

in the Vatican (circa 1530).²⁷ The setting is now 'classicized' according to Italian Renaissance decorum and the figures are set under a loggia divided by columns. On the left, the courtier (AULICVS) is introduced by Hope (SPER[ANZA]), and attracted by Wealth (IPVLENZIA). The next scene shows him (AULICVS) guided by Hope (SPER[ANZA]) and met by Fallacy — or is it again by Opulence (IP[UL]EN[ZA]) — and by Servitude (SERVITUS) who lead him, still full of Hope (SPR), to Toil (LABOR) who is holding a hoe. He is shown again in the next episode, now sickly and faded (SENITUS?) with Old Age probably shown here as the old man turning his back to us (also SENE[CT]VS). Still hopeful, he is now surrounded by Insolence and Despair. Hope then flies away and disappears forever. Despair finally grasps the courtier (AULICVS) with one hand and beats him. The man holding a walking stick is based on *Penitudo* in the Holbein woodcut; on the dish he is identified as Repentance (PENITENZIA). The identification of the figures — indeed the interpretation of the inscriptions — is often problematic. Hope, for example, is dressed in different ways; in addition she is not always identified by label. The artist was evidently not especially interested in the complexity of the iconography. But the ambiguities and the errors reflect the difficulty of devising, and in this case of copying a reconstruction of a literary *ekphrasis* not based on a real work of art.²⁸ These complexities, no doubt, help to explain why so few attempts were made by artists to illustrate the *imago vitae aulicae*. Johannes Froben was probably right when he suggested in his letter to More than no artist could manage to paint it as well as Lucian describes it in words.

JEAN MICHEL MASSING

KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

²⁷ For this dish, see Città del Vaticano, *Raffaello in Vaticano*, Milan 1984, p. 374, no. 145a, ill. pp. 372 and 373; Cast, op. cit. in n. 17 above, p. 81, n. 31, relates this dish to Holbein's woodcut but does not mention the subject of the allegory...

²⁸ The literary character of the *ekphrasis* is stressed by Lucian himself (*De Mercede conductis potentium familiaribus*, 42); see n. 7 above. The figure of Rhetoric mentioned in *Rhetorum praepceptor*, 6, is also a literary description: 'I wish first of all to paint you a picture in words, like Cebes of old...'; for this translation, see Lucian op. cit. in n. 8 above, iv, 1925, p. 141. For such descriptions not based on works of art, see J. Bompaigne, op. cit. in n. 6, pp. 262–64 and 722. The different character of the *ekphrasis* of the *Calumny of Apelles* indicates that it, by contrast, may have been a real painting known to Lucian; for a discussion of this problem, see R. Hinks, *Myth and Allegory in Ancient Art*, (Studies of the Warburg Institute, 6), London 1939, p. 117.

BENEDETTO VARCHI AND THE VISUAL ARTS*

AMONG THE MANY COMMONPLACES echoed by Paolo Pino in his *Dialogo di Pittura* was the affirmation of the status of painting as a liberal art and of the intellectual nature of its operations: '... because we painters are intelligent on a theoretical level, quite apart from practice'.¹ But although statements like this abound in the artistic literature of the sixteenth century, they should not simply be taken at face value as documenting either the position occupied by the visual arts in the hierarchy of arts and sciences or their relationships and analogies with philosophy, poetry or the disciplines of the *trivium*.

In this context Benedetto Varchi's *Due lezioni* of 1550 are particularly useful as a corrective to what might be called the optical and semantic distortions generated by the enthusiasm of *Cinquecento trattatisti*. Written with didactic purpose, these lectures reflect an attempt to exclude speculative thought from the visual arts. Using doctrines taken from Aristotle's psychology, Varchi places the operations employed in the visual arts in the lowest part of the rational soul, thereby restricting them to the representation of particulars. Moreover, in contrast to the popular Horatian dictum, *ut pictura poesis*, he stresses the differences between poetry and painting in relation to their content, suggesting a keener definition of their respective spheres of activity. The lectures also clearly show that Neoplatonism influenced Varchi's art theory in the sphere of the descriptive rhetoric of beauty more than in the conception of art and artistic creation. It is interesting to note that these views did not arouse any controversy in sixteenth-century Florence although a few of their inconsistencies were later noted and corrected.

