

ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTIONS OF POLITICS
WITHIN THE MYTH OF VENICE

by

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ABSTRACT

The reputation of the Venetian Republic as a model regime provided substance for a number of sixteenth century political writers. Moreover, the diffuse nature of this reputation, which has more recently been characterized as the 'myth of Venice', made it possible for these men to utilize the Venetian model for three wholly disparate conceptions of the nature of politics. Although the writers under investigation all employed the model of Venice to address the issues of 'politics', we find that, in fact, they portray three separate and alternative conceptions of politics-- of the purpose of the civil society and of the nature of political action.

Gasparo Contarini drew upon the reputation of Venice to portray a conception of politics as the lessons of history. The heritage of the Republic contained within it the traditions which not only provided the individual with a sense of civic identity, but also a number of patterns for political action which the founding fathers of Venice had wisely fashioned after those patterns infused by God into nature. The task of the political man, then, was to discover (or re-discover) those patterns and infuse them into positive law.

Paolo Paruta and Paolo Sarpi portrayed politics as a moral endeavour, and drew upon the Venetian experience to bolster their notions of the sanctity of the individual and the importance of individual action. For these men the civil society was of value in that it was properly an

institution for the ennoblement of men and an aid in their quest for perfection. Political man is portrayed here as a participant in the affairs of the civil society, and the value of that participation derives from the fact that it allows him to exercise his moral potential.

Lastly, Francesco Patrizi and Ludovico Agostini drew upon the reputation of the Republic for the efficient provision of goods and service to her inhabitants and upon the bureaucratic nature of her government to portray political man as an artificer who relies upon reason and expertise to construct and maintain a government whose task it is to co-ordinate the various functions of society. Government here is dedicated to ensuring the material goods of life, and its value is as a tool to achieve those goods.

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INTRODUCTION

The Problem

A full and accurate study of the political thought of another age or setting requires the adherence to certain methodological principles. First, that study must be carried out with an awareness of the social, political and philosophical context within which that thought developed. We must recognize that there have existed--and continue to exist--ways of viewing the world and of approaching the problems of civil life which are fundamentally different from our own.

Secondly, in order to portray accurately the political thought of a given age or setting, it is helpful to shift our focus away from a sole concentration upon those political thinkers whose very originality most often makes them atypical of that age. J. W. Allen points to the problem here:

It will be futile to lighten our labours by picking out a few writers or a few books that for some reason have become outstanding. If we adopt that method of approach, it is probable that we shall barely get into touch. The political thought of a period is to be found

rather in the writings of obscure and anonymous persons than in the work of writers whose real distinction and originality makes them untypical.¹

We must, then, recognize the value, for our purposes, of a body of literature which has hitherto received relatively little attention from later scholars precisely because it is not highly original.

As one begins to read the political writings of the sixteenth century, one becomes aware that there exist great disparities with regard to fundamental conceptions of the nature of politics, the purpose of civil society, and the proper manner of proceeding in political action. The differences here are more than those of tactics or strategy, or refinements upon a common theme. Rather they go to the very core of politics and the very roots of civil life. If one is to make comparisons between individual writers, then those comparisons must take into account these vital differences, and one must be able to articulate the fundamental disparities found in these alternative conceptions of politics.

We shall examine, in this study, the works of five political thinkers in our attempt to portray the political thought surrounding sixteenth century Venice; and we shall find in these works three distinct conceptions of politics. We will see politics treated alternatively as the lessons of history, as a moral endeavour, and as a managerial

1. J. W. Allen, A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century (Revised edition; London: University Paperbacks, 1964), p. xviii.

activity for the provision of man's earthly needs. The writings which we shall examine here are fully intelligible only when we understand the framework of ideas within which they were fashioned. Our task then shall be to examine these writings with a view to articulating those three distinct conceptions of politics.

The political writers in question drew from a number of intellectual traditions and influences, and it is this admixture of various traditions and influences in varying degrees which accounts, in part, for the wide-ranging differences which we find in their political works. One of the underlying influences, common to these five writers is what has come to be termed by modern historians as the "myth of Venice". There is disagreement among modern scholars as to the content of the myth or the parameters delimiting exactly what is, and what is not to be included in this mental construct; but a review of the literature provides a general sense of the vital core of the latter. Federico Chabod emphasizes the 'reputation' of Venice in the sixteenth century as the model state because of her constitution. Gina Fasoli, also one of the first to employ the term, emphasizes the reputation of the Venetians for their ethical virtues of magnanimity, heroism, generosity, and liberality.² In the last two decades the myth of Venice as a model polity has been somewhat more extensively treated, and we see that

2 Federico Chabod, "Venezia nella politica italiana ed europea del cinquecento," in La civiltà veneziana del rinascimento (Florence: Sansoni, 1958), pp. 48-49; Gina Fasoli, "Nascita di un mito," in Studi storici in onore di Gioacchino Volpe, Vol. 1 (Florence: Sansoni, 1958). p. 449.

a mental construct emerges which is multi-faceted. David Robey and John Law identify the important ideas associated with the myth of Venice as being those "...of the privileged origins of the city, of its long history of freedom and political stability, of its piety and of the excellence of its customs and institutions."³ Renzo Pecchioli points to the reputation of Venice as a model state from a constitutional point of view (which emphasized the equilibrium of the mixed government), and from the point of view of 'civil ethics'.⁴ Myron Gilmore offers the following characterization of the myth of Venice:

The city's long-continued independence, the stability of its institutions, the existence of an aristocratic governing class distinguished from the large mass of labourers and artisans, the 'mixed' quality of the regime, which prevented the domination of a single individual or faction, these were the elements from which the myth of Venice was constructed.⁵

Likewise, Franco Gaeta points to the polymorphous nature of the myth of Venice when he identifies three 'aspects' of the myth and, alternatively, characterizes these as three separate 'myths'; the myth of Venice as a state of liberty; as a mixed state; and as a gallant

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- 3 David Robey and John Law, "The Venetian Myth and the 'De Republica Veneta' of Pier Paolo Vergerio," in Rinascimento: Rivista dell'Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, Vol. 15, Second Series (1975), p. 3.
 - 4 Renzo Pecchioli, "Il 'mito' di Venezia e la crisi fiorentina intorno al 1500," in Studi storici, vol. III (1962), p. 471.
 - 5 Myron Gilmore, "Myth and Reality in Venetian Political Theory," in Renaissance Venice, edited by J. R. Hale (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), p. 439.

city.⁶ Felix Gilbert emphasizes the reputation of Veince as a city of liberty and as a city of domestic peace and stability;⁷ and Lester J. Libby, Jr. employs the concept under the rubric of the Republic as an 'ideal society' which exhibited a stability engendered by her political constitution.⁸ In his formulation of the myth of Venice J. G. A. Pocock has discounted the emphasis which Fasoli originally attached to the inherent ethical virtues of the Venetians:

The mito di Venezia consists in the assertion that Venice possesses a set of regulations for decision-making which ensure the complete rationality of every decision and the complete virtue of every decision maker. Venetians are not inherently more virtuous than other man, but they possess institutions which make them so.⁹

Despite modern disagreement as to the precise content of the myth of Venice, there is no question that Venice served as the model polity for a number of political writers in the sixteenth century; and the very lack of consensus among modern scholars regarding all of the elements of the myth of Venice points to its multi-faceted nature.

6 Franco Gaeta, "Alcune considerazioni sul mito di Venezia," in Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance, Vol. 23 (1961), p. 60.

7 Felix Gilbert, "The Venetian Constitution in Florentine Political Thought," in Florentine Studies: Politics and Society in Renaissance Florence, edited by Nicolai Rubenstein (London: Faber and Faber, 1968). pp. 466-67.

8 Lester J. Libby, Jr., "Venetian History and Political Thought after 1509," in Studies in the Renaissance, Vol. XX (1973), pp. 7-8 and passim.

9 J. G. A. Pocock, The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 324.

Various political writers, in the sixteenth century just as in the twentieth, have emphasized different aspects or elements of the Venetian model dependent upon that which they were (or are) attempting to demonstrate. For example, while the constitutional structure of the Republic was often cited as proof of the merits of a mixed polity, Venice was also often employed as an example of the benefits of an aristocracy. The model of Venice, then, has been utilized for a number of purposes. If we are to use the myth of Venice, we must think of it in terms of the relatively widespread reputation which Venice enjoyed in the sixteenth century as a model state exhibiting the qualities of longevity, stability and a lack of civil discord wrought by her constitutional arrangements and/or the virtue of her citizenry. It is this common thread of the influence of the Venetian experience which we will attempt to follow as we examine these three alternative conceptions of politics. How does it colour these three conceptions of politics? How is it utilized by different thinkers and what do they draw from the Venetian experience? Pocock has pointed out that a conceptualization of tradition is constantly going on, and that "...it may take place in a variety of ways and give rise to a variety of mental phenomena."¹⁰ We shall attempt to explore the various mental phenomena which arose from differing accountings and uses of what has come to be termed the myth of Venice.

10 J. G. A. Pocock, Politics, Language and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History (New York: Atheneum, 1971). p. 235.

The choice of terminology by modern historians is unfortunate here, for the term "myth" often tends to lead us to look for the degree of correspondence between myth and reality. While this may be a worthwhile endeavour in itself, it is important to keep in mind that men's actions are most often grounded in a perception of reality, whether or not that perception be accurate. In our search for an understanding of the political thinking of another era, the degree to which the myth corresponds to the reality should concern us less than the role of that myth in influencing and guiding the political thought of that time. We are interested, here, with the growth, alteration and utilization of ideas; and for this task a mere investigation of the correspondence between the myth and reality is insufficient.¹¹

This study, which examines and portrays three alternative conceptions of politics that derive from--and, indeed, are largely bounded by--the ideological context of the myth of Venice, is of value for a number of reasons. First, the writers under examination here have received too little attention from modern scholars. Many of these writers were tremendously influential in their day, yet the modern student is scarcely aware of their existence. We should seek to understand why these men enjoyed such a prominence with sixteenth and seventeenth century audiences, and what it is that they have to say regarding the

11 For a discussion of Euhemerist myth and the role of myth in politics, see Henry Tudor, Political Myth (London: Pall Mall Press, 1972), Chapters I and V.

nature of politics. This study is of value, then, in that we shall look at the works of a body of writers on whom there is a paucity of modern scholarship.

Secondly, modern scholars of these works have most often tended to treat them as discrete, self-contained entities, unconnected with the larger tradition of political discourse surrounding sixteenth century Venice. If these men of the cinquecento have adopted and utilized the ideas and values embodied in what has come to be termed the myth of Venice, then it is incumbent that we explore that framework of ideas and the ways in which it has influenced their works. By approaching these works in this manner, we shall be able to provide a context within which we can more fully understand their import. Indeed, we cannot fully understand the works of these men without this context; and the tendency of many modern scholars to treat these works as discrete and self-contained entities is inadequate.

Lastly, and most importantly, this study will provide that context in terms of three alternative conceptions of politics which derive out of a common body of ideas. We will be able to demonstrate that the Venetian experience has been employed to inform three separate and distinct notions of the substance of politics; and, as these three conceptions of politics take shape, it will become manifest that the attempt to deal with the individual works outside of this context is of little value. For example, two writers may both be writing about

"politics", yet at the same time be writing about very different phenomena. We can gain little from a reading of the works of an individual writer unless we are aware that he is writing with a particular conception of politics in mind, and unless we can articulate that conception. Thus far, the literature on these thinkers has not provided the student with this foundation for an understanding of their works.

While we shall find three distinct conceptions of politics surrounding sixteenth century Venice, we shall also find that these share much in terms of intellectual influences and ideals. We will attempt to explore those bases of political wisdom common to these three alternative conceptions of politics, as well as to account for the differences which we find.

CHAPTER I

THE SETTING

I

For centuries the city of Venice has inspired awe amongst outsiders; perhaps because it is an enigma. The current-day traveller to Venice juxtaposes in his mind the beauty of the city built upon canals with a realization that it is, in fact, a city constructed atop its open pungent sewers. He sees the beauty of the Byzantine mosaics in St. Mark's and, as he walks upon its uneven floors, realizes that the entire building is sinking slowly upon its foundations. Ground floors of buildings, awash with the water of the canals, testify to the fact that the city is currently facing an enemy more deadly than any faced in the past. One attempts to reconcile the glory of the art, the statesmanship and the adventure of the past with the street vendor hawking cheap souvenirs and the seeming inability or unwillingness of modern governmental powers to do anything about the plight of the city as a whole.

Like our current-day tourist, the Renaissance traveller to Venice also experienced a sense of awe--for the city, even then, was an enigma. The sources of his puzzlement were, however, different from our own. The Renaissance traveller marvelled at the ability of Venice to remain free from internal strife, and her ability to deal with great

royal powers as though she were an equal. Indeed, the internal quietude and civil harmony which seemed to characterize Venice earned for her a reputation best expressed in the sobriquet, la Serenissima--the most serene. What was it about this city, about her people, that allowed her to continue to endure and to flourish amidst a world of turmoil and change? Certainly far greater powers had succumbed to changing times and changing power configurations. A number of foreign commentators upon Venice addressed themselves to this theme.¹

The cornerstone of Venetian republicanism and liberty had been the insularity of the city and the attendant independence of the Republic from foreign powers. Indeed, the then popular myth regarding the foundation of Venice lent credibility to this conception of the raison d'etre of Venice being integrally tied to the conception of liberty. According to the myth, the city had been founded in the early fifth century by men who sought personal liberty and freedom from domination above all material goods, and saw in the lagoon an area in which they could live undisturbed by the chaos and turmoil which attended domination by others.² Venetian independence, and the personal liberty which that independence allowed, were seen as the essence of Venice

1 Federico Chabod, "Venezia nella politica italiana ed europea del cinquecento", pp. 29-55, discusses the influence of Venice in the writings of political writers foreign to Venice. See also William J. Bouwsma, "Venice and the Political Education of Europe", in Hale, op. cit., pp. 445-66. Z. S. Fink, "Venice and English Political Thought in the Seventeenth Century", in Modern Philology, XXXVIII (1940), pp. 155-72, discusses the "reputation" of Venice and its political institutions vis-a-vis English political writers in detail.

2 The Carmine of Marcantonio Sabellico, written in the fifteenth century, sets the date at March 25, 413.

herself rather than something of recent origin and worthy of note by a number of commentators. Indeed, Bodin tells us that this is Venice's primary claim to distinction: "This is the principal reason why men praise the state of the Venetians so much--one lives there in the greatest freedom."³

The belief that the very essence of Venice was inextricably tied to the notions of liberty and freedom from external powers was reinforced by her geographical location and isolation. The natural defences of the lagoon were a substitute for the reliance upon foreign powers which would have necessitated the surrender of some of her independence. The insularity of Venice allowed her to remain aloof from peninsular concerns until it was to her advantage to enter into an alliance. The advantage here can be seen in the constant reluctance of Venice to become embroiled in the disputes between the medieval papacy and imperial authority.

The geographical situation of Venice provided further assets in terms of fostering a spirit of community among the citizens. There existed a greater homogeneity of population, and a lesser degree of particularist interest than was to be found on the peninsula. There was no landed nobility as there was no need for one. The landed nobility of the peninsula based their power on two things which they were able to offer--land for agricultural production, and military power. Given the security offered by the lagoons, and the fact that the Venetian economy was largely one of trade, a landed nobility would

3. Jean Bodin, Method for the Easy Comprehension of History, translated by Beatrice Reynolds, Vol. 37 of Records of Civilization, edited by Austin P Evans (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), p. 276.

simply have been out of context. Hence a landed nobility and a native military class were non-existent in Renaissance Venice. Further, the nobility of Venice, as a group, did not have general interests which were divergent from those of the common populace. Both groups made their living from the sea, and a great degree of cooperation was needed to build and maintain the network of canals and dikes by which Venice could have access to the sea, yet impede its destructive aspects. There was not, or was there perceived to be, a divergence of interest between the ruling segment of society (the patrician class) and the subject. Lastly, the geographical features of Venice fostered a sense of community through its uniqueness. Nowhere else could one find a thriving republic which was built upon the water, and had so learned to use that advantage that it could largely remain impervious to the seemingly constant troubles of the mainland. Other Italians had often come to despise the Venetians for their non-involvement and this, through the mechanism of defiance, had reinforced the Venetian sense of political community.

Many of the attributes which provided for Venetian independence also helped to maintain the stability of the polity. The absence of a landed nobility with divergent interests and the absence of a native military class enhanced stability and tradition. Because of Venice's unique position and her dependence upon the sea, a landed nobility would have been at odds with a merchant class interested in

maintaining and enhancing maritime influence. Beyond this, there was often the view that Venice must always endure simply because she had endured so long. Indeed, the fifteenth century had seen the aggrandizement of Venice through the default of more mortal powers. The Byzantine Empire had succumbed to the Turks, the Balkan kings were unable to act in any decisive manner, and the assertion of Hapsburg power remained sluggish. The continued fragmentation of the peninsula precluded decisive action by any of its components.⁴

Despite the view that Venice must endure in her personal and civic liberty simply because she had endured so long in the past, Venetians were not unaware of the pre-requisites of that liberty. For liberty, to the Venetians, was not merely something abstract or idyllic, but was something that was hard-won and realized historically.⁵ While liberty was viewed much in the sense of a medieval privilege to which Venetians were privy by reason of citizenship, it was also something which must be constantly defended in the face of those such as the Turks, papists, the French, and other Italians who would take away that liberty. The workings of that liberty could be viewed in the everyday life of the Venetian and, therefore, the conceptions of that liberty and its defense had all the greater cogency. The differences between the lot

⁴ See Alberto Tenenti, "The Sense of Space and Time in the Venetian World of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," in Hale, op. cit., particularly pp. 17-18.

⁵ Ibid., 35-36.

of the Venetian and, say, someone dwelling on the plains of Lombardy, were manifest. Venetians did not owe fealty to landed nobles who might extract rents and military service as the occasion arose. They were not subjected to laws other than those passed in their own councils. And, perhaps most importantly, their homes were not under constant threat of being overrun by the marauding armies of feuding powers. The first pre-requisite to the maintenance of that personal and civic liberty was the maintenance of Venetian independence from foreign powers.

Venice of the sixteenth century has been variously characterized as a democracy, a republic, an aristocracy and an oligarchy. With regard to the governmental structure per se, the most accurate and precise characterization is that of a republic for, as we shall see, the number of those who actively participated in the government was relatively small when compared with the total number of citizens, and those that did so were to represent the citizen body as a whole. The participation of the individual citizen in the business of government was most often vicarious, and this was due to the fact that there were simply more citizens than needed government functionaries. Those citizens not participating directly in the government one year might or might not--depending upon lot and election--participate directly the next. In this sense though, Venice was also considered a democracy in that all of her citizens were eligible for positions in, say, the Senate or the Council of Ten.⁶ All inhabitants were not citizens however;

6 Further, I take the term 'republic' to indicate a type of regime which is included under the broader concept of 'democracies'.

and it is this fact which gave rise to the notions of aristocracy and oligarchy often associated with Venice. Citizenship was restricted to the patrician class whose members numbered approximately 3,000 in the sixteenth century. Thus, there is a sense in which the government of Venice was 'the rule of the few'. If one focuses upon the entire community, rather than solely upon the citizenry, the term aristocracy might appear more appropriate. Indeed Bodin uses this notion of 'focus' when he attempts to place Venice within a typological framework with regard to her form of government. Arguing against the characterization of Venice as a mixed state, he states that since the doge, the senate and, indeed, all of the magistrates owe their tenure to the people, we must therefore call this form of government 'popular'.⁷ But since the number of citizens is but a small part of the inhabitants, he continues, the form of the government is really an aristocracy.⁸ Lastly, the characterization of 'oligarchy' arose primarily from those detractors of Venice who preferred to cast her government in the light of the rule of a few who directed the state for their own, rather than public, purposes. As we shall see, this charge is not borne out by the evidence. The terms republican, democratic and aristocratic are all proper adjectives by which one might describe Venice of the sixteenth century, and the notions of democracy and aristocracy are not necessarily mutually exclusive categories.

7. Bodin, op. cit., pp. 190-91.

8. Ibid., p. 198. Bodin uses the term 'government of optimates', pointing out that there are, in reality, no aristocracies since we cannot assure that the 'best' men are at the head of the government.

A strong democratic or republican element had characterized the development of the Venetian political heritage. In the sixth and seventh centuries, each of the twelve communities of Venice was overseen by a popularly elected tribune. To meet rising internal disorder and the threat of invasion by the Lombards, a general meeting was called in 697 and, at the suggestion of a member of the clergy, it was decided that the authority of the tribune should be limited strictly to local matters and that a capo should be elected for life. Paoluccio Anafesto thus became the first doge and was invested with extensive powers. The institution of the doge lasted only twenty years before it was abolished during a period of civil strife. After six years of discord, another general meeting was called and the dogeship reinstituted--this time to last for about eleven centuries. The practice of electing the doge was superseded in 778 when Maurizio Galbaio was permitted to associate his son Giovanni with him for reasons of infirm health. Upon the death of Maurizio, the dogeship fell to his son. Association and hereditary succession became standard practice until the year 1032, when Domenico Flabianco called a general meeting for the purpose of reforming the dogeship. After recounting the unbridled ambitions and the tragic consequences of many of the doges for the past 300 years, association and hereditary succession were abolished. The republican factions pushed further, and two ducal counsellors were appointed to assist the doge in his ordinary duties. More importantly, in extraordinary matters of public importance, the doge was compelled to invite the more prominent

and experienced citizens to sit in the form of a council and offer advice. This council formed the beginnings of the later Senate and Great Council.