* This article is based on material from my thesis in preparation, 'Aspects of the Criticism and Exegesis of Italian Art, circa 1540–1600', University of London, Warburg Institute. I am grateful to my supervisor Charles Hope and to Jill Kraye for their advice. I am indebted to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, to the Fonds FCAR d'aide et de soutien à la recherche and to the ORS Awards Scheme for grants which enabled me to continue my research.

¹ Paolo Pino, *Dialogo di Pittura*, edn Milan 1954, p. 33 (*editio princeps* Venice 1548): '... onde noi pittori siamo intelligenti nell'arte nostra teoricamente senza l'operare'.

Varchi delivered his lectures in Santa Maria Novella under the auspices of the *Accademia Fiorentina*. They include the exegesis of a sonnet by Michelangelo and three disputes on respectively, the nobility of the arts, the merits of painting and sculpture and the differences and similarities between poets and painters. Eight letters of artists on the subject of the *paragone* complete the *editio princeps*, which was published a few months before Vasari's *Vite*² and which can be seen as a bridge between the culture of the workshops and the world of the *accademie*. It first attracted Panofsky's attention,³ and more recently two art historians, Sergio Rossi and Leaatrice Mendelsohn, devoted many pages to the subject.⁴

The striking juxtaposition of Aristotelian thought and Neoplatonic concepts which one encounters in the *Due lezioni* is by no means original or unique to Varchi; it characterizes most of the public commentaries on the *Canzoniere* sponsored by the *Accademia Fiorentina* from the early 1540s onwards.⁵ In these lectures Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism coexisted more than they clashed since they were explaining different, if not unrelated things. The *accademici* quoted Aristotle in their discussion on the nature and composition of the soul,

on the creation of natural objects, on virtue and time. From the Platonic tradition they rarely borrowed more than a few commonplaces on love and divine beauty, personified in Laura and worshipped by Petrarch.⁶ Their public exegesis of the *Canzoniere*, based on the learned doctrine expressed in poetry and on the Platonic behaviour of the poet, coincided with the aims of the *Accademia Fiorentina*: to make Tuscan the language of arts and sciences and to give a philosophical and moral formation to young Florentine nobles, thus preparing them to undertake studies at the University of Pisa.⁷

Only three lectures were given during the period on the visual arts, and the theory deriving from them seems rather sterile.⁸ For despite its potential in aesthetic matters, Neoplatonism was mainly used to teach an art of love and behaviour rather than a technique of art criticism. On the other hand Aristotle's explanation of natural creation through the example of artificial creation offered no way to distinguish the painter from the blacksmith, the carpenter or the potter who all, in one way or another, induced form into matter.

In May 1549 another academician, Giovanni Battista Gelli, commented on Petrarch's two sonnets in praise of Laura's portrait. After a long introduction on the rise and apotheosis of the arts of drawing, from Giotto to Michelangelo he interpreted the first poem, 'Per mirar Policeto a prova fiso' as praise of the image 'secondo la dottrina di Platone' and the second, 'Quando giunse a Simone l'alto concetto' as a praise based on Aristotelian doctrine.⁹ While he granted to Platonism the rhetorical character of an encomium he meticulously paraphrased some extracts from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in order to explain the

² Benedetto Varchi, *Due lezioni di M. Benedetto Varchi nella prima delle quali si dichiara un sonetto di M. MICHELANGELO Buonarroiti. Nella seconda si disputa quale sia più nobile arte la Scultura, o la Pittura, con una lettera d'esso Michelangelo, & più altri Eccellentissimi Pittori, et Scultori, sopra la Quistione sopradetta*, Florence 1549; Varchi delivered the text on 6 and 13 March 1547; see *Annali de l'Accademia fiorentina*, Florence, Biblioteca Marcelliana, MS B, III, 52, fol. 40^r. All the dates are here given in common style, as opposed to Florentine style according to which the new year starts on 25 March. Thus, the Torrentino press printed the *editio princeps* of the *Lezioni* in 1550 as indicated by the dedication, signed and dated 12 January 1549, Florentine style.