The Council arrogated increasingly more power and finally in 1172 the constitution was revised. Under the new constitution the city was divided into six wards. Each ward was to elect two representatives who would each appoint forty leading citizens from their respective wards to form the Great Council. The Council sat for a year, at the end of which it (not the wards) nominated the twelve men who would appoint the Council for the next year. Further, the Council obtained the right to elect the officers of state, including the doge. The doge was further controlled by increasing the number of privy counsellors from two to six.

The size and power of the Maggior Consiglio grew until the end of the 13th century when the Council was declared closed. The Serrata del Maggior Consiglio has been the subject of much disagreement by later scholars. Essentially, it limited membership in the Council to those families who were currently sitting, or had recently been sitting in the Council. This ruling was temporarily relaxed later in times of great governmental need when, for example, the exigencies of war necessitated a greater number of government officials. It was also occasionally relaxed to admit someone who had earned the honour through meritorious service to the Republic. Hence, the Council did not really achieve its final form until near the end of the thirteenth century.

On the surface, the trend toward the greater influence of the Council and the limitation of its membership appear to be patent moves in the direction of an oligarchy of noble merchant families. The rolls of the Council and other public offices bear out the continued prominence of a number of powerful families. Members of the Giustinian family, the Contarini and Morosini constantly appear as one reads the history of the era. The debate continues as to the significance of the Council. Stanley Chojnacki has undertaken an extensive analysis of the Venetian patriciate, and his results would suggest that the move toward an oligarchy in the power structure was not reflected in an equal decline in the republican temperament.

Indeed, while a relatively small percentage of patrician families dominates numerically both in government and in the ownership of immovable wealth, they did not translate their numerical preponderance into particularist advantage. The reason is not hard to find: they had no single particularist interest.⁹

Although there seems to have been an alternating pattern of expansion and contraction of the degree of democracy in terms of governmental structure, the notions of democracy appear to have been a very significant element throughout the process, and the history of the power structure of Venice is basically the story of an expanding and contracting republicanism as entrance to the Maggior Consiglio was alternately closed

9. Stanley Chojnacki, "In Search of the Venetian Patriciate," in Hale, op. cit., p. 70. See also Frederic C. Lane, "The Enlargement of the Great Council of Venice", in Florilegium Historiale, edited by J. G. Rowe and W. H. Stockdale (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), pp. 236-74, where he argues that the closing of the council was, in fact, an attempt to enlarge the ruling class in order to moderate factional strife.

and re-opened and, more importantly, the authority to perform various functions shifted between the doge, the Council of Ten, and the Maggior Consiglio. The values of republicanism were not discarded remnant of a long distant past, but rather a vibrant, living aspect of Venetian life.

Renaissance Venice was often--though not always--viewed by contemporary writers as portraying the ideal of a mixed constitution; and it was to this fact that her reputation for domestic tranquility was often attributed. More by accident of history than by design, the Venetian government had developed democratic, aristocratic, and monarchical features. The mixed constitution, as an abstract ideal, appears to have been an issue on the Italian mainland only from the latter half of the thirteenth century when Aristotle's Politics was translated into Latin and expounded upon by a number of scholars; and it is doubtful that the notions of a mixed government played any role in the Venetian constitutional reforms of about 1200.¹⁰ The mixed constitution as an accurate characterization of the Venetian Republic, however, dates from an even later period. "The most important notion developed by humanists in the fifteenth century", Gilbert says, "was that of the Venetian constitution as a realization of the classical idea of mixed government."¹¹ Pier Paolo Vergerio, Francesco Barbaro

10. Frederic C. Lane, "Medieval Political Ideas and the Venetian Constitution," in Venice and History: The Collected Papers of Frederic C. Lane (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), p. 228.

11. Gilbert, op. cit., p. 468.

and George of Trebizond are the quattrocento precursors of highly developed myth of Venice, and among the first to employ the notions of a mixed polity to characterize the Republic.¹² By the sixteenth century, Venice had become the accepted model of the mixed polity. Bodin uses Venice as an example when he attacked the notion of a mixed polity in favour of monarchy,¹³ and Guicciardini likewise pointed to the Venetian Republic when he spoke of the mixed constitution. Of the Venetian government he states that it

"...is the most beautiful and best government that any city, not only in our own times but also in the classical world, ever possessed; the reason is that it embodies all three forms of government: those of one, of a few and of many.¹⁴

As these two writers suggest, there was disagreement as to the merits of a mixed polity, but not regarding the fact that Venice was the model of a mixed polity.

The democratic element of the mixed constitution was embodied in the institution of the Great Council. Because of its unwieldy size, however, its main responsibility was to elect others to carry out the government administration. The Senate constituted the aristocratic element, and it was from this body that the government administrators and supervisors were appointed. The monarchical element of government

12. See ibid., pp. 468-70; and Robey and Law, op. cit., passim.

13. Bodin, op. cit., Chapter VI.

14. Francesco Guicciardini, Dialogo e Discorsi del Reggimento di Firenze, edited, by R. Palmarocchi (Bari: Laterza, 1932), p. 132. Cited in Gilbert, op. cit., p. 487.

was, of course, embodied in the person of the doge; though as we have seen, he was elected by the Great Council. Standing somewhat outside this pyramid was the Council of Ten. Initially a temporary appointment in the fourteenth century to deal with urgent and extraordinary matters, the institution was made permanent as the value of small body which could act quickly and decisively became apparent. The interplay and balance between these features were viewed by many as the means by which Venice acquired her title of la Serenissima.

The extent to which the mixed constitution of Venice contributed to her domestic tranquility was a topic of much debate in the sixteenth century. Indeed, it is uncertain as to what extent Venetian writers themselves viewed this ideal as a contributing factor to the political stability of Venice, and it seems worth noting that the 'mixed constitution' was not a planned ideal, but rather the product of a long historical development. What does appear certain is that the Venetians, as a whole, were acutely aware of their political identity, and their loyalty to the Republic seems to have been a source of comment for Renaissance writers throughout Europe.

II

Historically, Venice had directed its interests toward the Levantine world. A large empire was slowly built up on the basis of trade, beginning with the conquest of the Dalmatian coast in the 10th century. By the beginning of the quattrocento, this stato da mar included much

of Dalmatia, the coast of Morea on the Peloponnesus, the islands of Corfu and Crete, the island of Negroponte (Evia) in the Aegean, and numerous smaller islands in the Aegean. The empire was one built through Venetian naval power around the exigencies of an expanding trade network.

At the beginning of the fourteenth century, the Venetian Empire took on another dimension--expansion onto the terraferma. Padua, Vicenza, Verona, Brescia, Bergamo and Friuli were added to what had formerly been Venice's sole possession on the mainland, namely Trevisano. On the positive side, this expansion was seen by some Venetians as a buffer zone between Venice and potential enemies on the mainland. Alternatively, it was seen as an added source of prestige, enabling the wealthy noble to adopt the lifestyle on his mainland counterpart. Later, the expansion onto the terraferma was to be legitimized in terms of compensation for losses suffered in the Levant. On the other side of the coin however, the expansion onto the mainland was viewed as evidence that Venetians had been seduced away from the heritage and traditions which had served them well. They were abandoning their proper sphere of operation out of a blind pursuit to emulate their peers. Raffaino Caresini, a Venetian chancellor of the late fourteenth century voices this view: "the proper thing for Venice is to cultivate the sea and to leave the land alone."¹⁵

15. Quoted by Vittorio Lazzarini, "Antiche leggi venete intorno ai proprietari nella terraferma," Archivio Veneto, ser.3 XXXVIII (1920), p. 19.

The tensions between the stato da mar and the terraferma were to characterize Venetian politics for well over a century.

Whereas the stato da mar was viewed basically as a commercial and economic venture, the necessity for a sense of cohesion was minimal. Far-flung provinces of the Empire readily saw the advantage of alliance with Venice through increased economic advantage and security. With the terraferma though, the bases of unity with Venice could not be the same. The Venetian military power was naval power, and therefore of no use in the mountains around Bergamo or the plains of Padua. The cohesion of the lagoon city had been a natural phenomenon; that of the stato da mar was based upon practical advantage; but the cohesion of an enlarged Venice including parts of the terraferma was necessarily an artificial construction at best.¹⁶

The latter part of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth were to be difficult times for Venice as she faced crises on both the terraferma and the stato da mar. Venetians suddenly became aware of the tremendous build-up in Turkish naval power when Negroponte, the most important island in the Aegean trading system, was lost to the Turks in 1470. The threat remained as the Turks continued to advance around the Peloponnesus, taking Isonzo in 1472 and, most dramatically, Porto Longo in 1499. The news of the defeat at Porto Longo was not well received in Venice. Girolamo Priuli, a contemporary diarist speaks

16 Tenenti, op. cit., discusses the pre-emption of a commercial sense of space by a politico-military conception of space.

of the Venetian people at this time: "Faced by the Turkish threat, they are in a worse condition than slaves."¹⁷

The stato da mar was to undergo pressure from yet another direction. In July 1501, Portuguese caravels returned from India. The news of this newly discovered sea route to the Far East was met with mixed reactions. Some simply refused to believe the news. Others met it with a sense of deep depression, seeing this as much worse than defeat by the Turks or the possibility of the loss of the terraferma. The new sea route to India and the east meant the loss of Venetian pre-eminence as trader to the continent of Europe. It meant the breaking of a traditional economic base which had served the Venetians for centuries, and that the 'old world' view, whereby all would be well if only the Venetians held to their traditional role of trading, had become obsolete. "In the fifteenth century, Venice was the greatest merchant city in the world."¹⁸ But at the beginning of the sixteenth century, the basis for that greatness simply disappeared. The incredulity of the people at this turn of events can be noted in Venice's refusal of the offer by the Portuguese government to make the port of Lisbon the centre of the Venetian distributive networks. Tenenti points out that the refusal is a manifestation of the profoundly shocking nature of this turn of events by which Venice was torn from her patrimonial heritage, and was motivated by her reluctance to believe that such a fundamental change could occur and by her reluctance to discard her

17. Quoted in Tenenti, op. cit., p. 26.

18. Peter Burke, Tradition and Innovation in Renaissance Italy (Great Britain: Fontana/Collins, 1974), p. 305.

traditional way of life.¹⁹ The stato da mar was a troubled area indeed. What was not taken by the Turks was to be rendered useless by the discoveries of the Portuguese. The traditional source of wealth for Venice had, seemingly for no reason, been either taken by the Turks or wrenched completely out of the Mediterranean and transplanted into the Atlantic. "Fear and alarm..." says Tenenti, "are the words which best describe the atmosphere of the lagoon at the beginning of the sixteenth century."²⁰ To this we might add "despair".

The Turkish encroachment upon the mare nostrum of Venice continued with conquest after conquest throughout the sixteenth century, and the effects of this protracted relationship, which seemed to vacillate between rivalry and open enmity, were manifold for the Venetians. In the early part of the sixteenth century Venice received much of her grain supplies from the Ottoman empire, but with the rapidly growing population of Constantinople, that government was obliged to cut off her grain shipments to Venice in favour of the demands of her own capital in 1551. The 1569-73 war with Turkey was devastating to the Venetian textile industry as the Ottoman market was transferred to French textile manufacturers. The Ottoman market had represented the last staple of the Venetian textile industry, since the return of peace to the Italian peninsula after 1559 had meant that mainland manufacturing centres could re-open and resume supplying the European markets. The

19. Tenenti, op. cit., p. 31. Tenenti cites an entry, in 1509, in the Diarii of Sanudo which refers to the offer. The offer, thus would have been made sometime between 1501 and 1509--and I suspect closer to the former than the latter.

20. Ibid., p. 26.

Venetians were locked by necessity into a relationship with the Ottoman empire which was a source of trouble for the Republic throughout the sixteenth century.

Trouble, however, was not limited to the stato da mar. In 1509 the King of Spain, Louis XII of France, Pope Julius II, and the Hapsburg Maximilian allied with one another to form the League of Cambrai. Ostensibly to curtail any monarchical designs that the Venetians might have with respect to the peninsula, the League invaded Venetian territories on the mainland. Venice had fortified the outer cities of the Empire such as Brescia, Bergamo and Cremona; but considering the rest of the Empire safe if its outer edges were protected, had not fortified the inner cities such as Verona, Vicenza or Padua. Within a period of days, one could have stood upon the towers of Venice and seen the fires of battle across the lagoon. So desperate was the situation that, at one point, the Senate considered inviting the Turks to rescue them. The territories of the terraferma were lost to, and divided by, the members of the League. Indeed, "...the war of the League of Cambrai marked the end of Venice as a Great Power in Italy..."²¹ To the despair of the losses suffered in the stato da mar and the continued fear and alarm at the encroaching Turks, was added the disbelief at the loss of the terraferma. Sebastiano Giustinian, podesta of Brescia sets the tone:

21. William H. McNeill, Venice: The Hinge of Europe, 1081-1797. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 125.

"If an angel from heaven had said that the state of the Signoria would be lost in fifteen days, I would not have believed him."²² The territorial losses to the League were eventually recovered through what Libby characterizes as "a series of fortunate diplomatic accidents",²³ and indeed, an historical accounting of the actions between 1509 and 1515 leave one with the impression that the Venetians antedated the British in developing the art of "muddling-through".

The significance of the defeat of the Republic by the League at Agnadello in 1509 is a question of debate among scholars. Francesco Gaeta speaks of the war with the League of Cambrai as the "catalyst of the myth of Venice", and sees the war as responsible for its birth as well as its subsequent elaboration. Bouwsma also sees the war as one of a series of events which jolted Venice out of her "relatively inarticulate complacency"; and Libby states:

The same political events that destroyed the status of Venice as a great power helped to inaugurate the new career of the republic as a leading cultural center and an influential model of government for European political thought.²⁴

Those who pursue this argument go on to characterize the writings of the Venetian patriciate after 1509 as an attempt to restore the prestige of Venice amongst other European powers by pointing out that, although Venice had suffered her most significant defeat in her long history, she still retained her political institutions deserving of approbation.

22. Quoted in Tenenti, op. cit., p. 26.

23. Libby, op. cit., p. 7.

24. Gaeta, op. cit., p. 63. See William H. Bouwsma, Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 95; see Libby, op. cit., p. 7.

Other scholars, however, have attempted to discount the role of Agnadello in the fruition of the myth of Venice, pointing to the medieval and fifteenth century roots of that tradition and directing their concern toward earlier writers.²⁵ The most sophisticated treatment of the influence of these earlier writers is that offered by Frederic C. Lane, in which he explores the political thought contemporary with the formation of the basic features of the Venetian constitution.²⁶

Despite the scholarly disagreement regarding the significance of the defeat of Venice by the League of Cambrai, the important point is agreed upon by all--and that is that the development of Venetian political institutions long preceded the dominant rationale for, and adulation of, those institutions. The latter are phenomena of the post-Cambrai period, and are tied together in the 'myth of Venice'. More than anyone else, it is Gasparo Contarini who is credited with giving substance and form to the 'myth of Venice', and making palpable what had been a vague set of notions regarding the virtues and merits of the Republic.

25. See particularly Fasoli, op. cit., and Robey and Law, op. cit.

26. Lane, "Medieval Political Ideas and the Venetian Constitution," pp. 285-303.

III

The writers with which we shall deal come from a background of classical revival, conciliar failure, and particularism. Sabine characterizes the age in Italy as one of "blood and iron"²⁷ in which political power rested upon undisguised force. Allen echoes the sentiment and finds it influencing the political writings of the time: "Hardly any one of them [the numerous states in Italy] can be said to have possessed any sort of solid basis, moral or material. Venice stood firm almost alone."²⁸ And

any political thought produced in this Italy was likely to be completely dissociated with any kind of Christianity and completely detached from the thought of medieval schoolmen. The Protestant Reformation had yet to come; but Italy had already gone beyond.²⁹

The reason that the influences of Christianity and the medieval schoolmen were losing much of their power and cogency in Italy is that other traditions of thought were more often deemed to be applicable to the political realities of that "age of blood and iron". Traditions of thought do not simply lose their sway; they are supplanted by alternative manners of viewing and ordering experience which provide men with what they perceive to be a greater understanding of their world, and a better method of coping with their problems.

Among the dominant influences in the writings under examination--and, indeed, in the great bulk of Italian political thought in this

27. George H. Sabine, A History of Political Theory, Third Edition (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), p. 333.

28. Allen, op. cit., p. 466.

29. Ibid. One suspects that the 'break' is not as clear and distinct as Allen has portrayed it.

period--is the revival of classical political theory. It was, after all, Plato and Aristotle who spoke to the politics of the city-state, the most common political organization in the sixteenth century Italy.

A major aspect of the revival of classical political theory is the emphasis placed upon human reason, experience and observation as the prime sources of wisdom. Man is, in a sense, viewed as intellectually self-sufficient. It is within him that the potential for understanding, knowledge and wisdom reside; and in order to gain that knowledge or wisdom, he need only exercise his powers of observation and his faculty of reason. If man is viewed in this sense as intellectually self-sufficient, then we will find that the political writers under examination shall largely point to human experience as the touchstone of proof and of argument, rather than relying upon an external source such as scripture or Christian dogma.³⁰

One element of this earthly wisdom is the Aristotelian notion of nature as a pattern for men's behaviour and the construction of their institutions. Man may be independent in his quest for understanding, yet he must direct his powers of observation to something greater than himself to find a manner of ordering his world. It is nature which represents this perfection which is greater than man, and from which he may take his lessons. Above all, it provides the examples of a moderation of extremes, of a 'golden mean', which allowed for the

30. It is important, however, to keep in mind that this is one aspect of the influence of the pagan revival. It is not the hard and fast rule which Allen implies, but rather represents a general posture, largely dominant but not total.

encompassing of diverse elements. For those writers who cast Venice in the light of a mixed constitution, an Aristotelian conception of nature provided a ready argument, and perhaps as well, a motivation.

The epistemological link joining the patterns of nature to men's everyday existence is the notion of 'correspondences'. While the later mechanical conception of the universe looked to cause and effect, the general tendency in Renaissance Italy was to look for analogies, or correspondences. "The most famous of the correspondences was that between man, the 'microcosm' and the universe in general, the 'macrocosm'."³¹ Both were the creation of God, and one could gain insight into one phenomenon by studying the other. Further, the epistemological framework of correspondences, when coupled with the then dominant organic imagery of the universe, offered a set of patterns for man's activity and his political institutions. Contarini compares the Republic of Venice with the patterns infused into nature by God; Paruta finds a favourable comparison of the well-ordered commonwealth in the soul of man; and Bodin states that monarchy, the best form of government, finds a ready correspondence in nature.³²

Another aspect of this 'pagan revival' to inform the political thought with which we are concerned is the adoption of Aristotelian notions of perfection, and there are two elements to be considered here. The first is a perfection which is defined in terms of the full realization of potential. The civil society comes before man, for it is

31. Burke, op. cit., p. 209.

32. Bodin, op. cit., p. 271.

only within the civil society that man can achieve his perfection and become fully human. The civil society is of value, then, because it affords men the opportunity to achieve their potential. One of the dominant themes in the myth of Venice is that the Republic best provided men with that opportunity to achieve perfection.

The second element of this notion of perfection drawn from classical political theory is that of a hierarchical view of the relative nobility or perfection of different types of activity, objects and institutions. That hierarchy will be reflected in the place accorded to the civil society and the emphasis placed upon political activity. We find that unlike the conceptions of respublica christiana, politics in the republican writings of sixteenth century Italy, as in the classical writings, ranks relatively high upon the scale of virtuous and noble activities. These two elements are tied together in a notion of perfection, then, in that certain activities are deemed to be more appropriate to the nature of man because they represent a greater degree of perfection of that nature.

The pagan revival and its attendant humanism allowed for an increased focus upon the needs and capacities of man as an entity unto himself. Burckhardt has characterized this development of the Renaissance as one of increasing self-awareness, and a corollary of that awareness was the question of men's capacities.³³ The trend toward self-awareness

33. Jacob Burckhardt, The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy (New York: Harper & Row, 1929). See particularly Part II for a discussion of the role of the development of the non-distorting mirror in the process of increasing self-consciousness, see Burke, op. cit., p. 231.

was more than mere vanity, and a favorite subject of the era was the 'human condition'--a phrase made popular by the Italian Renaissance writers. Much of the literature on the human condition extols the dignity of man, and exhorts him to become more self-assertive, to realize his perfection. A myriad of what Peter Burke calls "self-assertion words" occur in the literature. Activity is exhorted on the basis of honour, glory, shame, envy, competition, valour and worth.³⁴ The interesting point here is that these non-tangible qualities are considered of great importance, and that they are inextricably tied to the concept of self-identification and identification among one's contemporaries. Activity, then, is seen as a form of identification and self-assertion.

What direction did that self-assertion take, and how did one get honour, or realize his potential for perfection? One of the great debates to characterize the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was that of the relative merits of the vita activa and the vita contemplativa, and for many writers the tension here remained unresolved. The nomenclature is, I believe, misleading; for the vita contemplativa was not viewed as 'non-activity' as the dichotomy would suggest. The vita contemplativa was no longer to be found only in the abbey and connected with sacred orders; but rather it was also seen as appropriate to the secular life in the country villa or in the city. It was a form of

34. Burke, op. cit., p. 231.

activity. The main pursuit of the vita contemplativa was a search for understanding, whether with a sacred or a secular bias. Both the vita activa and the vita contemplativa were seen as worthwhile forms of activity and self-assertion, and often by the same people. Paruta, as we shall see, never resolved the issue of the proper ordering of the two types of activity for himself.