³ E. Panofsky, *Idea*, tr. J. S. Peake, New York 1968, pp. 119 ff.

⁴ S. Rossi, *Dalle Botteghe alle accademie*, Milan 1980, pp. 83 ff.; L. Mendelsohn, *Paragone: Benedetto Varchi's Due Lezioni and Cinquecento Art Theory*, Ann Arbor (Michigan) 1982. Mendelsohn concentrates on Varchi's sources in the history of ideas. Rossi emphasizes the theme of the artist as an intellectual.

⁵ Petrarch's *Canzoniere* was the most commented text in the *Accademia Fiorentina*; see A. De Gaetano, *Giambattista Gelli and the Florentine Academy*, Florence 1976, pp. 114 ff. and 276 ff. De Gaetano, however, did not realize that many lectures were expanded versions of G. A. Gesualdo's erudite commentary in his edition of the *Canzoniere*. On the origins of the academic lecture see also R. S. Samuels, 'Benedetto Varchi, the *Accademia degli Infiammati* and the Italian Academic movement', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 29, 1976, pp. 599 ff.

⁶ This interpretation corresponds to the psychological and biographical reading of the *Canzoniere*, which, according to L. Baldacci, characterizes Cinquecento Petrarchism; see *Il Petrarismo italiano nel Cinquecento*, Padua 1974, pp. 50-51.

⁷ On the function of the academic lectures, see M. Plaisance, 'Culture et politique à Florence', in *Les écrivains et le pouvoir à l'époque de la Renaissance*, ed. A. Rochon, Paris 1974, vol. II, pp. 151-54 and J. Bryce, *Cosimo Bartoli, (1503-1572)*, Geneva 1983, p. 166.

⁸ Along with the lectures of Varchi and Gelli (see following note), the *Annali* (as in n. 2) record the now lost lecture of Niccolò Martelli on sonnets LXXVII and LXXVIII of the *Canzoniere*, delivered on 19 November 1545; see fol. 30^r.

⁹ Giambattista Gelli, *Lezione petrarchesche*, edn Bologna 1884, pp. 246 ff.

concepts of causation, form and privation.¹⁰ Hence, despite the eloquence of his introduction, Gelli's lecture lacked a rigorous definition of the visual arts.¹¹ And it was precisely this gap which Varchi succeeded in filling by clearly differentiating art theory from empirical admiration.

Varchi's text begins with a panegyric on divine love and on the dignity of man.¹² The first sentences introduce a long and strange harangue against those: '... who would like to be strong like lions, to run like deer, fly like birds or swim like fish ...'.¹³ At this time in Florence no one would have claimed to prefer the condition of animal to that of man except, perhaps, Giovanni Battista Gelli who some months earlier had published a book entitled *La Circe*. In this work Odysseus tries to persuade his companions, transformed into beasts by the enchantress, to regain their original human condition. All but one refuse; of the ten dialogues of the *Circe*, nine demonstrate a particular aspect of the superiority of animals over men.¹⁴

The *Circe* appeared in Florence in April 1549.¹⁵ Since Varchi wrote the second dedication of the *Due lezioni* on 12 January 1550¹⁶ he must have composed the *proemio* between April and December 1549. Besides the tense relationships which existed between him and

Gelli's circle,¹⁷ one fact confirms these hypotheses: the title page of the *editio princeps* introduces two lectures by *M. Benedetto Varchi* and not, as in the 1590 edition, *M. Benedetto Varchi Accademico Fiorentino*. To have this title appended to his name in 1549 Varchi would have had to submit his text for the approval of the censors who usually held their meeting in Gelli's workshop.¹⁸ The Platonic notions displayed in the *proemio* are thus primarily attacks against Gelli's pessimistic views of man and coincide only partially with the first lecture which treats the theme of love.