The increased debate regarding the relative merits of the active and the contemplative life could only have come about through the re-definition of the vita contemplativa. The fact that it had lost its purely sacred bias is a reflection of the increased secularization of the Renaissance era. It is also reflective of the increased tension between the sacred and secular domains--an outgrowth of the failure of the conciliar movement.

The tension between the sacred and the secular is perhaps nowhere more evident than in Venice during this period. The two concepts found embodiment in the rivalry and enmity between the Republic on the one hand, and the Church and Papal States on the other. The tension was exacerbated because of the long Venetian tradition of independence from superior powers. Venetians viewed themselves as a people independent since the founding of the city in the fifth century and resented any attempted interference by what were considered "outsiders." Perhaps even more important is the fact that Venetians tended to view the Republic as being equal to the papacy. This sense is well expressed in the myth that the Republic had arranged a peace between Frederick Barbarossa and Pope Alexander III in 1177. According to the myth,

original efforts at arranging a peace had failed, and the pope had taken refuge in Venice. The Venetians entered the war on behalf of the pope and scored a major naval victory in which Barbarossa's son was taken hostage. He was sent as an emissary to his father, and finally convinced him to enter into a peace agreement. Throughout these proceedings a number of symbolic gifts were given to the Republic by the pope, among them the right to seal documents with lead, and a ring for the wedding of Venice to the sea. Of even greater significance though, was that the pope, against the objections of the emperor, had insisted that a third umbrella be produced for the doge that the three of them might sit as equals in counsel. The doge then came to be viewed, at least by the Venetians, as being equal to the pope and emperor, and the three of them were what Bouwsma calls "the three parallel potentates of Christendom."³⁵ The Republic, then, was viewed in some sense as not being part of the hierarchy of Christendom, but rather an equal of the papacy. When later attempts at interference were made by the papacy, they were met with strong resistance.

Rivalry and enmity between the Republic and the Church had much of its foundation in another myth, namely that St. Mark, through his ministry had planted Christianity in the lagoons of Venice. The myth was accepted by Rome as well as by the Venetians. The idea of an apostolic foundation gave Venice a sense of independence from Rome, and indeed the city was often viewed as a rival centre of Christendom.

35. Bouwsma, Venice and the Defence of Republican Liberty, p. 55. The significance of the ring, which is referred to often throughout much of the literature, is that it was a symbol of Venice's dominion over the Adriatic.

This independence had been recognized by the medieval papacy through its granting to the Venetian nobility the privilege of selecting ecclesiastical as well as secular administrators. For example, the appointment of a bishop in Venice was carried out in the following manner: First, the Senate would recommend a candidate to the doge. The doge would convey the nomination to the pope, and the pope would automatically confirm the candidate. This practice continued with legal sanction until 1510, when technically the bishop was appointed directly from Rome. The practice, in fact, went on much longer on a de facto basis. The ecclesiastical independence of the Venetian clergy from Rome made it much easier for the state administration to control that clergy. The tension between Venice and Rome concerning ecclesiastical matters is often largely rooted in a tension between the notions of the sacred and the secular realms and the prerogatives of the authority structures of each.

The tension between the sacred and the secular is evident in two areas. First, it is reflected in many of the writings of the era. We will find that tension in the writings of Fra Paolo Sarpi who sets about the task of defining the limits to which the Church may interfere in the lives of the citizens of the Republic. Given Sarpi's vocation, that tension in his writings could only reflect the tension between the two ideals in his own mind. Further, we find that tension reflected in the relations between the Republic and the papacy. Undoubtedly much of that tension was the result of the two rival political entities, but, as well, much of it revolved around the dying conception of a unified

Christendom overseen by the papacy, and the replacement of this ideal by that of an autonomous republic in which there was some notion, albeit rather vague, of the separation of Church and State.³⁶ In his Commentaries, composed between 1458 and 1463, Pius II, who seems to have been hostile to all republics, refers to the Venetians as "companions... of fish and comrades of marine monsters." He goes on:

They are hypocrites. They wish to appear Christians before the world but in reality they never think of God and, except for the state, which they regard as a deity, they hold nothing sacred, nothing holy. To a Venetian that is just which is for the good of the state; that is pious which is for the good of the empire....They are allowed to do anything that will bring them supreme power. All law and right may be violated for the sake of power.³⁷

Papal hostility to increasing secularism and encroaching political power of the Republic was not limited to vitriolic prose. Papal censure and the use of the interdict were still strong weapons during the Renaissance and they were used repeatedly against both Florence and Venice. Venice was placed under papal interdict in 1509, in 1601, and again in 1605.

Though much of the tension between the Republic and the papacy is a product of the rivalry between two secular political entities, a

36. The notion of a political entity with complete sovereignty over ecclesiastical affairs was less developed in Italy than in other parts of Europe in the sixteenth century, possibly due to two major factors. State control over ecclesiastical affairs was antithetical to the Catholic Church, but aided the cause of Protestantism in other countries. Further, the small Italian states were more subject to the hegemony of Papal armies simply because of their proximity. The idea of the state as encompassing control of ecclesiastical matters, then, was less cogent in Italy than elsewhere. See Ernest Barker, Principles of Social and Political Theory (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), pp. 13-17.

37. The Commentaries of Pius II, translated by Florence A. Gragg. Quoted in Bouwsma, Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty, p. 47.

strict sacred versus secular component may be detected. The Pope, as head of the Papal States, feared that the Republic might attempt a conquest of the peninsula and the establishment of monarchy. As head of the Papal States, his sovereignty might appear threatened. The Pope as head of the Catholic Church and, in some sense, the leader of Christendom, had other reasons for concern. That papal authority within the Republic was being challenged as it was in, say, the area of judicial authority, pointed to a diminution of the realm of ecclesiastic authority and the attempt at a clearer distinction between the secular and sacred realms. It was the assertion that there exist areas with which the Church might not properly interfere. Further, the assertion of power by the individual Republics was a direct denial of the ideals of the hierarchy and unity of Christendom which were embodied in the respublica christiana. Venice was often cast in the role of Christianity's first line of defense on the sea against the Turks; but Venice's acceptance of that role appeared unreliable in the face of the increasing antagonisms revolving around the issue of the extent to which the Church might control the lives of the citizens of the Republic, and the fact that the Venetian Senate had considered inviting the Turks to save them from the papal armies in 1509. While religious loyalties still clearly lay with the Roman Catholic Church, political loyalties did not. The fact that the two loyalties could be different at all was evidence that the unity of Christendom was no longer a tenable ideal. The distinction between religious and political was evidence that the distinction between sacred and secular was already being made.

The ecclesiastical rivalry and political enmity between Rome and Venice are reflective of the broader Renaissance bias in favour of what Bouwsma calls "intellectual pluralism."³⁸ The older notions of an integrated hierarchical cosmos were losing currency in favour of a view of knowledge whose fundamental precept was that truth was variable, flexible, and dependent upon circumstance. What was true in one given set of conditions need not be true given an alternate set of conditions. That which might be appropriate or proper for the citizen of the Papal States with its intimate connection with the hierarchy of the Church, its peculiar position as the secular extra-territorial domain of the Bishop of Rome, and later, its ultimate judicial system tied to the Sacred Roman Rota, was most often viewed, by the Venetians, as clearly inappropriate to the citizen of Venice who owed his allegiance to a Republic whose very essence was tied to the ideal of independence. The notions of the variability of reality had gone further in the Venetian experience than in any other Italian republic or principality. The Venetian trade experience had gone far in demonstrating the variability of manners, customs, law, and political organization. The activity of trade was based upon dealing with peoples of other cultures--people who did not

38. Bouwsma, Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty, p. 9.

recognize the ultimate truths of, say, the Roman Catholic Church, yet often appeared to live well-ordered and fruitful lives. As well, Venetian participation in the various crusades had done much to foster the sense of the variability of experience. The fabric of reality could no longer be viewed as one unbroken tapestry in which all of the particulars related to, and played an integral part in, a coherent theme of that tapestry. Rather, we seem to be faced with alternative tapestries, or more probably, something like a patchwork quilt conception of reality.

Both the geography of Venice and her role as trader to the continent tended to reinforce this spirit of variability and intellectual pluralism. Situated in the north, she had greater access to what one might call the intellectual intercourse of the era. Contact with the centres of central and northern Europe was much greater in Venice than in many of the more southern Italian cities. A relatively large number of foreign artists and writers came to Venice to work, and undoubtedly brought with them fresh ideas to be incorporated in, or used as alternative ways of perceiving reality. The sixteenth century was the century of Luther and Calvin, and Venice was not immune from their impact. Indeed, we often find reference to Protestant communities living on the edge of the lagoon. The earlier Venetian experience in the crusades, their role as traders plying between east and west, their long history of independence, and their relatively high degree of social intercourse with the northern centres of Europe all combined to reinforce the variance to be found in nature, and the view that nature was in some sense malleable. The great works of synthesis attempting to locate reality in an unbroken

chain from God to his lowliest creation might be viewed, not as otiose, but perhaps an inefficient way to gain understanding of the world in which men lived and worked. For example, the relationship between Natural Law and Eternal Law which occupied Aquinas appeared less relevant to the Venetian writers than the relationship between the jurisdiction of the civil courts of the Republic and the ecclesiastical courts. The question of jurisdiction (particularly for the Venetians) in the sixteenth century appears to revolve more often around the concept of territorial sovereignty than the concepts of canon versus civil law. Indeed, the concept of territorial sovereignty itself assumes variability within Christendom. The tension between a notion of a static, ordered conception of reality, and one of a variegated, particularist, and malleable reality is reflected in differences between the ideals of the respublica christiana and those of the Renaissance republics.

We find this spirit of particularism among the characteristics of much of the political writing of the period. The universalist notions of a united Europe roughly coinciding with a united Christendom had largely lost their sway with the failure of the conciliar movement. The writings of the sixteenth century period reflect the tendency away from these universalist notions and a concentration upon smaller, more immediate political concerns. Given this tendency toward particularism, it was necessary that the areas of prime consideration also change--that the essence of politics be viewed differently. The great bulk of early christian and medieval political theory--from Seneca to Aquinas--

had been rooted in theology--its basic premises revolved around the nature of God, man's relationship to God, and the moral obligations imposed upon man by God. Indeed, these sorts of considerations continued to hold sway throughout much of Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But Italy, for a number of reasons, seems to have been the exception. Here, the basic questions more often concerned the circumstances and the past actions of men, rather than the more abstract relationship of man to the Almighty. Ultimate questions were eschewed in favour of the observations and experience of actual circumstance.³⁹ Indeed, J. W. Allen points out, "Theology had vanished from Italian universities; law, medicine, the classics and a philosophy that owed nothing to the schoolmen, reigned in its stead."⁴⁰

IV

The Renaissance was a period of growth and diffusion for the Italian language, and while Latin retained much of its status in judicial affairs, Italian increasingly became the working language of the

39. See John Plamenatz, Man and Society (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1963), Chapter I.

40. Allen, op. cit., pp. 445-46. Allen perhaps has once again overstated his point here.

government and of political writers.⁴¹ A number of concepts used in the works to be examined need clarification.

The most important of these somewhat ambiguous concepts is that of lo stato, or what we have come to translate as "the state". The medieval notion of status and its various European forms--lo stato, l'etat, der Staat--seems to have undergone a transition in meaning during the period with which we are concerned. Hexter has undertaken an exhaustive study of the term in his work on Machiavelli and concludes that it was not used in its modern sense in any of the Western European languages at the beginning of the fifteenth century; but by the seventeenth century it was frequently used in its modern sense in all of them.⁴² Between 1400 and 1600 then, we must take into account a shift in the connotation of the term lo stato, and keep in mind both medieval and modern notions of that term.

The medieval notion of status (and its Italian equivalent lo stato) was one which was based upon the political reality of the time, i.e., it blended both the sense of social and political. Hexter delineates two

41. The problem of the translation of words (and the ideas contained in those words) is mitigated, however, by the fact that the Italian language of the sixteenth century was much more highly developed than, say, the English language of the sixteenth century; i.e., there is a greater similarity between the language of sixteenth century Italy and modern Italian than there is between sixteenth century and modern English.

42. See J. H. Hexter, The Vision of Politics on the Eve of the Reformation: More, Machiavelli and Seyssel (London: Allen Lane, 1973), Chapter III.

medieval notions of status, both of which combine the social and political. The first of these is the status of the prince which in effect, was a defining body of obligations and privileges. The prince was most often viewed as fulfilling a calling from God and that calling was to rule over his subjects. The tools with which he was to perform his task comprised his status, which consisted of his rights, duties, obligations and privileges. These things defined what the prince did, and therefore came to be identified with the government of the principality. It is within the prerogative or estate of princes to govern principalities, and this by virtue of their status.

The second medieval notion of status is much the same, except that rather than being tied to the individual in the person of the prince, it is tied to the principality itself. Given the variations and convolutions of feudal allegiance patterns cities and principalities came to develop their own status, and the term often referred to the body politic and "...its fundamental condition, its constant ordering, its constitution..."⁴³ The prime difference here is one of focus. The first notion focuses on the ruler and by what means he rules, while the second notion focuses on the order and way of life of the ruled.

Opposed to these medieval notions of "the state", we have a modern connotation of the state which is based upon an initial separation of political and social. The separation can be perhaps best exemplified by the fact that in modern English usage we most often speak of "status"

43. Ibid., p. 155.

in a non-political sense. We use the word frequently in terms of a social position and have no reference to legal obligations and privileges. In a medieval context, this simply would not have made sense: "status" was inextricably tied to the political notions involved in an arrangement of legal rights, privileges, duties and obligations.⁴⁴

Federico Chabod's analysis of the term stato in sixteenth century Italian works suggests that the term is much closer to our own connotations than to a medieval conception.⁴⁵ Like Hexter, he points to the division between governor and governed, stating that the term stato can refer to the ruler, or it can refer to the territory and/or people over which the ruler holds dominion. Drawing upon the writings of Paruta however, Chabod identifies a third element in the sixteenth century connotation of lo stato. This element is one of a form, or type, of

44. Indeed, the fact that we most often use the term 'status' in a social sense, rather than political, lends credence to Arendt's argument that the political sphere is in danger of being subsumed by the social sphere. See Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition (Anchor Books edition; Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959), pp. 35-60. See also Raymond Williams, Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 251-2. See Barker, op. cit., pp. 11-15, for a discussion of the interconnections between 'social' and 'political'. See also Alexander Passerin d'Entreves, The Notion of the State: An Introduction of Political Theory (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp. 86-88; Wallace K. Ferguson, "Toward the Modern State," in The Renaissance, edited by the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), pp. 26-27; Joseph R. Strayer, On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), Chapter II and III; and Robert Ergang, Emergence of the National State (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1971), Chapters I and II, and pp. 163-66.

45. See Federico Chabod, Scritti sul Rinascimento (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1967), pp. 625-650. See also Nicolai Rubinstein, "Notes on the Word Stato in Florence before Machiavelli", in Rowe and Stockdale, op. cit., pp. 314-26.

"public activity or political action" identified with the regime.⁴⁶

The identification of stato with a way of acting or a manner of political action is significant for it points to the importance of the political institutions and laws regulating that political action--and it is no coincidence that Chabod finds this connotation of the term in the writings of a Venetian; for perhaps the most important element of the myth of Venice was the emphasis placed upon the laws and institutions which regulated political action.

Machiavelli is most often credited with giving lo stato its modern connotation. Its usage throughout the sixteenth century is inconsistent and it is well to keep in mind the tension between the medieval and modern notions of lo stato. We should expect that the term throughout the sixteenth century has a strong social component. Peter Burke gets at the same point by stating its converse: "But there was a strong political consciousness and men saw what we call 'social' in terms of political."⁴⁷ The terms repubblica, città and principato are forms of lo stato, and share in this coalescence of the political and social. We shall encounter this 'social' element in the politics of Patrizi and Agostini.

Like the notion of the 'state' and its various forms, the notion of patria suffers in translation and modern usage. Most often translated as 'fatherland', we have come to be suspicious of the term, regarding it as a sham ideal used to camouflage greed and xenophobia. In its older

46. Ibid., p. 645.

47. Burke, op. cit., p. 221.

sense though, the notion of patria is much more than that of merely the land of one's birth. Above all, perhaps, the notion of patria embodies the ideal of 'belonging' or citizenship. It embodies a sense of birthright by which the citizen shares in the legacy (or patrimony) of the past.

In the sixteenth century we find evidence of two notions of patria--one dominant and the other but nascent. The dominant notion of patria was city-based. One 'belonged' to Florence or Venice or Milan, or another local political entity. One's political identity was defined in terms of his relation to that political grouping, and by the constitution of that political structure. To belong to Venice, for instance, meant something quite different than to belong to Florence. The fundamental ordering of the Venetian constitution provided the individual with a set of beliefs about himself and his relationship to the larger society. The degree to which these beliefs operated in the minds of men is pointed to by Chabod when he characterizes the notion of patria as one of passion, sentiment and moral force.⁴⁸

Aside from this dominant city-based notion of patria, we find evidence of the term being applied to the larger community of a not specifically defined "Italy" in the sixteenth century. Machiavelli's passionate plea, in the final chapter of The Prince, for a liberator of Italy to cast out the barbarians evidences this larger notion of patria. We find in the literature of the sixteenth century, then, that the term most often refers to the identity provided by membership in the city-

48. Ibid., p. 658.

based political regimes; but there are also numerous instances wherein patria refers to a greater community of "Italians"--however that term might be defined.⁴⁹

Aside from stato and patria, there are other concepts which are less obviously political, yet which have a direct bearing upon how politics is conceived by the writers we shall examine. We cannot gain an understanding of the nature of politics for these writers unless we can understand these underlying concepts. The first of these, the concept of history, cannot be disentangled from the shifting perceptions in time which were wrought by the increased production and diffusion into society of the clock.

Prior to the mid-fifteenth century the use of clocks had been limited to weight-driven mechanisms, and for the most part these were both large and costly, and limited to use on civic buildings or churches where a large number of people combined to defray the enormous costs involved. The primary impetus to these cumbersome devices was one of civic pride, as the clock had become something of a civic status symbol. In the mid-fifteenth century the use of the spring as a motive force for the clock came into being, thus paving the way for smaller, more portable, and less expensive clockworks. By the sixteenth century, domestic clocks and watches had become more widespread.⁵⁰

49. See ibid., pp. 656-59. The concepts of patria and patrimony are still forceful considerations in Italian culture. All too often, the modern scholar underestimates their power.

50. For a brief history of the development of the clock and clockmakers, see Carlo Cipolla, Clocks and Culture 1300-1700 (London: Collins 1967). See also J. R. Hale, Renaissance Europe: The Individual and Society, 1480-1520 (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971), Chapter I, and E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism," in Past and Present, Vol. 38 (1967), pp. 56-97.

The significance of this development is profoundly important. The shift from 'task-oriented time' to 'clock-time' represents a shift from a cyclical to a linear notion of time. As long as the passage of time is marked by the recurrence of periodic activity, the progress of time can best be viewed as cyclical---whether men are measuring short spans of time such as those demarcated by mealtimes, longer periods such as those marked by seasonal harvests or plantings, or even greater time spans such as were marked by the rise and fall of empires. Perhaps the most salient feature of a cyclical notion of time is the limitations which are placed upon the range of possibilities for the future. The future holds that which has gone before, as past experiences are archtypically repeated. If the passage of time is viewed in such a manner, then the study of history takes on a special significance. The past is, then, composed of a group of experiences which will make up the future as those experiences are repeated.

The infusion of 'clock-time' into man's conception of the passage of time, however, brings with it an alternative mode of perceiving that passage. The future need not be conceived in terms of the repetition of tasks, activities, or phenomena which had been part of the past. It can be addressed in terms which go beyond the limitations of past experience. To speak of the future need not be to speak of yesterday, and the special significance accorded to history within a cyclical notion of time might give way to other sources of wisdom with regard to that future.⁵¹

51. For a discussion of the ramifications of a shift in perceptions of time with regard to the future, see Pierre Bourdieu, "The attitude of the Algerian peasant toward time," in Mediterranean Countrymen, edited by Julian Pitt-Rivers (Paris: Mouton, 1963).

The shift from 'task-oriented time' to 'clock-time' also allows for greater calculation and planning of that time. Time can be viewed as something akin to money (though we are not yet at the point of Franklin's 'time is money'), something that can be used, spent, wasted, and saved. It is something to be used in a rational and calculated manner. The calculation and measuring of time for its own sake is of marginal importance, but the fact that it touched the lives of the men of the period and allowed for a planning of that time, is of significance for us. The fifteenth century humanist Giannozzo Manetti makes the point. He is quoted by Vespasiano da Bisticci as being in the habit of saying:

"Of the time which is given us in this life we must give an account of every moment," basing his argument on a text in the Gospel which declares that Almighty God is like the master of a business who gives money to his treasurer and requires him to render an account as to how it may have been spent. So God wills that when a man quits this life he shall account for how he has spent his time, even to the glance of an eye.⁵²

The shift in perceptions of the passage of time wrought by an increased utilization of the clock brings with it its own problems. If men are able to measure, calculate and plan time (as the notions of 'spending' or 'saving' time would suggest), then we have a recognition of the linear nature of that time. The notions of planning and calculation,

52. The account is taken from Vespasiano da Bisticci, Vite di nomini illustri. Quoted in Burke, op. cit., p. 236. Cf. similar attempts to portray the utilization of time as a moral duty in Thompson, op. cit., particularly pp. 86-89.

though, presume a certain degree of predictability about the future-- but that predictability is, in a sense, decreased by the shift from cyclical to linear time. While the clock might allow men to plan and calculate their future with a greater degree of specificity, it also diminishes a sense of predictability by supplanting a notion of that future which is composed of past experiences.

Like the concepts of stato and patria, the concept of time was undergoing a transition during the sixteenth century. The shift to a linear conception of time is not total in this period, and the manner in which the passage of time is viewed has a profound effect upon the conception of history. Amongst these writers we shall find time treated in both manners, and, consequently, different emphases placed upon the value of history.

Another concept to be employed in this work is that which I have elected to term a 'moral endeavour'. The revival of Aristotelian political ideals to speak to the sixteenth century Italian city-state brought with it a new way of viewing political life and civil society. The emphasis upon the realization of man's full potential as the goal or end of political life gave new breath to the older notion of the polis. The polis represented the forum in which man could become fully human and achieve his perfection, and it is this which was the final justification of political life. We find this conception resurrected amongst Venetians of the sixteenth century as they sought to portray the Republic as that civil society which best afforded men the opportunity to achieve their perfection.

The two writers to be examined who treat politics in this manner portray man's perfection in terms of a morality which is attainable only in the civil society. In doing so, they have coupled the Aristotelian notion of the realization of man's potential with a perfection defined in terms of classical Christian morality. For them, politics is most appropriately viewed as an endeavour by which man achieves his perfection; and that perfection is the realization of his moral nature.

The last concept to be used in this study and standing in need of clarification as to its sixteenth century connotations is that of 'management' and its variants--manager, manage, managerial. We are interested here in its connection with specifically political activity and, therefore, shall not explore all of its other connotations and uses. There are two key elements of 'management' as it relates to politics in the sixteenth century. The first of these is that of leadership with respect to a public activity; and here the important variants of the term are manéggio and maneggiatóre (or its feminine form, maneggiatrice).⁵³ The Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana cites Sanudo, Machiavelli, Guicciardini and Sarpi among others to evidence the use of manéggio (management) to characterize the "government, command, direction (of an army, of a community, of an institution); the running, conduct, administration (of an undertaking, of a public or private matter)." Further, we are told that management is an "activity, operation, practice inherent

53. For this and what follows, see the Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana, Vol. IX, s.v. manéggio and maneggiatóre.

in the direction or administration of a community, of an institution, of a public or private office, etc.--in particular: the practice of government." (emphasis added) Again, Sanudo, Guicciardini, Aretino and Sarpi stand out among the writers of this era to employ the term in this sense. There is, then, the element of leadership; and we see that leadership is exercised in terms of command and direction. The disparity of authority inherent in the notion of command and direction is more pronounced when we seek to find out who are the managers. Giovanni Botero, who refers to the prince as the "manager of the people", is cited by the Grande Dizionario to tell us that the manager is "one who exercises the government, the guidance, the dominion over another."

To manage is something more than simply to command or direct however, and a second element is integral to the sixteenth century notion of management. This second element informs us of the nature of that command and direction. It is one of the realization of a purpose through organization, practical usage, and exploitation.⁵⁴ Management is a planned activity, the specifics of which are dictated by the considerations of 1) the purpose of the institutions or endeavour; and 2) the environment or setting in which that endeavour takes place. The purpose or end of an institution is given, and to manage the affair is to organize matters in such a manner as to reach that goal.

This second element, however, is characteristic of the management of a great many activities in the sixteenth century--from the handling of horses to the navigation of rivers. What of its political content? Is the concept used to speak to specifically political phenomena? We have seen that Botero, at least, views the activities of the prince as

54. Ibid., s.v. maneggiare.

those of a manager. Further, he speaks of civil justice as an activity of management. Indeed, the characterization of the administration of justice and the exercise of judicial power by the term 'management' was sufficiently popular in sixteenth century Italy to merit a separate entry in the Grande Dizionario although the term is now obsolete in this sense. We find that cittadini, likewise, are an entity to be managed. Most telling, however, is the usage of the term 'managed' to indicate governed with reference to the civil society.⁵⁵

The important point, however, is not simply whether we can find evidence of the term 'management' being used in sixteenth-century Italian to characterize political activity. We have done this, and it simplifies our task greatly. The more important point is whether or not the concept represented by that term is appropriate to that era. The sixteenth-century notion of 'management' is very close to our modern English connotations of that term, and this further simplifies our task. The salient difference between the two is that the former appears to be more often connected with political matters than the latter. The term 'management' apropos of the writings which we shall examine, then, connotes a leadership which is directive in nature, and which focuses that direction in terms of the practical utilization and exploitation of the civil society for the purposes for which it was founded.

55. Ibid., s.v. maneggiato.

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V

We have sketched the historical and philosophical context within which the Venetian political writers of the sixteenth century lived and worked. As we have seen, the picture is not one of definitive lines and discrete forms but rather, more often, it takes the form of an overlapping and often contradictory collage. Philosophic activity most often follows, rather than precedes, activity in the religious, social, political and economic spheres of life. It is the attempt to bring unity and coherence to experience. As Michael Oakeshott points out, the ideas which we form of an activity are to a large degree based upon our experiences of a manner of behaviour associated with that activity. They are a product of reflection upon the manner in which people are "...accustomed to go about the business of attending to the arrangements of their societies"⁵⁶ and those reflections cannot take place prior to the activity. The Renaissance was a period of relatively rapid and fundamental change, and the philosophical milieu of the period reflected this dominant characteristic. Given an historical sketch and an understanding of the milieu of the time, our task is to investigate three alternative conceptions of politics surrounding sixteenth century Venice and to demonstrate how the ideals of the Venetian Republic were

56. Michael Oakeshott, "Political Education", in Philosophy, Politics and Society, edited by Peter Laslett (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956), p. 8.

employed to inform those conceptions. To do this, we shall examine the works of five writers who develop, amplify and utilize what has come to be termed the myth of Venice. Their notions of what we gain from participation in the political life are different, as are their conceptions of the most effective manner to gauge and judge actions in the political sphere. They pose different ends for the political life, and differing means to achieve those ends. The disparity amongst the writers is based upon fundamental differences in the conceptions of politics; and three separate bases for political action are to be found in these five writers. Yet all of these writers have drawn upon the experience and reputation of the Venetian republic. We shall be concerned here with the extension and amplification of the myth of Venice to speak to three alternative conceptions of politics.

To gain a fuller understanding of the political thought represented by the works of these men, it is necessary to investigate these three distinct conceptions of politics. For the purpose of investigating the political thought of an era or a given historical setting we must look beyond those thinkers noteworthy because they were anomalies, to the works of more representative thinkers; for in the history of ideas, these men often prepared the ground for those great 'ground-breakers' who populate our texts in the history of political thought. There is much to be learned from these thinkers who attempted to explore, portray, and extend the ramifications of current dominant political ideals.

The first writer to be dealt with in our work is Gasparo Contarini, the great synthesizer of the myth of Venice. Contarini bases

his political writings upon a detailed awareness (but not necessarily 'understanding') of the institutions and practices of the Venetian past, and views this awareness as requisite to successful political action. His work is of the city-description genre, and finds the rationale for the longevity and stability of the Venetian republic in the excellence of her political institutions which the founding fathers had wisely constructed after the patterns offered by nature. His work is primarily of significance in that it offered a concrete expression of the reputation of Venice as a model polity and sought to locate the bases of that greatness. Myron Gilmore sums up the significance of Contarini:

...Contarini reflects perfectly the views of the Venetian patrician class especially in the period after the successful recovery from the period of the attacks of the League of Cambrai and the battle of Agnadello. He provided in its most developed version the idealized Venetian constitution, the elements of which were the exaggerated claims of the longevity, stability and independence of Venice, the theory of the mixed constitution and the conviction that not only the citizens who composed the Great Council but all the inhabitants participated in the good life which the Republic offered. He is above all the expositor of the myth of the Venetian constitution.⁵⁷

As the expositor of a cluster of ideals which was extended, modified and utilized by later scholars then Contarini provides a foundation for our own investigation.

Secondly, we shall deal with the writings of Paolo Paruta and Fra Paolo Sarpi, and attempt to see how the ideals embodied in the myth of

57. Gilmore, "Myth and Reality in Venetian Political Theory", p. 434.

Venice were used by these men to inform their political writings and to portray an alternative conception of politics. These men view politics as a moral endeavour and tied to the attainment of a virtuous life for the individual. Gilmore alludes to the linkage of these later writers with the tradition developed by Contarini: "Systematized by Contarini, the myth continued with some modifications to command the allegiance of the Venetians as an argument for republicanism throughout the period of Paruta and Sarpi..."⁵⁸

Finally, we shall examine the works of two utopian political writers who draw upon the reputation of Venice to inform their respective models of the ideal society. Ludovico Agostini and Francesco Patrizi drew upon other intellectual traditions and influences as well; but of significance for us is the fact that elements of the myth of Venice are used to portray yet a third alternative conception of politics.

58. Ibid., p. 439.

CHAPTER II

Politics as the Lessons of History: Gasparo Contarini

I

One cannot properly speak of the myth of Venice without dealing with Gasparo Contarini's De Magistratibus et republica Venetorum,¹ "...the most celebrated work ever composed on the Venetian government."² The greatest significance of the myth of Venice was that the Republic served as a model for imitation; and Contarini's is the central place in the development of the ideas embodied in the myth. Indeed, "one can say that with Contarini the process was perfected by which Venice

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1. The edition used here is Gasper Contareno, The Commonwealth and Government of Venice, translated by Lewes Lewkenor (London: Iohn Windet for Edmund Mattes, 1599).
 2. Libby, op. cit., p. 17. Fasoli, op. cit., and Robey and Law, op. cit., have utilized the myth of Venice to provide a framework for their discussions of earlier writers and have ignored Contarini and those who came after him. In so doing, they have ignored the culmination and extension of ideas embodied in the myth of Venice, and have thus ignored the significance of the concept itself.

of the sixteenth century replaced Rome as the terms of political imitation."³

De republica offers the most systematic and complete articulation of the ideas contained in the myth of Venice which were characteristic of the Venetian particiate in the sixteenth century. Gilmore states that

These ideas existed in a somewhat unformulated way in the consciousness of the Venetian patricians and they found occasional expression in the ambassadors' reports.⁴

Contarini brings those ideas together and fashions them into an integrated political theory which served as a normative model for a good number of other political writers. Further, Contarini's De republica is a paradigmatic example of a conception of politics as the lessons of history and the work exemplifies one of the conceptions of politics with which we shall deal. It offers us a notion of the scope of government through a portrayal of various Venetian political institutions and activities. It tells us what types of activities, issues, problems and purposes the Venetian statesmen viewed as appropriate to the political realm; and it gives us a context within which to place the works of other writers of the period. It provides, moreover, a systematic

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3. Gaeta, op. cit., p. 65. Oliver Logan, Culture and Society in Venice: 1470-1790 (London: B. T. Batsford, 1972), p. 5, echoes this view of the significance of Contarini as the most eminent proponent of Venice as a model political society: "With Contarini came the perfection of the myth; Venice was superior even to ancient Athens and Rome."
 4. Gilmore, "Myth and Reality in Venetian Political Theory", pp. 433-34.

articulation of those ideas which were utilized and modified by later Venetians to portray alternative conceptions of politics.

As a family, the Contarini of Venice are perhaps unique. They surface continually as prominent figures in any history of Renaissance Venice. Further, they were also the most ambitious chroniclers of Venetian history. Although not closely related in terms of kinship or accomplishment, the prominent figures of this family seem to share, as a common focus, a passionate interest in Venetian history and historiography. Alviso was appointed official historian to the Republic in 1577; Nicolo held that post prior to his election as doge in 1630. Jacopo Contarini was chosen to plan the redecoration of the Great Council chamber after the fires of 1574 and 1577 on the basis of his extensive knowledge of the history of the Republic. Tomaso Contarini directed his efforts towards an analysis of the position of Florence, and the role of the Medici and the papacy in the destruction of Florentine freedom; and Pier'Maria Contarini's Compendio universal di repubblica appears to be a defense of aristocratic government based upon classical history.

Gasparo Contarini began his studies at the University of Padua at the age of eighteen in 1501, and here he encountered two major philosophical influences which coloured his work and thought. His studies in Aristotle and Aquinas provided him with a philosophical background which could accommodate the competing loyalties and tensions to be experienced in his own life.⁵ The war with the League of Cambrai forced the temporary closure of the University in 1509, and Contarini returned to Venice and

5. On the dual influence of Aristotle and Aquinas, see Logan, op. cit., pp. 52-54; and Felix Gilbert, "Religion and Politics in the Thought of Gasparo Contarini", in Action and Conviction in Early Modern Europe, edited by Theodore K. Rabb and Jerrold E. Seigel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 102-110.

embarked upon a self-imposed programme of study between 1509 and 1511. He came to rely heavily upon two friends, Tommaso Giustiniani and Vincenzo Quirini, for guidance and reinforcement.⁶ Giustiniani was Contarini's elder by seven years and, to a degree, served as his spiritual mentor. In December 1510 Giustiniani entered the Camaldolese order, and nine months later Quirini followed his example. The denial of the demands of family, friends, and patria by Giustiniani was made all the more poignant by the timing of Quirini's decision to embark upon the eremitic life of the Camaldolese order. He had recently been entrusted with diplomatic tasks on behalf of the Venetian government and seemed to be at the beginning of a rising political career.⁷ The actions of his two friends provoked within Contarini an identity crisis which the historian, Oliver Logan, characterizes as parallel to that of Luther.⁸ This crisis revolved around the competing demands of family, friends and patria on the one hand, and the promise of salvation offered by the cloistered spiritual life on the other.

6. For an extensive description of this triad see J. B. Ross, "Gasparo Contarini and His Friends", in Studies in the Renaissance, XVII, 1970.

7. Gilbert, op. cit., p. 93.

8. Logan, op. cit., p.15. See Erik Erikson, Young Man Luther (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1958); and Heinrich Boehmer, Martin Luther: Road to Reformation (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1957), Part One.

Although foregoing the monastery, it appears that Contarini exhibited much the same degree of personal rigour and discipline normally associated with monastic life. His self-imposed programme of study appears to be a step in that direction of planned self-discipline. Further, in 1512, he undertook a private vow of celibacy. He appears, then to have adopted a lifestyle which one might term a "civic" or "secular monasticism" which minimized external demands, yet did not isolate him from family and friends. Between the years of 1520 and 1534 he held a number of ambassadorships; and in 1534 he ascended to the position of cardinal and became "...perhaps the most powerful member of the reforming group at the papal court."⁹

De magistratibus et republica Venetorum was written during Contarini's period of intense political activity between 1520 and 1534. There is much confusion as to the actual date (or dates) of composition. Our best source of information here appears to be the historian Felix Gilbert, and his conclusions are in the form of an either/or proposition.¹⁰ If the manuscript was written during the 1520's, then it was revised in the early thirties to take account of more recent developments. However Gilbert states that because of Contarini's personal working habits, it

9. Logan, op. cit., p. 15. See also, Hubert Jedin, "Gasparo Contarini e il contributo veneziano alla riforma cattolica," in La civiltà veneziana del rinascimento (Florence: Sansoni, 1958).

10. See his "The Date of Composition of Contarini's and Gianotti's Books on Venice", in Studies in the Renaissance, XIV (1967).

is more plausible to believe that, while sections of the work were written during the twenties, the work was not completed until the 1530's. Gilmore concurs with Gilbert's latter position, and argues that the first four books were composed in 1523-24 while Contarini served as ambassador to Charles V, and that the fifth and final book was not composed until 1531.¹¹ Another time lapse ensued before the work was first published in Paris in 1543.

Contarini's work has most often been viewed as a response to the events surrounding the Venetian war with the League of Cambrai--either in terms of explaining the genesis of Venice's defeat, restoring a damaged prestige, or explaining Venetian recovery from the losses to the League. Libby, for example, identifies Contarini as one of a circle of Venetian patriotic humanist writers responsible for the development of the myth of Venice and concerned with the restoration of Venice's reputation:

After 1515, the Venetian patriciate devoted increasing attention to literary projects intended to restore the damaged prestige of the state by presenting the republic as an ideal political society, a conception which contemporary historians have called the 'Venetian myth'.¹²

There is, however, no direct evidence to indicate that Contarini's work was motivated by such considerations; and the work, in its entirety, appears to be directed at the Venetian patriciate themselves, advocating

11. Gilmore, "Myth and Reality in Venetian Political Theory," p. 431.

12. Libby, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8. See also pp. 22, 24.

a return to practices embodied in Venice's ancient constitution.

J. G. A. Pocock has characterized this tradition of political discourse which is directed toward demonstrating the ancient and traditional roots of a given constitution as one of 'constitutional antiquarianism', and goes on to point out that this tradition has served different purposes for different writers. Contarini's work can be viewed within this context, and it would appear that his motivation was that "...the ancient constitution had kept the people happy for centuries and should accordingly be retained, or restored, as the case might be."¹³ We shall see this theme continually borne out as we view De republica. The crises of Cambrai may well have played an integral role in moving Contarini to set pen to paper, but only in the sense that Cambrai represented the consequences of deviation from Venetian tradition.

Contarini's portrayal of Venice as the ideal political society in De republica draws upon a number of intellectual traditions and influences. Bouwsma characterizes the work as a "...portrait of static perfection..." whose argument is based upon "...an uneasy blend of Aristotelian common-places with the Venetian political myth...and the entire amalgam is occasionally modified by considerations drawn from his long period of personal experience."¹⁴ As we turn to this 'amalgam' we shall attempt to discern dominant influences in Contarini's work, to explore the myth of Venice as a model political society, and to portray Contarini's conception of politics as the lessons of history.

13. J. G. A. Pocock, The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), p. 21. See also pp. 17-18.

14. Bouwsma, Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty. p. 145.

II

Contarini opens his work by noting that strangers travelling to Venice marvel at a number of outstanding characteristics of the city. Some are impressed by the commodity of trade, or the greatness of the empire. Some note the fact that the city is the cross-roads of so many foreign peoples. Still others wonder at the site of the city which combines the defensive inaccessibility characteristic of the hilltop towns on the mainland, with the easy access for trade. Contarini goes on to point out that while these are all admirable characteristics of the city, a more important aspect of the city and the Republic is often overlooked.

But which is more, since those times...from the first building thereof, even until this time, being now a thousand and one hundred years, it hath preserved itself free and untouched from the violence of any enemies, though being most opulent and furnished, aswell of gold and silver, as of all things that might, yea even from the farthest parts of the world allure the Barbares to so rich a bootie and spoile.¹⁵

Beyond the longevity and independence of the commonwealth, Venice deserved recognition because of her realization of the purpose of civil life. Cities, Contarini remarks, are more than walls and houses, and Venice had accomplished the greater end of civil life.

...and this is the true reason, manner & forme of commonwealths, through which men enjoy a happie and quiet life: This is the rare and excellent thing, wherein Venice seemeth to shine, and to surpass all antiquities, for though it is apparent that there hath been many commonwealths, which have farre exceeded Venice as well in empire and

15. Contarini, op. cit., p. 5

greatness of estate, as in militarie discipline
and glory of the wars: yet hath there not beene
any, that may be paragond with this of ours, for
institutions & lawes prudently decreed, to establish
unto the inhabitantes a happie and prosperous
felicities...¹⁶

We have, in Contarini's introductory remarks then, the assertion of two elements of the Venetian myth--the longevity of the Republic, and laws wisely formulated--and Contarini ties these two elements together as he moves through his narrative.

Having opened the treatise with the observation of the Commonwealth's longevity, and this bold assertion of the inimitable quality of life within the Commonwealth, Contarini moves to explore the basis of that greatness and those courses of action which must be pursued if Venice is to retain her position of pre-eminence in providing that "happie and prosperous felicitie" which he sees as the hallmark of the Republic.

The genesis of Venetian greatness was, for Contarini, the wisdom and self-sacrificing of her founding fathers. He often extols the virtue of the early Venetians much in the tone of a lamentation for a past Golden Age: "...I am wont greatly to wonder at the wisdom of our ancestors, at their industry, the virtue of their minds, & their incredible love and charity towards their country."¹⁷ Or, again,

But our ancestors, from whome wee have receyved
so flourishing a commonwealth, all in one did
unite themselves in a consenting desire to establish,
honour, and amplifie their country without having in
a manner any the least regarde of their own private
glorie or commodity.¹⁸

16. Ibid., pp. 5-6.

17. Ibid., p. 6.

18. Ibid.

To reinforce his point regarding the selflessness of the Venetian ancestry, and the fact that they were more concerned with public good than private interest in comparison with noblemen elsewhere, he cites the lack of personal monuments in the city, and the prolific construction of palazzi with the ideal in mind of the beautification of the city.¹⁹

This wisdom and self-sacrificing nature of the Venetian founding fathers was part of the patrimony in which every Venetian shared, not through some abstract ideal of participation in tradition, as much as through the utilization and continued functioning of a concrete set of institutions and procedures by which decisions were made, leaders selected, and courses of action taken. For example, in his discussion of criminal judgements, Contarini speaks of "...two statutes wisely enacted by our ancestors" which provided the best opportunity for an accurate and impartial judgement. The first was a provision that judgement was to be made by a council of judges rather than a single individual; and the second allowed for the opinion of each judge to be made known through secret ballot in order that the judges might not be swayed by possible social repercussions of a judgement nor motivated by considerations of personal ambition.²⁰ For Contarini, the unparalleled

19. While Contarini's point regarding the absence of personal monuments in the city is well taken, his position regarding the construction of a palazzo as an act for the beautification of the city rather than personal aggrandizement may appear less tenable to the modern mind. This same mechanism of honour through contribution to the patria via the construction of sumptuous buildings is also found in the early Roman Empire.