The body of the text begins with a question: since love is by nature good, why are lovers sad and desperate? Michelangelo's sonnet provides the answer: just as the *ottimo artista* imagines and reveals the statue hidden in the marble, the *ottimo amante* extracts from a beautiful face its full potential of pleasure; but the common sort of lover gets only pain. So the torments of love derive from the lover's clumsiness rather than from its nature. After a long series of digressions on artistic creation and on Michelangelo's poetic works the lecture ends with a long paraphrase of the discussion in Ficino's *De amore* on Platonic love. According to Varchi, this type of love surpasses all other activities in terms of both nobility and utility.¹⁹ He therefore concludes that Michelangelo's Platonic behaviour eclipses his achievement as a painter, sculptor, architect and poet: he surpasses everyone '... in the true art of love, which is neither less beautiful nor less tiring but far more necessary and profitable than the other four ...'.²⁰

Varchi does not draw any parallel between Michelangelo's contemplative behaviour and his actual artistic achievement. Although Platonic love requires a certain familiarity with *l'idea di tutte le bellezze*,²¹ Varchi excludes the universe of ideas from the field of artistic creation:

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 264 ff.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 223 ff. He defines only the visual arts as arts of imitation, but is inconsistent as far as the parallel between interpretation of poetry and of painting is concerned.

¹² According to Mendelsohn, 'Varchi outlines the philosophical perspective through which he intends the poem to be seen' (Mendelsohn, *Paragone* ..., as in n. 4), p. 96. In reality Varchi composed these lines at least two years after the public delivery of his text, with Gelli rather than Michelangelo in mind.

¹³ Varchi, *Lezioni* ... (as in n. 2), p. 8: '... che vorrebbero o essere galiardi come i lions, & correre come i cervi: o volare come gli uccelli, o notare come i pesci ...'.

¹⁴ On the *Circe*, see De Gaetano, *Giovanni Battista Gelli* ... (as in n. 5), pp. 161 ff.; in one of the dialogues of *I Mondi* (Venice 1552, fol. 19) A. F. Doni confirms Gelli's scepticism: he nicknames him *Il Dubbioso* and makes him say: 'Io sono stato anchora molte volte in dubbio se fosse stato meglio essere animale senza ragione, o con ragione ...' (see also Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1150a). The polemical character of Varchi's *proemio* escaped the attention of Mendelsohn who, nevertheless, quotes the *Circe* twice: *Paragone* ... (as in n. 4), pp. 204 n. 38; 253 n. 45.

¹⁵ The dedication is dated April 1549 but the text was already approved on 7 December 1548; see, *Annali* (as in n. 2), fol. 50^r.

¹⁶ Varchi, *Lezioni* ... (as in n. 2), p. 8.

¹⁷ Plaisance, 'Culture et politique ...' (as in n. 7), pp. 159 and 164-65; U. Pirotti, *Benedetto Varchi e la cultura del suo tempo*, Florence 1971, pp. 24-25.

¹⁸ *Capitoli dell' Accademia Fiorentina*, Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS Magl. ix, 91, fol. 20^r and *Annali* (as in n. 2), fols 30^r, 35^v, 45^v, 50^r.

¹⁹ Varchi, *Lezioni* (as in n. 2), pp. 50 ff.; Ficino, *Commentaire sur le banquet de Platon*, ed. M. Marcel, Paris 1956, vii, xiii ff., pp. 257.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 53 ff.: '... nella vera arte dell'amare, la quale non è ne men bella, ne men faticosa ma ben più necessaria, & più profittevole dell'altre quattro'.

²¹ Ibid., p. 51.

... whoever makes something does no more, according to the Peripatetics, than take it from its potential existence and reduce it to its actual existence; and for this purpose one needs neither Plato's ideas nor Avicenna's demon.²²

He clarifies these apparent inconsistencies when he explains that Michelangelo's sonnet aims at solving a question on love, '... and in order to demonstrate it better, [Michelangelo] uses (as Aristotle always does) the example of artifacts'.²³ One suspects that he used Michelangelo's Platonic *mores* and his written work rather than his artistic production because the theoretical foundations of the visual arts seemed to him insufficient to turn a great artist into a great man.

In his definition of arts in general and of the visual arts in particular²⁴ Varchi quotes Aristotle's 'dottissimo Commentatore':

Art is nothing but the form of the artificial thing which exists in the soul of the artist and the factive (or productive) principle of artificial form in matter.²⁵

Since this definition encompasses all activities aiming at the production of objects, it fails to distinguish the specific method employed by the artist from those used by the carpenter, the blacksmith or the potter.²⁶

Varchi develops these ideas further in the first dispute of the second lecture through a debate on the nobility of the mechanical arts.²⁷ It begins with a theoretical introduction in which, following book vi of the *Nicomachean*

Ethics, the rational part of the soul is divided into a speculative and a practical intellect.²⁸ In the speculative soul, whose operations deal with the universal, he places science, wisdom (*sapienza*) and intelligence (*cognizione de' primi principi*). In the practical intellect, which deals with particulars and is subdivided into active and factive intellects (*fattibile*) he places respectively sciences and prudence. The goal of sciences is the knowledge of truth and the soul's good; prudence aims at the good in *mores* while the arts aim at the physical good.²⁹ Thus medicine dominates the hierarchy of arts since its purpose is health; architecture comes second; painting and sculpture, which are seen as subsidiary to architecture, lag far behind.³⁰ Although Varchi identifies the aim of these two visual arts, 'una artificiosa imitazione della Natura',³¹ he does not give a precise definition of their utility.³² Consequently, lacking the function assigned to architecture, painting and sculpture are described merely as *arte fattive*, which leave a trace of their performance afterwards, in contrast to, say, dancing or horse-riding.³³

This very humble ranking derives from a confusion between *techne* and mechanical arts which led Varchi to place *all* the arts under the

²² Ibid., pp. 61 ff.; *Ethics*, 1139a.

²³ Rossi is indeed misinterpreting Varchi and his sources when he refers to science as 'un abito fattivo di cose necessarie' in *Dalle botteghe*... (as in n. 4), p. 107; on the utility of arts see Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 981b and Albertus Magnus, *Metaphysica*, lib. 1, tract. 1, 15-40 ff.

²⁴ And not third and fourth as Rossi seems to assume: *Dalle botteghe*... (as in n. 4), p. 108; see Varchi, *Lezioni*... (as in n. 2), p. 76: '... conciosia che le Sculture, e Pitture si fanno per adornare gl'edifici...'

²⁵ Ibid., p. 101.

²⁶ I disagree with Mendelsohn's view, *Paragone*... (as in n. 4), pp. 47, 121, that according to Varchi the utility of the visual art lies in their ability to express the intelligible universe in general and the Platonic idea of beauty in particular. In fact Varchi gives preference to sculpture on the ground that, thanks to its imitative possibilities it deceives touch, the most difficult sense to fool as well as the most unsuited to perceive ideas. Moreover, quoting the example of passions generated by palpable images, he obviously refers to bodily desire, rather than the yearnings of Platonic love. Vasari noticed this and expressed his indignation (*Le Vite nelle redazioni del 1550 e 1568*, Florence 1976, vol. 1, p. 18.). Furthermore the criterion adopted for the resolution of the *paragone* is the Aristotelian concept of substance, poles apart from the Platonic doctrine of ideas (see n. 35 below).