20. Contarini, op. cit., pp. 92-93.

wisdom and virtue of the founding fathers had become institutionalized in the constitution, and it was through the utilization of these institutions that the citizens were participants in that great body of past wisdom.

An important aspect of that ancestral wisdom to which Contarini pays great tribute is the imitation of nature to provide for civil order. "Every institution and government of man, the neerer it aspireth to the praise of perfection and goodnesse, the nearer shold it imitate nature, the best mother of all things:"²¹ The major purpose of the civil society is to provide order, and just as nature tended toward a moderation of extremes, the perfected civil society is one in which moderation prevails over factional strife. That moderation, we shall see, in turn requires a balanced government best achieved by the mixed constitution. The Venetian forefathers, Contarini says, were aware of the value of the patterns provided by nature:

Our ancestors therefore by the imitation of nature have provided both for one and the other inconvenience, and have therein used the iust temperature and excellent moderation, that none...may any way blame or finde fault with a government so vertuously established and so temperately maintayned:"²² (emphasis added)

The founders of Venice had, according to Contarini, admirably adopted the patterns of nature in their task of planning the structure of Commonwealth; and it was necessary that the men of Contarini's own time recognize this correspondence to fully appreciate the value of their institutions of government.

21. Ibid., p. 66.

22. Ibid., p. 149. See also p. 148.

Moreover, since the founding fathers had been so sagacious in fashioning the Republic after the patterns of nature, and since the Republic had so long endured, another avenue to a knowledge of the value of these institutions was opened. This was experience. He who would but look into the history of the Republic would be able to see the value of those institutions. For example, in Book III Contarini speaks of the Council of Ten:

That there hath great utilitie redounded to the
commonwealth of Venice through this councell
& Colledge of tenne: experience it self hath
made most manifest and plaine.²³

Throughout the work we find experience being used as the touchstone of proof. "Besides, it is by experience approoved...", "...experience the mistress of all things doth elegantly teach us...", and "...so hath experience approoved it for allowable & of high commendation..."²⁴ are markers of a common theme which pervades the work. Those unable to discern the patterns of nature and translate them into prescriptions for the governing of civil society, had but to look to past experience to see whither this rather abstract and abstruse formula would lead them. The founding fathers had tackled that labyrinthian task of patterning the Commonwealth after nature, and therefore current generations need not start at the beginning, but rather were offered the living proof of the task through experience. Further, experience and history provided a more powerful and accurate guide to political behaviour than any

23. Ibid., p. 81.

24. Ibid., pp. 70, 13, 83.

strictly mental exercise. The 'utopian' works of ancient philosophers could not equal the concrete reality of experience in providing for a happy life within the Commonwealth. In comparing the reality of Venice with those imaginary republics forged by philosophers of the past, Contarini states "...in the discourses of those great Philosophers, which fashioned & forged commonwealths according to the desires of the mind, there is not any to be founde so well fayned or framed..."²⁵

Thus nature provided a pattern to which a commonwealth well-established should correspond, and the Venetian ancestry had incorporated that pattern into their institutions of civil life. History had proven the wisdom of following that pattern and, further, provided a great body of experience from which the wise political actor could draw in attempting to maintain or ameliorate the civil life. Nature and experience provided a storehouse from which the political actor could draw the lessons necessary to his task.

Contarini states that men are, by nature, civil creatures and that they unite into communities in order to live more commodiously: "...whereunto the whole reason of civil institutions pertaineth, that by the easiest way possible the citizens may be made possessors of a happy life."²⁶ The sine qua non of the civil society is, for Contarini, the order provided by an effective government. Civil order can only obtain in a commonwealth which is organized in such a manner that

25. Ibid., p. 7. I assume that, above all, Contarini is referring to Plato in this passage.

26. Ibid., p. 8.

factions do not periodically arise to combat one another at the expense of the entire commonwealth. It is this quest for order through the alleviation of faction which figures largely in Contarini's account of the Venetian constitution.

Orderly government requires, for Contarini, a basis of law, because laws can be perpetual and, if rightly legislated, are not subject to the passions which attend individual men. In order to assure good law, Contarini advocates that legislation be carried out by assemblies rather than individuals. The assembly is preferable, he says, because in making the laws many wise men meet together and this assures that personal interest does not dictate the law.²⁷ Further, the assembly is a preferable legislative format because it can be perpetual whereas even the most sagacious law-giver is bounded by death. Contarini's method of circumventing the passions of men and their "...fraile disposition, which for the most parte enclineth to the worser parte...",²⁸ is to place law at the centre of an orderly civil society. "Something more divine then men shoulde rule and governe the companies of men..." he says, and therefore "...the soverainty of government should be recommended not to men but to lawes..."²⁹ Law, then, is central to the maintenance of civil order, and it is in the formulation of positive law that the republican form of government offers men the greatest advantage. Laws formulated in a republic, says Contarini, exhibit the advantages of being guided by reason rather than passion, and of being perpetual.

27. Ibid., p. 11. Contarini seems to overlook the obvious non sequitur here.

28. Ibid., p. 13.

29. Ibid., p. 12.

If, in the formulation of positive law, man seeks patterns in nature or attempts to replicate earlier patterns which were drawn from nature, then we have a notion of political man not so much as 'man the artificer' of law, but as 'man the discoverer' of that law. The basis of positive law then lies outside the bounds of man's creation, and is rather part of God's creation. Further, if positive law is formulated according to divine designs rather than human will, then that law takes on a special validity which owes nothing to human will other than the fact that the original legislators were sufficiently wise to detect those patterns and sufficiently civic-minded to eschew private interest in favour of a public good. Contarini speaks of the wisdom and self-sacrificing nature of the founding fathers, but it is in this sense of the founding fathers of Venice as discoverers, rather than artificers of beneficial positive law. Such a view of law (which is the cornerstone of civil society), then, leaves a relatively bounded sphere of action for the political actor.

Orderly government requires more than laws which regulate behaviour, however. It requires an absence of faction; and it is the consideration given to the problem of faction which ultimately leads Contarini to advocate the mixed polity. Contarini characterizes the danger of faction as the most powerful enemy of the Commonwealth:

...if you will have your commonwealth perfect and enduring, let not one parte bee mightier then the other, but let them all...have equall share in the public authoritie.

For, "...there cannot happen to a commonwealth a more dangerous or

pestilent contagion, then the overweighing of one parte or faction above the other..."³⁰ The Venetian constitution provided for a balanced government exhibiting monarchical, aristocratic and democratic elements. We have seen that the aristocratic element provided the polity with just laws, according to Contarini. The monarchical and democratic elements of that mixed polity spoke to the issue of faction by providing unity and contentment, respectively.

The democratic practices of the Venetian Republic offered the citizen the sense of participation in the common public authority. The importance of the perception of participation is alluded to in Contarini's discussion of the procedure employed to elect the Doge. The complicated procedure here is a combination of lot and election designed to safeguard against both fraud and faction.³¹

30. Ibid., p. 67. See also p. 78.

31. The procedure was as follows: All citizens over the age of thirty meet together and draw coloured balls out of a pot. The thirty men obtaining gold balls are retained, and the rest dismissed. Nine of these thirty are selected by lot--again using the method of choosing coloured balls. These nine elect forty citizens which are then called to the Court. The forty men selected are reduced to twelve by lot; and these twelve elect twenty-five. The twenty-five men elected are reduced to nine by lot; and these nine elect forty-five. The forty-five are reduced by lot to eleven; and these eleven men elect forty-one individuals who have the authority to elect the Doge. (See Contarini, op. cit., pp. 53-56.) A further safeguard against faction is introduced at the beginning of the procedure by not allowing two members of the same family to be chosen by lot in the original thirty. Once one member of a family obtains a gold coloured ball, the other members of his family are disallowed from drawing and a silver ball is removed from the pot. The use of sortition as a mechanism to prevent fraud was in evidence in the Athenian democracy. See Victor Ehrenberg, The Greek State (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1958), Chapter II.

Our ancestors (being men most wise and vertuous) made choice of this strange and intricate proceeding, to the ende the whole multitude might seeme to have a part in this creation & election of their prince.³² (emphasis added)

While it is important that all citizens have the sense of participation in the process of the election of the Doge, Contarini is unwilling to put this task over entirely to the people. This combination of lot and election has the advantage, he states, of not leaving the matter entirely to fortune nor "...to the wavering witte of the inconsiderate people, among whom commonly a vaine opinion and ungrounded favour may doe more, then a settled iudgement of those that are wise and vertuous."³³

There is, here, a great tension between the ideals of unity and hierarchy. On the one hand, Contarini speaks of the need for equality among the citizenry: "...the Venetians will not allow among their citizens any other difference, then only of age, because from thence never sprang any sedition or contention."³⁴ On the other hand, however, this quest for equality does not appear to coincide with his characterization of "the wavering witte of the inconsiderate people"; or his concern to curtail the role of wealth with respect to entrance into the nobility in order to eliminate the influence of "the very skum of the people..."³⁵ Contarini's concern for unity appears to be based

32. Ibid., p. 56.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., p. 26. Cf. Aristotle's Politics IV, xii, Sec.6; "The better, and the more equitable, the mixture in a 'polity', the more durable it will be."

35. Ibid., p. 17.

primarily upon the consideration of preventing internal strife and sedition,³⁶ but at the same time he ties this to a sense of justice.

And without doubt it is almost impossible for that commonwealth to maintaine itself afoot, and to stand firme, whose government many of the citizens do seek to alter or undermine: so that nothing is more proper to a commonwealth, then that the common authority and power should belong to many: for it is iust that the citizens, by whom the state of the Cittie is maintained, being otherwise among themselves equall, should not in this distribution of honors bee made unequall.³⁷

The dilemma arises here when we attempt to locate the grounding of the principle of hierarchy. If the principle of an equal participation in a common authority is grounded in justice, how are we to reconcile the implanting of an hierarchy of authority upon a group of individuals who are justly equal? It is here that we find the Thomist influence, with its emphasis upon purpose and subordination to an end, in Contarini's work. Since the civil society is organised so that men may be made possessors of a happy life, and since the prime impediment to the civil society is internal strife or sedition, it is necessary first of all to maintain the spirit of unity. In Book II Contarini tackles the question of hierarchy: "...we now take upon us to expresse the first reason that moved our wise & vertuous auncestors to place one man onely at the helme of their commonwealth."³⁸ He goes on to state:

Now a unitie cannot well be containd, unlesse one being placed in authoritie above, not onely the vulgar multitude, but also all the rest of the citizens and officers, have authoritie to combine them together...and to bind them all in

36. "...not anything so much to bee doubted and feared, as an intestine enemy, or civill strife and sedition among the citizens," Ibid., p. 78.

37. Ibid., p. 33

38. Ibid., p. 38. See also Aquinas, Summa Theologica, Prima Secundae, Qu. 90. and De Regimine Principum, Chapter V.

one entire body.³⁹

The principle of hierarchy then, while it may in one sense be incongruous with the unity desirable in the civil society, is, in fact, the sole means by which that unity can be maintained. There is, then, a certain expediential quality to the principle of hierarchy. Contarini alludes to the expediential basis with his observation, "Besides it is by experience approved, that the thing which dependeth generally alike upon the care of all, is generally alike in manner of all neglected."⁴⁰ Simply put, Contarini argues that a division of labour is entailed in order to accomplish the tasks of government, and that division of labour requires a concomitant division of authority. The justice of equality must give way to the maintenance of unity and the utility of achievement.

Contarini further attempts the reconciliation of these two principles through the application of the Thomist conception of different stations or duties which contribute to the perfection of the whole. This division of labour (and concomitant authority) corresponds to the model provided by nature in the human body. Just as the eyes see the environment and direct the actions of the other parts of the body, so the nobility is charged with the tasks of 'seeing' and of directing the other parts of the body politic.⁴¹ The pattern is one which runs through

39. Ibid., p. 39.

40. Ibid., p. 70. Cf. Aquinas De Regimine Principum Chapter V; also Aristotle Politics II, iii, Sec. 4.

41. See ibid., pp. 148-149.

the entire course of nature where all are "...upheld and maintayned under one heavenly and eternall mouer, and so likewise all causes under one, the first cause of all things."⁴² Contarini never fully reconciles the dilemma involved in the two concepts of hierarchy on the one hand, and equality as an aspect of unity on the other; but he seems to portray a modus vivendi based upon moderation and a balance between the two ideals. Again, this 'solution' is modelled upon nature: "And therefore it may easilie appear, that this our commonwealth is tempered with that moderation, which seemeth chiefly and neerest to imitate nature."⁴³ The Aristotelian ideals of balance and moderation pervade both Contarini's portrayal of the government of the Republic and his characterization of the practices of the ruling class. Book II of De republica is devoted to a discussion of the office of the Doge and the qualities of balance which this monarchical element brings to the government. Above all, the office of the Doge provides for unity by binding the entire body under one authority.⁴⁴ The many safeguards against the abuse of authority on the part of the Doge prevent over-powering of the delicate balance of government by this monarchical element. The popular element in the balanced government of Venice is represented by the Great Council,⁴⁵ and mid-way between these two extremes are the Senate (consisting of 120 members) and the Council of Ten. These last two institutions represent, according

42. Ibid., p. 39. Cf. Aquinas Summa Theologia Prima Secundae, Qu. 91 Secunda Secundae, Qu. 104.

43. Ibid., p. 148.

44. Ibid., pp. 37-39.

45. Ibid., p. 63.

to Contarini, "...the meane or middle, which reconcileth and bindeth the two extremes,..."⁴⁶ The ideals of balance and moderation between extremes are not simply limited to a balance between democracy and monarchy, but the internal structure of each institution is also formed around these ideals.

Every committee and collegiate body in the whole complicated machinery of government is in a way 'mixed' and so the microcosm reflects the general principle of organization.⁴⁷

For example, Contarini speaks of the practice of appointing colleges of forty judges which serve on a rotating basis, whereby a new panel of forty is periodically initiated into the judicial process:

...neither without reason are these forty younger men mingled with the Senators, which are for the most part olde men in regarde that the heate of their nature maketh a temperature with the others coldnesse, yet are not these young men equall in number to the olde men, but much fewer, onely inough to put some heat into the cold deliberations of the Senate..."⁴⁸

The Aristotelian ideals of balance and a moderation of extremes are central to Contarini's conception of the various Venetian political institutions, and are at the base of the mixed constitution.

No less, this same ideal of moderation and "temperature" pervades his portrayal of the activity of governing. The civil tranquility characteristic of Venice was largely attributable, for Contarini, not to force of arms, but to a "...iust and temperate manner of ruling."⁴⁹

46. Ibid., p. 65.

47. Gilmore, "Myth and Reality in Venetian Political Theory," p. 433.

48. Contarini, op. cit., p. 94.

49. Ibid., p. 146.

The habit of "moderation and temperance in gouernment"--yet another element of the myth of Venice--established by the prudent ancestors was responsible for maintaining the loyalty of the common people.⁵⁰ One aspect of this temperate manner of ruling is in the provision by the state of what might be termed social services. The Republic provided for magistrates charged with the duty of maintaining proper health standards. These magistrates conducted periodic food inspections to insure the quality of foodstuffs being marketed within the city. The government provided a number of 'isolation houses' approximately three miles from the city, to where those infected with a contagious disease were removed with their families. Contarini portrays these as spacious villas with beautiful gardens to make the stay more pleasant. After a period of incubation the family would move back to their own home if no further sign of disease developed.⁵¹ The Republic also appointed three magistrates charged with supervision of the corn supply, and it often supplemented deficits in this supply by purchasing from foreign markets and selling to the inhabitants at a price lower than that paid.⁵² The government even provided for aged citizens who had served the Republic but who had more recently fallen upon ill fortune. Yearly stipends and housing in the arsenal "... (which is so ample and large, that it representeth the shew of another towne)..." were given to those who had served the Republic but were presently too aged or infirm to work.

50. Ibid., pp. 138-139.

51. Ibid., pp. 117-118.

52. Ibid., pp. 116-117. This office parallels that of the Roman institution of the Curia Annonæ

Provision was made for a pension system for retired mariners;⁵³ and the care of the poor and the orphans was charged to the Procurators of St. Mark.⁵⁴ This "social service" aspect of Venetian politics Contarini views as indicative of the balance incorporated into the activity of ruling, and he finds a favourable comparison in the example of the Roman Republic which he says concerned itself too much with the needs and arts of war while neglecting the needs of the people in times of peace.⁵⁵ The spirit of noblesse oblige, by which those of a higher station tempered their interests and desires with considerations for those of the common people, and for the common good, is deemed evidence of the spirit of moderation and balance characteristic of the Venetian aristocracy from its very foundations.

At times, however, this spirit of 'moderation' on the part of the ruling class in which the needs and desires of the common people are looked after approaches an attitude of appeasement. Contarini cites Aristotle's division of society into two classes, and speaks of the provisions made for those "...who of nature are rather intentive to gaine then to honour..."⁵⁶ People, as a whole, seek only to live a life of plenty unfettered by oppression. We have no sense of man as a participant in the political life of the community:

And commonly all peole do require this at the hands
of their rulers, that they live commodiously &
in plenty, & that they be not subject to the
oppressions and iniuries of those that are

53. Ibid., pp. 140-141.

54. Ibid., p. 122.

55. For example, see ibid., p. 14.

56. See ibid., pp. 141-142.

mightier than themselves: which when they have attained, they go on with their business secure & careless of the rest: of which there was not anything omitted of our ancestors pertaining to those two points."⁵⁷

Those who spend their lives in the pursuit of gain and are subjected to manual labour are not citizens and are not participants in the political life of the community. Those things which the common people acquire through the civil community are commodious living and protection by the civil authority. These two qualities are the reason of their uniting into the civil community, and great pains are taken to assure that these two qualities of peace and plenty are provided. For example, the city provided for a sort of "instantaneous night court" whereby six judges would make rounds of the city in the company of armed men and dispense justice on the spot for the misdemeanours of vagabonds and prostitutes. They were

...to see that there be not any disorder done in the darkness of night, which alwaies imboldneth men ill disposed to naughtiness, and that there be not any houses broken up, nor theeves, nor rogues lurking in the corners with intent to do violence.⁵⁸

Venice provided the order and plenty which were the two principal values gained by man through his life in the commonwealth. The sense of justice, the sense of noblesse oblige on the part of the patrician class, and the moderation with which they ruled provided these qualities: "By

57. Ibid., p. 140.

58. See ibid., pp. 96-98.

these thinges you may perceive that there appeareth in every parte of the Venetian common wealth, that moderation, and temperature, which in the beginning of this work, I tolde you our ancestors did so highly indeavour to establish..."⁵⁹

Civil order, the keystone of the commonwealth, was provided first of all, by just laws. Secondly, civil order required the sense of a broad participation. Those who participated in the political process would, Contarini reasoned, be less inclined toward sedition and civil strife. We have already seen the limitations imposed upon the ideal of a broad participation by the concern to maintain a government of the 'most virtuous'. The social harmony engendered by a sense of broad participation was reinforced, for Contarini, by the sense of unity provided by the monarchical institution of the Doge. Fourthly, civil order required a sense of balance and moderation by which no one class or faction would view itself as being oppressed by others. The Venetian constitution provided for this balance through an elaborate set of devices to prevent faction and fraud. These devices did not make men more virtuous but, to a very great extent, prevented the translation of men's baser intents into action.⁶⁰ Lastly, civil order required

59. Ibid., p. 95. See however, Donald E. Queller, "The Civic Irresponsibility of the Venetian Patriciate," in Explorations in Economic History, Vol. 7 (1969-70), pp. 223-35, where he explores the myth of Venetian patriotism and self-abnegation, and argues that public service was more often shunned than welcomed because of the financial burdens involved.

60. Pocock, The Machiavellian Moment, pp. 324-325.

provision by the state of those two qualities which brought men into the civil society: freedom from oppression and the ability to live commodiously. Contarini's account of sixteenth century Venice gives the impression that these two qualities of civil life are ideals based rather upon tradition than any sense of philosophical argument or reasoned planning.

Contarini relies heavily upon the wisdom of the Venetian founding fathers in the provision of a groundwork for political action. Bouwsma characterizes this reliance upon tradition as a link between philosophy and politics:

The missing link between philosophy and politics is supplied, for Contarini, by the fact that earlier generations of Venetians had been statesmen as well as sages; they had combined active with contemplative virtues.⁶¹

The key to the politics of the present and future, for Contarini, lay in the past. The past provided the examples of the wisdom of those sagely men who had laid the foundations of political action which had lasted for over a millenium. They were the men who had worked out the problems of civil order and social harmony, and experience had proven the efficacy of their solutions. The wise political actor was one who could emulate those actions and continue a thousand year old tradition. Contarini's position must have been cogent to the Venetians who could look around themselves and see the fortunes of other republics and empires which came and went with such great rapidity while Venice continued to endure.

Contarini's reliance upon the past was not, however, based solely upon the longevity of the Venetian Republic. He employs a cyclical view of history--as did a great number of Renaissance writers. One

61. Bouwsma, Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty, p. 148.

aspect of that "pagan revival" which characterized the Renaissance was the rebirth of the influence of Aristotelian and Polybian notions of historical cyclism. The eschatological Augustinian vision of two cities moving along a linear path had been, in large part, supplanted by the pagan notions of cyclism. Aquinas had made the works of Aristotle acceptable to the Church as early as the thirteenth century; and by the sixteenth century historiography could assimilate the notions of cyclism so long as its focus was limited to the secular realm. While the city of God might be eternal, Rome provided sufficient evidence that the earthly city certainly was not and that, perhaps, classical notions of historical cyclism were more appropriate to the study of such earthly institutions.⁶²

Contarini employs this cyclical view of history in his treatment of institutions as corresponding to organic entities which require continual or periodic revitalization to overcome the inevitable decay of nature.