²⁷ Varchi, *Lezioni*... (as in n. 2), p. 68; see Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, II, 18. Varchi seems to confuse the arts expressed through action with the doctrines dealing with action (see following note).

²² Ibid., p. 34: '... chiunque fa qualunque cosa, non fa altro secondo i Peripatetici, che trarla dell'essere potenziale, & ridurla a l'attuale, al che fare non ha bisogno, ne delle Idee di Platone, ne del Demone d'Avicenna...'. See Aristotle, *Opera cum Averrois Commentariis*, Venice 1562, vol. VIII (*Metaphysica*), VII, 28H, fol. 178^v.

²³ Varchi, *Lezioni*... (as in n. 2), p. 15: '... e per meglio... dimostrarlo, [Michelagnolo] usa (come fa sempre Aristotile) un esempio delle cose artificiali.'

²⁴ In this context the *paragone* is of little importance as the author declares the two arts substantially identical and only accidentally different (ibid., p. 101).

²⁵ Ibid., p. 24: 'Ars nihil aliud est, quam forma rei artificialis existens in anima artificis, quae est principium factivum formae artificialis in materia'. I have not been able to identify the *dottissimo Commentatore* quoted by Varchi; Mendelsohn's reference to Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (1032b) is incorrect although it corresponds with the general meaning of the text: Mendelsohn, *Paragone*... (as in n. 4), p. 255 n. 62.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 18.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 61: 'L'intendimento nostro in questa prima disputa, è di trovare qual sia fra tutte l'arte la più nobile.'; for Varchi's confusion between art and mechanical art see n. 34 below.

factive part of the practical intellect on the ground that, unlike prudence, they use the body and produce something concrete:

... because in prudence, in addition to the fact that nothing remains after the action, anyone can act as he pleases, without the help of the body or of any external instrument; this does not happen in art.³⁴

If Varchi considered the visual arts to be superior to crafts, he certainly never articulated this conviction in any theoretical expression. Indeed, in the second dispute he declared sculpture superior to painting because he thought it was naturally closer to 'substance' than to accidents. He used 'substance' in the Aristotelian sense of the most intense expression of a being or a thing, the palpable expression of the inseparability of form and matter.³⁵

For Varchi the comparison of painting and poetry revealed more divergences than points in common since it contrasted a mechanical art with an activity closely related to prudence and the sciences:

But we must know that Poetry is called an art, not because it is really factive, but because it is reduced to precepts and teachings, and these constitute a minor part of it. In fact, in my opinion, no one can say greater things than a true poet ... because in his works ... one can necessarily look for the sciences of everything; therefore it is obvious that the best part of poetry is in the speculative intellect.³⁶

While the best part of poetry belongs to the speculative intellect, the practice of the visual arts is limited to the functions of the practical intellect, whose activities concern only the realm of the particular as opposed to the

universal reasonings of science. Thus when Michelangelo writes: 'la mano che ubbidisce a l'intelletto', Varchi explains that, in this context, *intelletto* means *fantasia*.³⁷ Since the imagination was included in the irrational soul, common to animals and men,³⁸ the practice of painting necessitated the use of another higher faculty, the passive intellect. In order to explain his use of the term *intelletto*, Varchi quotes Philoponus (*Giovanni Grammatico*) according to whom the passive intellect and imagination constitute one faculty which deals with images received by the senses and deliberates on the particulars.³⁹ Since in his scheme the field of the visual arts is reduced to the sensitive universe of shapes and passions, their language is consequently opposed to the universal categories used by sciences: '... all the arts have ... some proper names and specific terms which are more often known only to the artists themselves'.⁴⁰ Although the artist shares with the poet a familiarity with the visual world of expressions and actions, Varchi presents artistic culture as rooted in workshop practice.⁴¹