Those ancient lawes and goodly institutions do still continue even till this time of ours, though sundry young men, being since the increase of our dominion corrupted either by ambition, or ryot, have neglected their country customes...for such is in all worldly thinges the course of nature, that nothing may be among men perpetuall. But all thinges howsoever they seeme at first perfectly and well ordained, yet in course of time nature still slyding to the worse,

62. See Frank E. Manuel, Shapes of Philosophical History (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), Chapter 3. See Jean Bodin, The Six Books of a Commonwealth, Book IV, Chapter I, for his discussion of the cyclical nature of a commonwealth.

they had need to be mended and renewed...so in everything there must be a relieve and reparation added to the wearing and alwaies downe declining course of nature.⁶³

A strict linear view of history would preclude the value of the imitation of the examples of the Venetian founding fathers; and a view of history as some form of random change may or may not render imitation of past example of value; but a cyclical view of decay and renewal renders that imitation of paramount importance. For example, Contarini alludes to the need for diligence and renewal in his discussion of the office of the Auditors who were to screen appeals in the judicial process.

Noting the decline of this office, he states "...I know not by what negligence by little and little it is brought to pass...that this office which was before time so honourable, is now become to bee greatly obscured and eclipsed."⁶⁴ Given a cyclical view of history, Contarini could point to the traditions of the past as the source of political wisdom. Venice's current troubles could best be alleviated by drawing upon the rich traditions sown by the sagely founders of the Republic.

It is in this sense of revitalization that the cyclical view of history provided Contarini's work with a tone of optimism. The eclipse

63. Contarini, op. cit., p. 135.

64. Ibid., p. 101. It is interesting that Contarini states that he does not know how it came to pass that the office has declined. Perhaps he accepted the decline as the inevitable decay of nature; or, more importantly, he may not have considered the reasons for decline as all that important. The important points would seem to be 1) the office is in a state of decline; and 2) we possess, in history, the wherewithal to revitalize that office.

of the ancient world with the fall of the Roman Empire and the subsequent medieval era might represent the constant decay and declining course of nature; but the rebirth of learning, the expansion of universities, arts and sciences, and commerce during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries testified to the fact that men could at least approximate the achievements of the ancient world. That declining course of nature could, then, be modified by man to the extent that he could reinstate the institutions and practices of an earlier era. The Venetians were fortunate to have in their own heritage the exemplars of greatness. One need not view the decay of civic institutions as the progress toward a pre-ordained and inescapable eschatological end, but rather only as the downward curve on a cycle which could once again see the revitalization of those great institutions and practices which had characterized the Republic at its apogee. The notion of cyclism offered its adherents the optimism of at least an approximation of former greatness.

Contarini's cyclical view of history, and his concomitant reliance upon the examples of the past, however, also reveal the basic weakness of his thought. History, with its patterns corresponding to nature, provided, for Contarini, the key to the future, and a close study of history was all that was required to build that future. Venetian history, according to Contarini, provided all the examples necessary for the maintenance of the Republic in a changed environment. He failed to recognize that the changed environment of the Republic represented more than another revolution in the inevitable cycles of decay and renewal.

Contarini's statement,

...whereby it may appeare to those that shall consideratellie, and with an indifferent eye looke into the order, and government of this common wealth, that our ancestors did not omit anything that might tend to the common benefite and good of their Countrie.⁶⁵

represents a closing off of other areas of knowledge, and forms of speculation in the pursuit of a beneficial civil life. He seems in danger of emphasizing historical knowledge to the extent that he denigrates the value of speculative knowledge. Pocock characterizes this weakness as a deficiency not only of the thought of Contarini, but of the Aristotelian-humanist tradition, and points to its ramifications for political action: "...the fact remains that the weakness of the Aristotelian and humanist tradition was the insufficiency of its means for discussing the positive, as opposed to the preservative, exercise of power."⁶⁶

This weakness would appear to be derivative of the posture which characterizes Contarini's approach to his subject; and, indeed, which is characteristic of the larger Aristotelian-humanist tradition. The first aspect of that posture is a focus upon an earthly reality wherein those points of interest are what is rather than what might be. Man is an earthly creature with given needs and a given nature; of importance is how man lives within the confines of that nature, utilizing his resources to achieve his full potential. Aside from a focus upon an earthly reality, Contarini's approach to his topic is marked by a near reverential idealization of the ancients--and here he is likewise characteristic of the Aristotelian-humanist tradition of the Renaissance. That which sets

65. Ibid., p. 125.

66. Pocock, The Machiavellian Moment, p. 325.

Contarini apart in this respect is that, for him, the "ancients" are those founding fathers of Venice. The enthusiasm with which the works of the classical scholars were adopted aided in directing that initial focus backward in time. If one sought wisdom regarding the civil society, he looked to the past, for there were to be found the exemplars of greatness and of that wisdom. Given such an approach to one's subject, the range of possibilities for the exercise of political power is bounded by the past. If one is to focus upon an earthly reality it must be in terms of the past or of the present, for we have no experience of a reality of the future. And when one conceives the present to be a degeneration of the past, it is to the past that we must turn for guidance. Contarini's account of Venetian history suffers from one further weakness which, in one sense, makes his work appear ahistorical. His portrayal of the birth and development of Venice is much like Botticelli's portrayal of the birth of Venus. Contarini's Venice, like Botticelli's Venus, seems to rise forth from the sea, and enter the world fully formed and mature. Contarini gives no account of the historical fact of the gradual development of Venetian public institutions, but subsumes the entire process under the actions of the founding fathers. We have no sense of the gradual amelioration of those institutions and the "growing pains" involved in their development--just as Botticelli's Venus gives no account of the gradual development of a beautiful woman. The historical inaccuracy involved here gives one the impression of a static perfection which characterized the early period of Venice, and the practices and institutions of which need only be

replicated in order to return to that perfection and alleviate current decay.

The value which Contarini places upon the study of history reflects his position as a member of a society with strong traditional roots. Tradition most often provides one with a sense of self-identity as well as a sense of how things are arranged in the world. It links the individual to a greater identity and provides him with a set of ideas about himself; and further provides him with a sense of the reality of the world. Reality is, in fact, made up of one's perceptions of the world, and tradition provides men with the means to order and make sense of those perceptions. Moreover, Contarini's recognition of the value of history and tradition provided for continuity in the political process and, certainly, a number of exemplary ideals and practices after which to model political action. Taken literally however, his emphasis upon history and tradition has the deleterious effect of closing off other forms of speculation regarding the direction and form of government most appropriate to the changed historical reality of sixteenth century Venice. His reliance upon history as the sole storehouse of knowledge derives from his cyclical view of history, but it is precisely this which places the greatest limitations upon his conception of politics. His failure to recognize history as something other than cyclical prevents him from stepping outside the bounds of past example. If history is viewed as some form of linear progression, or as some form of random change, then the examples of the past become

didactic tools from which we can select according to the circumstances of our own time. Once we accept a strict cyclical view of history, then tradition becomes a straight-jacket and the ability to pick and choose according to circumstance is diminished. The examples of past experience, then, have lost their analogical character and have become rather models to be resurrected and reinstated in toto into the political regime.

De republica is of significance for a number of reasons. Of prime importance is the model society drawn by Contarini using the materials of the Venetian experience. Those ideas embodied in the myth of Venice and which played an important role in influencing later writers--both Venetian and non-Venetian alike--found their first systematic and comprehensive articulation in this work. We have seen that those ideas revolve around the central position of law in the maintenance of civil order, and to provide just laws Contarini sees the need for the legislative process to be carried out in the context of assemblies.

Secondly, contrary to the generally accepted view which held that mixed polities were inherently unstable, Contarini saw this form of government as necessary to ensure against the development of faction, and to combine the members of the polity in a unified body. He found, in Venice, an example of the mixed constitution which Aristotle maintained was most beneficial for the majority of the states, yet also most rare.⁶⁷ Of even greater significance, however, is the fact that Contarini bases his model society upon the lessons which he draws from the Venetian experience. "...Contarini found in Venice the model city not only for the present, but for all time."⁶⁸

67. Aristotle, Politics, IV, xi, Secs. 10-12.

68. Gaeta, op. cit., p. 65.

III

The conception of politics as the lessons of history, as represented in the writings of Contarini, drew from a number of intellectual traditions; and it is the ordering of priority given to these more general influences which distinguishes it from other conceptions of politics evident in the sixteenth century. At the base of the conception of politics as a quest for civil order and happiness through the lessons of history is a notion of wisdom--drawn largely from Aristotle--which emphasizes action over contemplation, and virtue over knowledge.⁶⁹ Contemplation and knowledge represent the beginning of wisdom; and wisdom, in the Renaissance, is realized when actions are built upon that foundation of contemplation and knowledge. Eugene Rice, in his investigation of the notion of wisdom in the Renaissance, states that "Real wisdom must be tangibly useful to living men and to oneself"⁷⁰ and goes on to point out that the highest form of wisdom in the Renaissance was considered to be political or civil wisdom.⁷¹ We can, then, identify two aspects of Renaissance wisdom which operate within the conception of politics based upon the lessons of history: first, political wisdom is knowledge connected with action; and secondly, that action is useful in some manner, helping men to ameliorate their situation. If the man of the Renaissance sought a pattern or blueprint for action, though, where did he begin his study? Where did he look for the knowledge which would serve as a foundation for

69. See Aristotle, Politics VII, i-iii.

70. Eugene F. Rice, J., The Renaissance Idea of Wisdom (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 73.

71. Ibid., p. 60.

political action?

Rice characterizes secularism as one of the three fundamental tendencies of Renaissance wisdom,⁷² and--to elucidate this Promethean character of wisdom--cites Robert Gaguin who, in 1496, urged his contemporaries to "...seize the splendid torch of wisdom from the heavens."⁷³ If political wisdom was the union of knowledge with useful actions, then the substance of that knowledge must be of such a nature that it could relate to man's terrestrial existence--for it was his terrestrial existence which offered the opportunities for action. The philosophy of medieval scholasticism, which was most often grounded in an understanding of an extra-terrestrial order, could not provide those patterns for action. It is the very essence of the Renaissance that those lessons were to be gained from a study of the ancient past, for it was in the period of classical Greece and Rome that the thinkers of the Renaissance found the exemplars of wisdom relating to man's civil life. Here were the thinkers who addressed themselves to the problems of the city-state. Here, too, were to be found those men such as Polybius and Livy who had surveyed the history of Rome in an attempt to draw lessons for man's terrestrial life.

72. Ibid., p. 180. The other two which he delineates are humanism and moralism.

73. See ibid., pp. 93-94.

Noting a general trend of Renaissance thinkers to concentrate upon history as a prime source of knowledge, Alban Widgery explains:

With the conviction that the Middle Ages had been a period of degeneration, many of them wanted a return to some of the modes of life and ideals of ancient Greece and Rome. There was a concentration on the cultivation of the values of terrestrial life.⁷⁴

It was, then, this history of earthly institutions which served men in their quest for political wisdom: and this shift to history as a source of wisdom is indicative of the more general posture which Manuel describes: "The crucial Renaissance revolution in philosophical history lies in the shift of focus from the City of God to the City of Man."⁷⁵

The Renaissance posture toward the study of the past has been described as 'pragmatic'. Widgery speaks of "...the pragmatic attitude to history common in the period of the Italian Renaissance"⁷⁶ and states of the Renaissance historians, that "Their concern with the past was for the sake of the present."⁷⁷ This 'pragmatic' approach to the lessons of history is derivative of Roman and Hellenistic historiography with its great chronicallers of events and conditions, and gained ground in the Renaissance largely through the influence of Polybius. History, for the man of the Renaissance, as for Polybius, was "worth studying because it is a school and training ground for political life."⁷⁸

74. Alban G. Widgery, Interpretations of History: Confucius to Toynbee (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1961), p. 143.

75. Frank E. Manuel, Shapes of Philosophical History (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), p. 48.

76. Widgery, op. cit., p. 152.

77. Ibid., p. 146.

78. R. G. Collingwood, The Idea of History (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), p. 35.

The Venetian political writer, in particular, shared much with the Roman historical tradition. He could gain insight into the workings of civil society by drawing upon a tradition rich in historical example. The state of Venice had, after all, been in existence for centuries, and the preponderance of that existence had been free from foreign domination. Further, the Republic of Venice was in possession of a unique set of political institutions and practices which had likewise endured for centuries, gaining the acclamation of strangers as well as of those native to Venice. We have seen that there was a conservative idealism characteristic of much of the political writing surrounding Venice and, to a large degree, this conservatism was not unwarranted. Collingwood speaks of the value of history for the Romans, and his characterization is equally apt for a good many Venetians in the sixteenth century:

History for them meant continuity: the inheritance from the past of institutions scrupulously preserved in the form in which they were received; the moulding of life according to the pattern of ancestral wisdom.⁷⁹

However, the Venetian approach to history, like that of the Romans, was much more than a pragmatic approach to a pool of wisdom located in the past. Men could discover much from the past which was directly applicable to the present because of two ideals which marked a Renaissance approach to history--continuity of men's character over time, and the Aristotelian-Polybian notions of cyclism. Much of the value of a study of history for the thinker of the Renaissance derived from

79. Ibid., p. 34.

the notion that a people's character--their passions, emotions and dispositions--were constant over a relatively long, if not indefinite, period of time. For instance, Machiavelli speaks of the value of a study of history which derives from this view of continuity:

Wise men say, and not without reason, that whoever wishes to forsee the future must consult the past: for human events ever resemble those of preceding times. This arises from the fact that they are produced by men who have been, and ever will be, animated by the same passions, and thus they must necessarily have the same results. ...It also facilitates a judgment of the future by the past, to observe nations preserve for a long time the same character; ever exhibiting the same disposition to avarice, or bad faith, or to some other special vice or virtue.⁸⁰

The glorification by various writers of the spirit animating the founding fathers of Venice from the initial settlement of the lagoon area to the establishment of a constitution would suggest that these later writers sought to portray Venice as a continuation of that spirit and character. Again Collingwood's characterization of history is appropriate. It was "...a history in which the hero of the story is the continuing and corporate spirit of a people..."⁸¹ The appeal of history to the Venetians was powerful as they could look upon a long, and for the most part successful, struggle to establish and maintain independence from foreign hegemony and internal civil liberty.

80. Machiavelli Discourses III, xliii. See also James Burnham, The Machiavellians: Defenders of Freedom (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), Part II, Chapter IV; and Sydney Anglo, Machiavelli: A Dissection (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1969), pp. 91-95 and 239-40.

81. Collingwood, op. cit., p. 34.

Another ideal closely related to the notion of a continuity of a people's character over time and which coloured a Renaissance approach to the past was the increasing consciousness of one's political identity.⁸² The complex, multi-faceted and often vague notions of a differentiation between peoples on the basis of character came to be complemented by institutionalized rivalries on the basis of political or religious identification. For example, while it might be difficult to differentiate between the Venetian people and their contemporaries in Rome with regard to their respective characters or dispositions, the differentiation could readily be made with respect to their political institutions and the attitudes toward ecclesiastical authority which those institutions represented. A difference in 'character' was, in the eyes of many, reflected in a people's political arrangements; and as we have seen, the Venetian Republic boasted a political structure widely acclaimed as providing stability, order, freedom and longevity of the Republic.

Besides the continuity of some form of 'national' character, the Renaissance approach to history most often reflected the cyclism characteristic of Aristotelian and Polybian writings: "The Renaissance

82. For an extended discussion of the role of national consciousness and nationalism in the late medieval and Renaissance history, see F. J. C. Hearnshaw, The Social and Political Ideas of Some Great Thinkers of the Renaissance and Reformation (London: George C. Harrap & Company, 1925), pp. 25-30. It is important to keep in mind that the political identity here is not that which we have come to associate with the 'national' boundaries of Italy. These states of the Renaissance, rather, represent the transformation and territorial expansion of urban communities.

writers were directly, almost slavishly, dependent on the cyclical theories that they found in the ancient texts."⁸³ It is important to keep in mind that the historical cyclism of the Renaissance was not the highly formalized cyclism which was to be later worked out by Giambattista Vico, but rather a general recognition of decay and decline which might be overcome by the reassertion of human effort. Machiavelli conveys that general tone:

It may be observed, that provinces amid the vicissitudes to which they are subject, pass from order into confusion, and afterward to a state of order again; for the nature of mundane affairs not allowing them to continue in an even course, when they arrived at their greatest perfection, they soon begin to decline.⁸⁴

As we have seen the notions of cyclism offered an optimistic perspective on the human condition. It offered the prospect of a restoration of the glories of an earlier era, and an opportunity to interrupt what had most often been viewed as an inevitable course of decline and decay. It was the chance to 'put things right' once again.⁸⁵ Contarini asks his readers to return to those political institutions which the founding fathers had patterned after nature; and current decadence could be replaced by vitality with the application of the traditional Venetian virtues. It was this which offered the prospect of transforming inevitable decline into a cyclism capable of restoring past glories.

83. Manuel, op. cit., p. 51.

84. Machiavelli Florentine Histories V, i.

85. For a discussion of the role of cyclism with regard to the problem of restoration, see Robert A. Kann, The Problem of Restoration: A Study in Comparative Political History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), Chapter IV.

Thus good always lapses into evil, and evil becomes good. All this had been a commonplace of historical thinking from ancient times; and it was an attitude especially favoured in the Renaissance which, of course, saw itself precisely as a period of ascent following long decline from the fall of Rome through to the abyss of the Dark Ages.⁸⁶

The notions of cyclism reflect a greater self-confidence on the part of men in their ability to ameliorate temporal existence--and this no doubt derived largely from the increased rapidity of scientific invention and innovation in the Renaissance--for without that confidence in human initiative and its ability to transform evil into good, the declining course of nature could not be interrupted. Confidence in men's capabilities to seize the initiative and alter the course of history was the sine qua non of the historical cyclism which we find in much of the Renaissance writing.

That conception of, and approach to politics which we find exemplified in the writings of Contarini draws heavily from the Renaissance notion of wisdom being made up of knowledge and useful action. A close study of the past offered not only an understanding of a people's distinctive character, but also a picture of what types of action had proved useful to their political arrangements in the past. It provided, then, both elements of political wisdom--knowledge or understanding, and patterns for useful action. This conception of politics as a quest for

86. Anglo, op. cit., p. 172.

87. See Erwin Panofsky, "Artist, Scientist, Genius: Notes on the 'Renaissance-Dammerung'," in The Renaissance: Six Essays, edited by the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Revised edition; New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), pp. 138-40.

civil order and felicity through the lessons of history does not, however, emphasize a number of other intellectual influences which we find in the sixteenth century. For example we find in this approach to politics, little emphasis upon the individualism which Burckhardt takes to be a major development of the Renaissance period.⁸⁸ Otto Gierke has pointed out that in terms of focus, the state and the individual tended to obliterate intermediate groups⁸⁹-- and in this conception of politics the focus is entirely upon the state, as perfection is sought through the restoration of the state institutions of an earlier era. The role of the individual in politics--which so occupied other writers such as Machiavelli, Sarpi, and Botero--is minimized in this conception of politics. In sum, we find here, a cluster or framework of ideas which draws together the Renaissance emphases upon action, secularism, cyclism, restoration, an acute sense of political identity and, above all, historical knowledge as the basis of wisdom. This conception of politics, however, minimizes a number of other powerful intellectual influences in the Renaissance--among them, individualism, moralism, and the value of independent human reason. We are led to the conclusion that the fundamental disparities which we find between alternative conceptions of politics reflect a differing accounting of the various intellectual influences which we find in the Renaissance. Faced with a plethora of intellectual influences vying for men's attention and allegiance, individual writers have incorporated and utilized these influences in differing degrees to forge their views of political life. In so doing, we find, they have

88. See Burckhardt, op. cit., Vol. I, Part II.

89. Otto Gierke, Political Theories of the Middle Age, translated by Frederic William Maitland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), p. 87.

provided us with radically different conceptions of politics--of the nature of the civil society, its purpose, and the most beneficial forms of political organization and political activity.

There are two major limitations to a conception of politics based upon a view of history and tradition as the prime sources of political wisdom. First, this approach to politics gives us an understanding of what we may preserve, and how to go about preserving those traditions and institutions, but it offers no means by which we can discover alternative institutions to those of the past.⁹⁰ This fact, in itself, would not have rendered this approach to politics in sixteenth century Venice untenable for, as we have seen, the Venetian tradition boasted a number of political institutions well worth preserving. But this first major limitation is coupled with the second; and that is that this approach to politics provides no means to accommodate a fundamental alteration in the historical context of those political institutions and practices. Political institutions of the past were most often, we may assume, formulated with a view to, or affected by, the exigencies of the historical environment in which the government found itself. If that historical environment is so fundamentally altered that the institutions of the past are no longer practicable or of value, we must then formulate new institutions which take into account current exigencies rather than the requirements of an earlier era. The crises facing Venice in the sixteenth century appear to constitute such a fundamentally altered

90. See Pocock, The Machiavellian Moment, p. 325.

historical context. Growing power and antagonism against Venice on the mainland, increasing piracy which the Venetians were unable to curtail, the loss of overseas colonies and, most importantly, the loss of wealth through increased European trade with the New World, all coalesced to place Venice in a position quite disparate from that faced by earlier generations of Venetian political actors. Libby alludes to Contarini's failure to recognize the present as fundamentally different from the past:

Contarini's conception of history is essentially archaic, looking back into the past for a model of ideal virtue upon which the present could be reconstructed.⁹¹

Given a fundamentally altered historical context such as that which faced cinquecento Venice, a conception of politics which posits preservation and/or restoration of the old order as the proper means to achieve the goals of political life is insufficient. In such a situation, political action must be attuned to the demands of an altered historical environment and provide alternatives to what has gone before. Given the advantage of hindsight, we can see that this conception of, and approach to politics, by its very nature, failed Venice in terms of the provision of a blueprint for future political action. It could not do otherwise. While this approach to politics offered much in terms of explanatory powers, its architectonic value is bounded by historical circumstance.

91. Libby, op. cit., p. 30.

IV

We have seen that for Contarini the purpose of politics was the establishment of civil order that men might lead lives of a 'happy and prosperous felicity'. The emphasis upon order is not idiosyncratic to Contarini, but rather marks this conception of politics which could most effectively address the questions of maintenance and preservation. If we are faced with a tradition of political discourse which is fundamentally preservative in nature, we can infer that the quest for civil order assumes a high priority within that tradition--particularly in the Venetian experience where that for which preservation was sought was a centuries old reputation for order and stability.

At the centre of the quest for civil order we find the concern with good laws. Law performs two functions for those writers who articulated the myth of Venice. First, it regulates behaviour by defining what actions shall be classed as legal and illegal, and assures each individual his own. In this it performs the function of law elsewhere. Secondly, however, laws for the Venetian writers erected an intricate institutional arrangement by which the role of passion in decision-making was decreased, the dangers of faction were minimized, and a sense of broad participation was enjoyed. It is in this second function of law that Venice was claimed to be and often seen as unique, and served as an example for imitation. And it is in the consideration of this second function of law that the Venetian writers turned to the lessons of history. Besides good laws, however, civil order required, for these writers, habits of moderation and temperance in government--and here, again, those practices were to be found in historical example.

The political task, then, is the establishment of an orderly society through the formulation of good law and through a temperate manner of ruling. Both of these facets of political activity are best guided by historical example, for it is in the past that we find living proof of the efficacy of those patterns developed by the Venetian founding fathers. The wise political actor is one who can maintain and/or restore those past practices; and politics, then, is an activity built upon the lessons of history.

There were other political writers surrounding sixteenth century Venice, however, who drew upon the ideas embodied in the myth of Venice to inform alternative conceptions of politics. By combining those ideas drawn from the myth of Venice with other intellectual traditions and influences they were able to build up and portray an alternative conception of politics to that which we have seen in the writings of Contarini. These writers, for various reasons, have eschewed the Venetian past as a model for strict imitation, and have relied upon other sources of wisdom which colour their conceptions of politics. Of interest, however, is the fact that they continued to utilize the ideals embodied in the myth of Venice to mould their writings. There is perhaps no more powerful testimony to the cogency of the reputation of Venice than that these men continued to employ those ideals as a complement to their works which approach the problems of politics from a perspective radically different from that employed by Contarini.

CHAPTER III

POLITICS AS A MORAL ENDEAVOUR: Paruta and Sarpi

The major significance of the myth of Venice is that the Republic was viewed by many as offering a blueprint for the construction of a stable and long-lasting regime; but further, those ideas contained in the myth are significant in that they were adopted and utilized by other political thinkers to shape their writings. Two such writers who drew upon the Venetian experience and the ideas embodied in the myth of Venice were Paolo Paruta and Paolo Sarpi. Unlike Contarini who used the excellence of Venetian institutions as a springboard for his plea for restoration, Paruta and Sarpi employed the ideals and practices of the Republic to advocate and evidence a notion of politics which seeks to make men better human beings and aid them in the attainment of a perfection inherent in their nature. Venice provided them with the example of a polity in which men could most readily achieve that perfection and live moral lives. In their work they have portrayed

a conception of politics which can best be characterized as a moral endeavour.

I

Paolo Paruta

Paolo Paruta was born in 1540 of a newly ennobled family which had its origins in the northern Tuscan city of Lucca. The family migrated to Venice, and had been inducted into the patriciate in 1381 on the strength of a commitment by the Venetian government, made in 1379, to ennoble the thirty families contributing the most to the war against Genoa. In effect, the family, bought its way into the nobility. Paruta was, by reason of birth, cast into the quarrel between the 'older' and 'younger' noble families which was to characterize the early modern Venetian patriciate, and it is perhaps this tension between young and old, between the giovane and vecchiaia conceptions of the Venetian nobility, which did much to colour his perceptions of political life. Although there is some disagreement as to the actual dates involved, it is generally accepted that Paruta studied at the University of Padua between the years 1558 and 1561.¹ Here he seems to have been influenced to some extent by the Platonist and Aristotelian philosophy characteristic of the University at the time. Upon returning to Venice, Paruta opened

1. See Arturo Pompeati, "Per la biografia di Paolo Paruta," in Giornale storico della letteratura italiana, XLV (1905). Various ages, from twelve to eighteen years, have been stated as the age at which Paruta began his studies at the University. By following Paruta's post-university career, Pompeati points to the age of eighteen as being accurate, thus setting the date at 1558.

his own private academy in his home where he met regularly with other scholars and students. As well, he held a number of minor government positions which offered him insight into the actual workings of the Venetian bureaucracy. It was during this period that he wrote his first major work, Della Perfezione della Vita Politica.² Subsequent to the publication of this work, and possibly because of it, Paruta was appointed state historian for the Republic. Later he served as the Venetian ambassador to Rome, and it was there that he wrote his second major work, Discorsi Politici, which was published in 1599, a year after his death. Paruta was not, however, a highly original writer. Gaetano Mosca states that he was "...a writer inferior to the fame that he enjoyed and one would search in vain through his works for profound and truly original views."³ The fame that he enjoyed, then, is due more to his articulation of currently held beliefs than to any conceptual innovation on his part. For our purposes of an exploration

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2. There is much confusion here. The work was written in 1572, and published in 1579. Pompeati, in his article "Le dottrine politiche di Paolo Paruta," in Giornale storico della letteratura italiana, LXVI (1905), states that the work was later translated into English. Allen, op. cit., claims that the work was translated in 1657 by Henry Cary. An exhaustive search has failed to produce any evidence of this or any other English translation; and I am under the impression that Pompeati is confused here, and that Allen, who seems to rely heavily upon secondary evidence, has compounded the error. There was an English translation by Henry Cary of Paruta's second major work, Discorsi Politici, which appeared in 1657, and I suspect that it is this that Pompeati has in mind. The confusion here points to the larger problem involved with much of the scholarship surrounding Paruta, i.e., there has been too heavy a reliance upon secondary materials and a concomitant insufficient checking of the original sources. See n. 42. below.
 3. Gaetano Mosca, A Short History of Political Philosophy, translated by Sandra Z. Koff (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1972), p. 114.

of the political thought surrounding sixteenth century Venice his work is of value precisely because it is of this representative nature.

Of the two works, Della Perfezione della Vita Politica has received the most attention of later scholars, and indeed it is here that we gain the most complete view of Paruta's political thought. The Discourses have largely been ignored in the secondary literature. Pompeati in his pioneering study, elects to ignore the Discourses because they are "negligible" and do not add anything to that which is stated in Della Perfezione.⁴ J. W. Allen seemingly follows the example of Pompeati, stating of the later work that "it does not add very much of interest."⁵ This I believe to be misleading, and we shall examine both works here. The Discourses offer, if not a modification, at least a limitation to the conception of politics which Paruta develops in Della Perfezione. Further, the work is of value for our purposes in that it is yet another manifestation of the power of the myth of Venice: "In sum, the work takes its place in the abundant sixteenth-century political literature which exalted Venice as a model of political life..."⁶

Della Perfezione della Vita Politica purports to be a recording of a conversation which took place at the home of Matteo Dandolo, the Venetian ambassador at the Council of Trent in 1563. Paruta had

4. Pompeati, "Le dottrine politiche di Paolo Paruta", p. 286.

5. Allen, op. cit., p. 105.

6. Dizionario letterario Bompiani delle opere e dei personaggi, Vol. II (Milan: Bompiani, 1947), p. 714.

accompanied Michele Suriano on a special embassy to Innsbruck and, on the return trip, the two had stopped to view the proceedings of the Council. While there a friend, Francesco Molino, supposedly related the conversation of the evening to Paruta, who then recorded it some nine years later. Given the second-hand information, the time lapse involved, and the fact that the work runs in excess of 300 pages, this account of its genesis is dubious--though as Bouwsma points out, since the participants were real personages and alive at the time of publication, the work most likely reflects the opinions which they actually held.⁷ Della Perfezione is composed of three books, and is initiated by a debate about the relative merits of the active and contemplative lives. Pompeati suggests that Paruta's own position can be identified with that of Suriano in the work,⁸ but it would seem that this would be the case only in the first book. Thereafter Suriano plays a minor role in the dialogue, and the weight of argument shifts to other participants. In the second book Barbaro articulates Paruta's position, while in the third it is Da Ponte who is called upon to bear the weight of the argument. Paruta's own ideas, then, appear to be a combination of the ideas put forth by these three men.

The dialogue format, and its setting at the Council of Trent, are indicative of Paruta's intent, as well as of what he took to be the central issues facing political philosophy in the late Renaissance.

7. Bouwsma, Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty, p. 201.

8. Pompeati, "Le dottrine politiche di Paolo Paruta", p. 287.

There was the dilemma of the choice between the active life of the civic community and the cloistered contemplative life of the Church which seemingly offered a more certain route to salvation. Paruta attempts to reconcile the two types of life by demonstrating a rapport between moral life and political life--and we see Paruta attempting an intellectual reconciliation of the very problem which Contarini faced in a personal manner at the beginning of his career. Paruta's task then, is to convince his readers that the debate between sacred and secular, between Church and state, and between morals and politics is, in fact, not a debate at all. Rather, in each case, both sides are but aspects of one type of life, i.e., the noble human life given to man by God. To accomplish this task, Paruta draws upon the Venetian experience to demonstrate that civic activity best provides one with the opportunities for human perfection. Pecchioli points to the affinity between Contarini, Paruta and Francesco Barbaro in this respect:

In all of them is maintained substantially unchanged the same positive attitude in regard to political activity as being in accordance with the virtuous perfection of human existence, from which followed necessarily an inclination toward a profound conscious apology of their city, considered above all to be the exemplary functionality of its institutions and the goodness of civil conduct.⁹

This view of the role of the Venetian experience in the writings of Paruta is echoed by Grendler:

9. Pecchioli, op. cit., p. 481.

With the exception of treatises inspired by the example of Venice, like Paolo Paruta's Della perfettione della vita politica, most sixteenth century champions of education for the vita civile laid less emphasis on dedication to a city and were less concerned with history than their quattrocento predecessors.¹⁰

The dialogue format as Paruta has employed it not only points up the tensions between the two sides of the debate, but also emphasizes the role of Venice in his formulation of politics as a moral endeavour. Not only were the participants 'real personages and alive at the time,' but they were also readily identifiable with one side of the debate or the other. Those engaged in demonstrating the virtues of the active civic life were, in fact, prominent Venetians who pointed to their city as the best possible forum in which man could live a truly virtuous life. The other side of the debate is articulated by members of the clergy, thus solidifying and making concrete the tensions between two abstract ideals. The dilemma of the active versus contemplative is reified, then, into a concrete choice between Venetian republican institutions and values and those of the Church. Venice was employed as a model for Paruta inasmuch as it is the position of the Venetians involved in the debate that their civic institutions and values were better able to provide men with the opportunities to achieve perfection through the exercise of virtue.

10. Paul F. Grendler, Critics of the Italian World: 1530-1560 (Madison; University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), p. 137.

Paruta opens Della Perfezione della Vita Politica with a dedication to Giovan Valiero, the Bishop of Belluno, in which he recounts the oracle of Apollo as a way of raising the question of how one may find happiness. The injunction to "know thyself" inscribed above the portal of the temple at Delphi is sound advice, but difficult in that we all are created with diverse potentials and gifts. The virtuous life, and that which will bring us happiness, is a proper accounting of ourselves, bringing our senses into accord with reason. It is the perfection of our humanity in order to "elevate ourselves to a more noble state, allowing us to participate in a greater good which God has given to virtuous men..."¹¹ The path to happiness here, and the sense of a virtuous life, is sufficiently vague to encompass the most disparate of characters. What then does Paruta mean by "the perfection of humanity"? What is the "more noble state" to which we should attempt to elevate ourselves? What is the "greater good" which God has given to virtuous men? In sum, we are back to the original question: "What do we mean by a virtuous life?"

The balance of the work is less ethereal, and Paruta's writing is most often viewed as a defense of Renaissance values

11. Paolo Paruta, Della Perfezione della Vita Politica (hereinafter abbreviated PVP). p. 141. The edition used here is found in Bruno Widmar's collection, Scrittori Politici del '500 e '600 (Milan: Rizzoli, 1964).

against what he perceived to be hostile clerical elements of the Counter Reformation. But it is more than a mere defense, for he not only attempts to defend the active and participative life of the Republic from its detractors but, at the same time, to give that life a greater meaning. He begins his task not with an attack upon the contemplative life, but rather the defense of the active life. The importance of this is that his task was not to denigrate the contemplative life, but rather to portray a fuller human life -- and for this, mere denigration of one side of the tension was insufficient. Machiavelli and Guicciardini resolve the tension between the vita activa and the vita contemplativa in favour of the active; Bellarmine and other moralist writers subordinate the active life of politics to a morality sought through the contemplative life. For Paruta, the two worlds go hand in hand, and anything less than a conjunction of the two is less than a fully human life. The first book, then, consists of the dialogue revolving around the relative merits of the two sides, and an attempt to bring them into conjunction.

Paruta's starting point may be viewed as the dual nature of human life. Man, by his very essence, is part of both the "City of God" and the "earthly city". Body and spirit are tied together in one creation; and that dual nature is what differentiates men from God on the one hand, and from beasts on the other. The appropriate life to men, then, is one which accommodates this dual nature. The dual nature of man is reflected in two types of needs which must be met. First, there

are the requirements of physical comfort; and secondly there is the need to practise virtue as required by the moral component of man's nature.¹² Only the civil life allows man to fulfill both needs, or act in both spheres, as it were. To reject social existence in favour of the life of a recluse is to forego an essential part of one's humanity. It is, as Bouwsma points out, "...to reject humanity in favour of the perfection appropriate to some other nature: that of a beast or a god but in either case unsuitable to man."¹³

Man, according to Paruta, is also unique for reasons other than his dual nature which gives him both divine and bestial potentials. Among creation, it is only man who is given the attributes of both will and reason. Of these two, will is supreme, and reason has the lesser role of a counsellor. Like the attributes of wealth and power, the attribute of reason is not meritorious in itself. Rather, the value of reason is dependent upon how it is used. In the second book, will is characterized as the queen of man's soul. Suriano makes the comparison to a well-ordered republic in which there exists

"one leader who commands everybody, but using the advice of other citizens to provide for the particular needs of the city. Similarly it is with our souls, the queen...[which]...is the will, does not deliberate alone, but always consults with reason, following what it proposes as good."¹⁴

12. Paruta, PVP, pp. 179-183.

13. Bouwsma, Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty, p. 210.
Cf. Aristotle Politics I, ii, Sec. 14.

14. Paruta, PVP, pp 307-8.

Reason is portrayed as a counsellor, while the will has the sole responsibility for action. Reason is unable to force action, and it is the will which is the prime moving force.¹⁵ The importance of the distinction here, and the separation of the functions of reason and will, is that if will is the primary human attribute rather than reason, we can infer that man is essentially an active rather than a strictly contemplative being. That is, man's potential can only be realized through the exercise of will as well as reason; and will can only be exercised in the realm of the vita activa.¹⁶ The exercise of will represents a conscious choice, and the act of making that choice places man squarely in the realm of action. The process of choosing, then, represents the bringing together of the primary attribute of the vita contemplativa (reason), and the primary attribute of the vita activa (will).

What we are faced with in this conjunction of reason and will is, in fact, prudence; and thus far it would seem that the notion of prudence portrayed here differs little from that of, say, Machiavelli. But Paruta's notion of prudence portrayed in Book II is drawn from Plato, and is both an intellectual and a moral virtue at the same time.¹⁷ It is a notion of prudence which accounts not only for

15. Cf. Martin Fleisher, "A Passion of Politics: The Vital Core of the World of Machiavelli", in Machiavelli and the Nature of Political Thought, edited by Martin Fleisher (New York: Atheneum, 1972), pp. 133-42.

16. See Bouwsma, Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty, p. 208.

17. See Paruta, PVP, p. 288 et seq., and Pompeati, "Le dottrine politiche di Paolo Paruta", p. 304. Cf. Plato, The Republic, Book IV.

expediency of action, but also speculates on the content of virtue. The rapport between ends and means must, in the final accounting, be dependent upon the virtue of both. Indeed, the use of reason to guide or curb our appetites here is this Platonic notion of prudence, and fulfills much the same function as "conscience" in the contemporary Protestant literature.¹⁸ The fact that the decision to listen to our rational component requires the exercise of will places the process in much the same light. The salient difference appears to be that conscience mainly serves to curb man's "evil" appetites in the Protestant literature; while prudence, for Paruta, is more positive in that it also helps us to identify virtuous action. This difference appears to be rooted in differing conceptions of the essential nature of man. Rather than viewing man as a fallen creature who is at the mercy of an angry God, Paruta views him as a social creature and an active participant in God's creation. Man's duty is not to fend off the evil influence of the rest of creation, but to participate in, and work with, the rest of that creation.

The notion that virtue has to do with activity can be seen in Paruta's four "grades" of virtue. Happiness, he says, is greater as one moves up the scale. The first grade of virtue is the natural

18. For example see John Calvin, On God and Political Duty, edited by John T. McNeill, 2nd edition (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1956), Chapter I, and Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), Chapters III and IV. See also Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion, "...the conscience which distinguishes sufficiently between just and unjust..."; II, ii, 22.

disposition which men have to be virtuous. It is the potential for virtuous action given to them by God. The second level encompasses the beginnings of action by which we may verify that natural inclination. The third level or grade is the habit of virtuous action, by which we act in a virtuous manner due to social custom or personal habit. The highest grade of virtue, and that which brings us the most happiness, is conscious action to confirm habit.¹⁹ The interesting point here is that we have an ascending scale of conscious action. Happiness is to be found in conscious virtuous action, rather than in the habit or disposition to be virtuous. Virtuous action, then, is something which must be realized and acted out--the central criterion being the realization of a potential. Mere inclination or unconscious habit are insufficient to bring gratification; what is needed is the conscious exercise of will. There is no "justification by faith alone" here; happiness requires implementation of the best sentiments through "works".²⁰

The concept of virtue is important, for it is through the notions of virtue and virtuous activities that we are able to give substance to Paruta's conception of morality. We have seen that one of the needs which derive out of man's dual nature is that of practising virtue as required by the moral aspect of that dual nature.

19. Cf. Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics, I, 8.

20. Paruta, PVP, pp. 277-83.

If man's moral nature requires the exercise of virtue, and we can identify those activities which Paruta characterizes as virtuous, then we can make palpable Paruta's conception of morality. We begin to get an idea of the content of virtuous action in the opening dialogue regarding the proper forum for a virtuous life.

What else is our life other than work? And among our activities none are more noble nor more perfect than that which is directed toward the good of many: and yet he who gives himself to the governing of the republic lifts himself from idleness which is the death of the soul, and gives himself a true and happy life.²¹

Civic activity, then, is the means by which we achieve a "true and happy life", and it is activity in the service of the civil society (and those contained therein) which is most virtuous. Besides the fact that it gives one a happy life, there is an injunction to community service based on the premise that that form of activity is good in and of itself. The impetus to action is based upon the nature of the activity itself; the "true and happy life" would seem to be one of the beneficial consequences of engaging in an inherently more perfect type of activity.

The obligation to public service is grounded upon this very principle. Suriano counters the idea that men should divest themselves

21. Ibid., p. 137. See Arendt, op. cit., pp. 19-20, for a discussion of activity as the quest for immortality. That Paruta characterizes idleness as the death of the soul places him within that tradition which Arendt characterizes as a quest for "immortality" as opposed to "eternity".

of worldly concerns with the following:

Too great is the obligation that we have to the patria: which is a company of men, not constructed for a brief time like those of mariners, but founded in nature, confirmed by election, in every case dear and necessary. (emphasis in original)²²

The obligation to participate in civic activity derives out of the very nature of the civil society. Civil life is of value to man, according to Paruta, in that it provides the context within which he can satisfy his moral potentials. It contains "...our sons and daughters, our relatives, our friends, and with these externals, the true and greatest good of virtue."²³ The major advantages of civil life are not the material or aesthetic qualities which it provides, but rather the potential which it affords the individual for the exercise of his moral virtues through action; and it is this which is the final justification for civil life.²⁴

Chabod points to the importance attached to activity in Paruta's treatment of politics, stating that he most often employs the term 'repubblica' rather than 'stato'. And "Now and then, 'republic' is

22. Paruta, PVP, p. 150. I have not translated the term patria here. See Chapter I.

23. Ibid., p. 151. See Arendt, op. cit., p. 18.

24. Bouwsma, Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty, p. 212.

equated to public activity, or political activity, more than to 'state'."²⁵ Repubblica, then, encompasses a manner of acting and an idea-set regarding men's behaviour, as well as the notions of territorial dominion and rule. " 'Stato' is here not only political government; but institutions and laws, and--at the same time--the power, the direction and the conduct."²⁶

We have seen that man's moral aspect requires the practice of virtue, and we have found that the proper forum for virtuous activity is the civil society, but we must give substance to Paruta's conception of virtue. Adopting an Aristotelian notion of function, Paruta states that virtue "...is an attitude to exercise well one's own function,"²⁷ and virtuous action in the civic life does not appear to be disparate from the virtuous action appropriate to the individual. The cardinal virtue in both areas is the exercise of "prudence", or the bringing together of reason and will.