Varchi thus excluded speculation from the field of painting and sculpture since he considered it irreconcilable with their essential characteristics. He therefore based his praise of Michelangelo on the real or assumed content of his poetry, displaying more empirical admiration for the artist's visual production than sophisticated understanding of the figurative thought on which it was based. The intellectual side of artistic creation, the *fatiga di mente* of the

³⁴ See Varchi, *Lezzioni* ... (as in n. 2), p. 62: '... perciocchè nella prudenza, oltre che dopo le operatione non rimane alcun opera, può ciascuno operare a sua voglia, senza l'aiuto del corpo o d'altra cosa di fuori; il che nell'arte non avviene ...'. See also *ibid.*, p. 71, where he claims that: 'tutti l'arti sono meccaniche ... cio è manuali ...'. He is probably referring to Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1140b) where activities traditionally associated with prudence such as politics or economics are excluded from the arts.

³⁵ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1029a.

³⁶ Varchi, *Lezzioni* ... (as in n. 2), p. 112: 'Ma dovemo avvertire che la Poesia si chiama arte, non perchè ella sia propriamente fattibile, ma perchè è stata ridotta sotto precetti ed insegnamenti che questa è la minor parte ch'ella habbia; perchè a giudizio mio, non si può dir cosa nè maggiore, nè dove si ricerchino più cose e più grandi che in uno che sia vero poeta. Perciocchè in lui ... si ricercano necessariamente tutte le scienze di tutte le cose; onde si vede manifestamente che la sua parte migliore è nell'intelletto speculativo.' Rossi, *Dalle botteghe* ... (as in n. 4), p. 113, nevertheless speaks of the 'sostanziale unità delle due arti'.

³⁷ Varchi, *Lezzioni* ... (as in n. 2), pp. 30 ff.

³⁸ Aristotle, *De anima*, 429a.

³⁹ Jean Philopon, *Commentaire sur le De anima d'Aristote*, ed. G. Verbeke, Louvain 1966, 95-96 and introd., pp. lxii ff.; in Philoponus's view the imagination is of no use to the speculative intellect whose deliberations focus on universals. In Varchi's text the absence of a synthesis between the Aristotelian theory of artistic creation and the Platonic conception of divine love recalls Philoponus' opposition of active and contemplative life, in which the passive intellect and *fantasia* are separated from the speculative intellect (pp. lxiii, 61-85, 62-32). Such a gap tends to reduce the difficulties in reconciling Aristotle's psychology with the slightly different division of the soul Varchi used to order the various human activities.

⁴⁰ Varchi, *Lezzioni* ... (as in n. 2), p. 79: '... tutte (l'arti) hanno ... alcuni nomi propri, & vocaboli particolari quali le più volte non sono noti, se non a gl'Artefici medesimi'; on the idea that the knowledge of one science supposes the knowledge of the others, see *ibid.*, p. 80.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 81: '... alla perfezione dell'arte si ricerca non solamente la dottrina cioè la cognizione universale delle cose appartenenti ad essa arte, ma ancora l'uso e l'esercitazione ...'.

artist, was seen by Varchi merely as the difficulty of imagining and executing a group of particular figures expressing different emotions.

According to the *Annali* of the *Accademia Fiorentina* Varchi's lectures, with their rather awkward blend of Aristotelian psychology and Platonic love theory, were received '... con somma lode e gran piacere degli uditori'.⁴² The only negative response came from Vasari. In all likelihood he wrote at the instigation of Varchi's Florentine enemies, that is Gelli's friends, who were probably irritated by his attacks on the *Circe* and therefore wanted to discredit the *Due lezioni*.⁴³

Since Vasari attacked only the second of the *lezioni* he did not discuss Varchi's most arguable view: his belief that the visual arts belonged to the factive part of the practical intellect. More than fifteen years later, however, the Florentine philosopher, Francesco De'Vieri, responded to Varchi's ideas in his book on the arts and sciences:

But if someone were saying to me that these two professions, namely painting and sculpture, are really factive arts and do not deserve to be counted among the active disciplines whose subject is our actions, I would reply to him that it is indeed true, in terms of their *modus operandi* on matter, externally and from the outside (...), that they are truly arts; but regarding their end, from which the name of any discipline derives and is evaluated, they must be included among the doctrines which deal with moral and active matters, in order to inspire one to imitate the virtuous actions of great men.⁴⁴

De'Vieri's discussion is more of an expansion than a refutation of Varchi's categories. The arts are still placed under the factive part of the

practical intellect in terms of their method of operation; but in terms of their goal, they are connected to the faculty of moral judgement since they aim at inducing men to imitate virtuous actions. Such a definition does justice to the practical nature of the artist's activity in making paintings and sculpture, while also taking into account the work of art's potential for ethical influence on the behaviour of the viewer. Moreover De'Vieri's formulation corresponds to a distinction already pointed out in Pontormo's letter to Varchi in which 'El diletto che io so che voi, magnifico M. Benedetto, pigliate di qualche bella pittura o scultura ...' is ironically contrasted with the painful 'fatiche di chi opera'.⁴⁵

De'Vieri was not the only one to use Varchi's lecture as a point of departure. Vincenzo Danti clearly based his notions of *imitare* and *ritrarre* on the opposition of speculative and practical intellect;⁴⁶ and Federico Zuccaro used it to develop his categories of *disegno interno* and *disegno esterno*. Varchi's ideas may not have been fully worked out; nevertheless, through the use of Aristotelian doctrines, he distanced the visual arts from the learned universe of poetry and drew them closer to the world of workshop practice. And on this foundation, others were able to elaborate more consistent explanations of the intellectual activities involved in the visual arts.

FRANÇOIS QUIVIGER

WARBURG INSTITUTE

⁴² Varchi, *Lezioni* ... (as in n. 2), p. 132.

⁴³ Vincenzio Danti, *Trattato delle perfette proporzioni*, in *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento*, ed. P. Barocchi, Bari 1960, vol. 1, p. 266; for Danti's acquaintance with Varchi see M. Daly Davis, 'Beyond the "primo libro" of Vincenzo Danti's *Trattato delle perfette proporzioni*, in *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, xxvi, 1982, pp. 63 ff.

⁴⁴ *Annali* (as in n. 2), fol. 40^v.

⁴⁵ Vasari, *Vite* ... (as in n. 14), p. 25, vol. 1; C. Bartoli, P. Giambullari and C. Lenzi were Vasari's proof readers; this attack may have surprised Varchi who refers to Vasari as '... mio amicissimo ...' (*Lezioni* ... (as in n. 2), p. 92.)

⁴⁶ Francesco De'Vieri, *Del soggetto, del numero, dell'uso e della dignità et ordine degli habiti dell'animo, cioè dell'arti, dottrine morali, scienze speculative, e facoltà stornentali*, Florence 1568, p. 55: 'Ma se qui alcuno mi dicesse, che queste due professioni cioè la pittura e la scultura sono arti veramente fattive, & non meritano di essere annoverate tra le notizie che habbiano per soggetto le azioni nostre & che siano attive, io gli risponderai che bene è vero, che quanto al modo dell'operare in materia esteriormente & di fuori, (...), elle sono assolutamente arti, ma rispetto al fine, donde si prende el nome, & donde si fa giudicio delle cose, elle sono da annoverarsi tra le dottrine, le quali hanno del morale & attivo, per operare à fine di muoversi all'imitazione delle vertuose operazioni degli huomini di pregio.'

AN EARLY SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY CANON OF ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE

PIERLEONE CASELLA'S *ELOGIA ILLUSTRUM ARTIFICUM* of 1606

ACCORDING to how we look at it, we may regard canons of artistic excellence as manifestations of pedantic Alexandrianism or