Prudence is not purely negative, but it is an active virtue, which precedes rational and practical choices of goods, by which men can flourish. It teaches, for example, the father how to conduct his family well, just as it teaches the statesman how to govern the city well.²⁸

25. Chabod, Sritti sul Rinascimento, p. 645.

26. Ibid., p. 646.

27. Paruta, PVP, p. 288. Paruta uses the term ufficio which can be translated as 'office', 'function' or 'duty'. Cf. Aristotle Politics I, v.

28. Enrico Zanoni, Paolo Paruta nella vita e nelle opere (Livorno: Giusti, 1905), p. 55.

The exercise of prudence would seem to be the cardinal virtue because it defines the good in the balance of men's activities. It is the means by which other virtuous activities can be identified. Just as reason can combine with various appetites, so we have various virtues. The appetite defines the material or area of given need, and reason gives us the form of satisfying that need.

In the political sphere, this concept of prudence is tied to "...the virtue of justice, noble and excellent above every other because it is the true conservator of that equality so necessary to the civil life."²⁹ Just as prudence is the union of reason and will in the individual which defines the good, so it is justice in the political sphere which defines the good. It is the tempering of appetites by reason. In the political sphere, prudence and justice for Paruta are qualities inextricably tied to one another. His use of prudence is quite different from the concept as we see it portrayed in the writings of Machiavelli, and much closer to Contarini's portrayal of the habits of moderation and temperance which he saw as guiding public actions. Rather than a tool by which we define the most expedient course of action, prudence for Paruta defines the just course of action; i.e., through the exercise of prudence we can ascertain whether or not a given action is just. Because justice is concerned

29. Paruta, PVP, p. 289.

with the preservation of equality, prudence can aid us in discriminating between just and unjust actions. If we accept justice as a moral good, the function of prudence in the political sphere is also essentially moral. It is a tool by which to define those specific acts which we can include in that moral good.³⁰

Besides prudence and justice, Paruta delineates other virtues appropriate to the civil life. These are liberality, meekness, magnanimity and temperance.³¹ These virtues are of greater worth, he says, than the purely intellectual virtues of science and art, because "...virtue has respect to the operation, being the perfection of a potential,"³² and the worth of purely intellectual virtues

30. It is interesting to note the etymology and transition of the term "prudence" in the English language. The term enters the language in the late sixteenth century, the prudent man being "wise and discerning", and is now obsolete in this sense. The modern usage of the term dates from the latter part of the seventeenth century. The seeming disparity between prudence and justice, then, would seem to be a modern contrivance deriving from the fact that we have lost the original meaning of prudence from our own language. See the Oxford English Dictionary (hereinafter referred to as OED).

31. Paruta, PVP, pp. 290-91. Confusion exists concerning the term "liberality" in the English language due to the rise of British liberalism, and its subsequent influence upon the language in the nineteenth century. Prior to that time the term most often connoted charity, benevolence, and kindness. See the OED, and Williams, op. cit., p. 150.

32. Ibid., p. 290.

is dependent upon the ends for which they are used. For example, while the intellect may be used for either good or bad, the virtues of temperance and justice cannot be used in an evil manner. There cannot be a contradictory distinction between just actions and the achievement of justice. The means are appropriate to the ends. The intellectual virtues, however, take no account of ends or the potential to be realized. An example of what Paruta has in mind here might be seen in Machiavelli's conception of prudence which is a virtue appropriate to a wide diversity of ends.

Pompeati points out that the virtues most useful to the state are justice and strength.³³ It is appropriate that justice comes before strength, for without justice to define the good, strength is of little or no value. Strength provides the means for action, but that action must be directed in some manner. It is justice which defines the ends to be sought by that action; and strength is the means to accomplish that end. The coalescence of prudence and justice here reinforces the image of prudence fulfilling the same role as "conscience" in the Protestant literature of the sixteenth century, i.e., a gauge by which men might determine the rectitude of specific acts, and a mechanism by which to curb man's appetitive nature.

33. Pompeati, "Le dottrine politiche di Paolo Paruta", p. 324.

Like strength, riches are neither good nor bad of themselves, but are properly means to achieve just ends. In the third book, Paruta makes his famous defense of wealth. When the bishop of Ceneda decries riches and the desire to enrich ourselves as corrupting men's souls, Suriano counters his argument with the following:

...the desire to enrich ourselves, like the desire to live, is natural: this because nature provides beasts with the necessities of their lives; but in man, who is poor, naked, and subject to many needs is inserted the desire for riches; and he is given ingenuity and industry by which to procur them, that he may live not like other animals, but humanly, which is that certain elegance and dignity that one seeks of the civil life appropriate to man.³⁴

While Paruta's defense of riches may be viewed as derivative of his mercantile background, the more important point would seem to be the importance of wealth in gaining civil felicity. Riches, like strength, are essentially means rather than ends. It is not the fact that one is rich which makes one happy, but rather the happy man is one who has enough riches that he can fill the offices of a good father to his family and a good citizen. In Book I, answering the charge that civil life corrupts the souls of men, Paruta uses riches and material goods as an example of comparison. Of these things, he says that it is not their nature which corrupts, but rather their imprudent use. Riches and the civil life, he says, are much like wine: all use it, some abuse it. It is better, then, to castigate those who abuse it rather than prohibit its usage or decry it as evil.³⁵

34. Paruta, PVP, p. 493.

35. Ibid., p. 154.

Material wealth and the desire to enrich ourselves, for Paruta, are not merely for satisfying man's basic needs, but also serve "... to satisfy more noble and elevated needs."³⁶ Riches favour the arts, promote industry and are necessary to obtain work and labour. The desire for material good, then, provides an incentive to action; but the dynamics appear to be different from the Hobbesian notion of greed and anxiety being a spur to the institution of Leviathan and closer to the later utilitarian conceptions of wealth. The desire for material wealth, for Paruta, is not the prime mover, but rather an appetite which is modified by prudence. The ultimate appetite is that of happiness, and for this, material wealth is insufficient. Material wealth is seen not as an end, but as a means by which one can serve the more noble requirements of being the good father and citizen. The concept represents a movement away from the classical Greek conception of wealth as merely freeing men for other pursuits. Wealth here is seen as directly serving those higher goals.

The realization of man's moral nature, then, requires the exercise of virtue. It requires, above all, the exercise of prudence and justice in men's actions. Further, the realization of man's moral nature requires the exercise of liberality, meekness, temperance and magnanimity. These virtues can best be exercised within the civil society, and it is this which is the justification for that civil society. It provides men with the opportunity to practise these virtues, and thereby achieve happiness. Paruta's notion of politics as a moral

36. Pompeati, "Le dottrine politiche di Paolo Paruta", p. 327.

endeavour then, is that the raison d'etre of the civil society is to allow man to realize the moral potential embodied in his dual nature. This realization of a moral potential is accomplished through the exercise of virtue--and Paruta portrays for us a scheme of virtuous action which he sees as appropriate to man qua private individual as well as to man qua political actor.

Pompeati sums up the purpose of Della Perfezione: "The intent of the author in the writing of these three dialogues was that of drawing the model of a citizen, of teaching the perfection of civil life."³⁷ Further, since civil life is viewed as the most perfect type of life for man, he is attempting to get at the perfection of human nature. In order for civil life to be viewed as the most perfect type of life for man, it must be presented in terms of virtue. Paruta is portraying, if not a set of rules or code of laws which fully define virtue, at least a way of acting which leads men to virtue. We are given, in the dialogues, rather tangential references to the areas which Paruta has in mind. Above all, virtuous acts are connected with the well-being of the polity and one's family. But more importantly, we are given a plan of how to act in a virtuous manner. The use of prudence or justice to prescribe action is of paramount importance.

37. Pompeati, "Le dottrine politiche di Paolo Paruta", p. 340.

Given the context of sixteenth century tensions between public and private morality, and the tensions between sceptre and crozier, Paruta's work stands out as portraying moral behaviour in the political sphere as coincidental to personal moral behaviour: "... Paruta does not have recourse to a fictitious morality which is diverse from private morality; he is not the architect of a state ethic which springs from the dissension between common life and political life."³⁸ For Paruta, there is no discrepancy between leading a moral life in the private sphere and in the public sphere. Both aspects are part of man's nature, and anything less than morality in both areas is failing to live up to one's human potential. Moral behaviour in one sphere cannot help but be reflected by moral behaviour in the other. Paruta's efforts here appear to be an attempt at a conceptional reconciliation of the long-standing tensions embodied in sceptre and crozier by pointing out that both are, in fact, aspects of the same phenomenon and both are concerned with the same end; i.e., the fulfillment of man's potential for moral behaviour. His refusal to concede fundamental differences between public behaviour and private behaviour represents a shortcoming which manifests itself in the later Political Discourses.

Despite Paruta's abundant references to Plato and Aristotle to bolster his points of argument, it is perhaps this blending or synthesizing of the public and private spheres which most sets him apart from these two thinkers and, at the same time, places him

38. Ibid., p. 315.

squarely within the context of sixteenth century Italian political philosophy. Further, whereas Plato favoured the speculative life, Paruta, like many of his contemporaries, viewed this as of value only when connected with the active life of the polity. The exercise of reason, judgement, and prudence remain sterile exercises until connected with the will which derives from appetite. It is this which makes us men, and without the exercise of both faculties we are less than human.

Let us turn to the Discourses.³⁹ The work was published in 1599, one year after Paruta's death. The Discorsi Politici appear to be a response to Machiavelli's I Discorsi.⁴⁰ The similiarties between the two works are manifold. Besides the similarity of title, there is a similarity of subject matter. Paruta takes on many of the examples of history used by Machiavelli, pointing out considerations of which Machiavelli has failed to take note. He discusses such things as whether or not fortresses are of value to the prince. He deals

39. Unless otherwise specified, the edition used here is Politick Discourses, translated by Henry Cary (London: 1657).

40. Giuseppe Ferrari, Corso su gli scrittori politici italiana (Nuova Edizione Completa; Milan: Casa Editrice Monanni, 1929), p. 351, views Paruta's work as a response to Botero's Ragion di Stato. Curiously, Ferrari, a rather eminent political philosopher, seems to have run completely amok when dealing with Paruta. He takes no pains to conceal his hostility toward Paruta and the ideal of the Venetian Republic, which he refers to as "una città nel fango" (a city in the mud) (p. 352). His analysis is suspect when he places the wrong title on Paruta's earlier work, and once refers to Paruta as Giovanni, who was, in fact, the son of Paolo Paruta (p. 353).

extensively with the role played by fortune in the affairs of man. At one point, he justifies action in terms of "reason of state" -- though his conception of ragion di stato appears to be different from that of Machiavelli.⁴¹ Paruta discusses the value of confederacies as opposed to the strength of the prince who relies only upon himself. Allen points out: "Only once does Paruta refer to Machiavelli; and

41. The distinction here is extremely subtle, and revolves around the difference in the respective conceptions of stato. Paruta seems to use the term stato in the sense of the order and way of life of the polity, while Machiavelli uses the term deriving from the more medieval notion of status identified with the government of the principality. See supra, Chapter I, for a delineation between the two notions of stato. Paruta's notion of ragion di stato seems then to embrace the notion of the maintenance of a given way of life, while Machiavelli is concerned of the more general consideration of the maintenance of governmental structure or regime.

then it is to express a hope that his works will remain for ever in oblivion."⁴² Besides this one obvious reference by name, numerous references are made to Machiavelli throughout the work without naming him. There can be little doubt, then, that Paruta was responding

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42. J. W. Allen, op. cit., p. 506. This is a most curious point. Curious, first of all because of Allen's obvious error here. The passage, in fact, reads as follows: "I find these things in some Authors, but Chiefly amplified and affirmed by Nicholas Machiavèl, a name which hath formerly been very famous for the curiosity of the matter which he took upon him to write on his discourses; but it is now so condemned to perpetual oblivion by the holy Apostolick Sea, as it is not lawful to name him." (p. 131). Here we seem to have no indication that Paruta hopes that Machiavelli's name will forever remain in oblivion. Paruta is merely stating the fact of the matter. Nor is the problem one of translation. The original line reads "...Niccolo Machiavelli, nome gia famoso per la curiosita delle materie delle quali si tolse a scrivere ne suoi Discorsi, ma che ora condannato dalla Sede Apolstolica ad oblivione perpetua, non e pur lecito di nominare." Discorsi Politici de Paolo Paruta (Siena: Presso Onerato Porri, 1827), Book II, p. 52. The difference here between the passage and Allen's interpretation is, I believe, quite significant.

Further, the passage is curious in itself; for it is within the same sentence that Paruta states that it is no longer lawful to name Machiavelli that he does so. Given the fact that the work was published posthumously, and the possible repercussions from ignoring the ban on Machiavelli (Machiavelli's works were placed on the original Papal Index in 1559, and the decision was confirmed at the Council of Trent), the possibility raises itself that Paruta had never intended this later work for publication. If this is so, is it related to the fact that, in terms of style, it is closely patterned after Machiavelli's Discourses? Does it represent the shift in attitude which we see in the "Soliloquie" appended to the end of the book in which Paruta, in effect, states that he has been so busy with the affairs of state that he has ignored his God, and that he hopes to break that habit some day so as to be able to devote his time to the sacred aspect of life? Does it account for some of the seeming inconsistencies in the work (see particularly Book II, Second Discourse), and if so, are we really faced with two Parutas -- one private and one public?

to Machiavelli's Discourses in his own.⁴³

The Politick Discourses is made up of two books; the first of which draws upon the experience of Rome to gain insight into the proper form and end of good government, while the second book draws upon the Venetian experience for the same purpose. The basic line of argument in the early part of the work appears to be that developed in Della Perfezione della Vita Politica. We find the same overriding concern with "civil felicity", and the view developed in Della Perfezione of the coalescence of the public and private spheres. Paruta's prime concern is laid down in the first discourse: "...the perfection of Government lies in making a City vertuous, not in making her Mistress of many Countries."⁴⁴ Unlike Machiavelli, who saw that the quality of life within the polity was dependent upon the position of that polity among foreign powers, Paruta directs his concerns inward. Good government and civil felicity depend not upon relations with foreign powers, but rather upon the exercise of virtue by the citizenry. And virtue among the citizenry is one, whether exercised in the public sphere or the private:

43. On this point see Dizionario letterario Bompiani delle opere e dei personaggi, Vol. II, pp. 713-14; Gaeta, op. cit., p. 70; and Pecchioli, op. cit., p. 486.

44. Paruta, Politick Discourses, p. 10.

For it is not to be affirmed that the same thing can be good in respect of the publick, and bad in private Affairs. For the general felicity of the whole City, and the particular good of every Citizen is one and the same thing...⁴⁵

The exercise of virtue requires prudence, "...joyning Reason and Custom to Nature."⁴⁶ In opposition to Machiavelli, Paruta places little store in the strong prince to make the citizens virtuous: "Therefore where good Institutions of life are wanting, the severity of Magistrates is not sufficient to make Citizens obedient to the Laws. For when the appetite had already gotten power, and is accustomed to vice, 'tis too hard to overcome her by force."⁴⁷

Unlike Della Perfezione, wherein virtuous action can seemingly overcome all, the Discourses give a much wider berth to the role of fortune in the affairs of men. Chance and "accidents" limit the degree to which reasoned action may guide history, and are considered by Paruta to reflect the will of "Divine Providence".⁴⁸ Reason has its limitations and cannot penetrate into the will of God. The place allocated to fortune in the later work would seem to reflect both Machiavelli's extensive treatment of the concept and, as well, the more specific and concrete nature of the Political Discourses as compared

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid., p. 11.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid., p. 18.

with Della Perfezione. The extensive treatment of fortune in the Political Discourses represents, I believe, a major limitation to the scope of action developed in the earlier work.

The line of argument seems to shift in the later part of the Discourses where he employs the example of Venice rather than Rome. Here, for example, we find Paruta's defense of Venetian action on behalf of Pisa against the Florentines. It appears that Paruta's task was a difficult one, and we see him hedging on some of his earlier assertions. Of Venice's action defending Pisa he says: "Such actions may then be measured either by the ordinary reasons of justice and equity, or else by reasons of State, which are the more proper."⁴⁹ His earlier position would seem to suggest that there would be no disparity between the two measures. Further, he seems to distinguish between the public and private spheres in terms of judging this action. "Certainly the actions of a Philosopher, and those of a Prince, ought not to be measured by one and the same rule; nor must we fancy the condition of men, and of affairs, to be what peradventure they ought to be, but what they are for the most part."⁵⁰ Paruta sounds ominously close to Machiavelli or Botero in these passages, but perhaps this arises out of his attempt to defend what may have been, in fact, an indefensible action except in terms of

49. Ibid., p. 123. Cf. p. 19.

50. Ibid., p. 128. Cf. p. 11.

raison d'etat. It is equally possible, however, that the principles laid down in Della Perfezione simply would not illuminate the questions Paruta sought to answer here and, in fact, he hints at a conception of politics which is different from that which we have seen in the earlier work.⁵¹ Although Paruta is not explicit, it may well be that he recognized that, as Figgis points out in his discussion of Machiavelli: "...Rules of morality are not of the nature of eternal truths, immutable in their authority--but only rough statements of what in ordinary cases is man's duty. Hence the need of some consideration of the extraordinary cases when they do not hold,..."⁵²

Among other questions raised in Book II, Paruta discusses whether or not fortresses are of value to the state, whether or not confederacies are a valuable form of organization, and the role of gunpowder in changing the nature of warfare. This type of consideration cannot be addressed within the context of the earlier work, and we are faced with a limitation of Paruta's politics based on morality. For example, the question of the Venetian defense of Pisa is an entirely public question, and the action could not be defended adequately on the basis of a public morality which was equivalent to a private morality. In terms of a personal moral behaviour, the contemporary Venetian would be

51. The alternative to this is the idea that there is a public Paruta which is different from the private Paruta (see n. 43).

52. John Neville Figgis, Studies of Political Thought from Gerson to Grotius: 1414-1625 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), p. 92.

hard-pressed to justify the intervention between two foreign powers. The political situation between the government of Florence and the government of Pisa did not impinge upon the personal life of the Venetian citizen. The geographical distance involved here is less important than the qualitative distance between the political and personal sphere of life. The concept of a public virtue which was the equivalent of private virtue simply could not be made to address itself to this point, and it was necessary to shift to justifications drawn from the concept of raison d'etat.

There are limitations to Paruta's conception of politics. A notion of public morality as the equivalent of a private morality simply cannot be sustained. Actions in the public sphere are inherently different from private actions, and cannot be justified solely in terms of a private, become 'public', morality. Public actions require their own justifications--whether this be in terms of a public morality or whether it be in terms of reason of state. The step from private virtuous action to public morality is one of quality rather than of location. If individual moral action is an outgrowth of the needs and potentials of man, then public moral action may be viewed as an outgrowth of societal or public needs and potentials. Social ideals are not merely private ideals applied to the social setting, but rather a collective formulation of an ideal which is embodied in the laws and institution of society.

Public moral action is a more cumbersome and complex phenomenon than individual moral action. We may be able to speak of a "public will" as did Rousseau, but the translation of that will into action inevitably falls upon the shoulders of individual actors. In the public sphere, the step from willing to acting involves two critical points at which we must rely upon these individuals to act on behalf of the public. First of all, the desires or needs of an individual are generally apparent to that individual; but the desires or needs of a political community are most often less apparent. They may be made up of a number of facets which, when taken together, do not characterize any single individual or group of individuals within that community. Ascertaining the will of the body politic is a much more difficult task than defining our own private individual will. Secondly, the beginnings of action, once that public will is ascertained, inevitably falls to individuals. Whole communities simply do not spontaneously decide to embark upon a certain course of action. Most often the public, as a whole, must be entreated, persuaded, and cajoled by its leaders into undertaking any course of action. Given these two critical points then, public action appears to rest ultimately with individuals who act on behalf of the public; for without the role played by these agents, the public, as a whole, would be incapable of any concerted and sustained action, be it moral or non-moral. Further, this process is continually repeated throughout the life of the body

politic whenever the government acts in some manner. The springs of public action are grounded in the individual acting on behalf of the public, and this must have implications for the way in which we gauge that public action. Paruta's shortcomings, then, center around the extent to which codes of morality appropriate to the individual can be implanted upon the political sphere.

Despite the shortcomings of Paruta's work, he offers us an understanding of a conception of political experience as a manifestation of man's moral potential. He constructs a framework within which to view human experience and which can accommodate his dual nature. Further, it is a framework which recognizes, and indeed, fosters diversity in human behaviour. His emphasis upon the individual's exercise of prudence places that diversity in a perspective which not only tolerates, but legitimizes and sanctions diversity. At the same time, Paruta has shifted both political and moral responsibility to the individual. Rather than locating moral responsibility in the Church and political responsibility in the person of the prince, Paruta has seemingly recognized the importance of an acceptance of the responsibility for choice and action to human growth, and placed these responsibilities on the individual. Only by accepting the responsibility for moral and political choices can the individual utilize his attributes of reason and will to their fullest extent in order to "elevate himself to a more noble state." The perfection of the individual can only be accomplished when he begins to exercise

the cardinal virtue of prudence, joining reason to will; and prudence can only be exercised in terms of making active choices. The individual, then, must be allowed the opportunity of choice in the all important area of politico-moral considerations, for it is in this area that lie the greatest potentials for human growth and civil felicity.

Those ideals and values which Paruta takes to be the cornerstone of political life are manifest in the model of Venice and, indeed, his work can be viewed as an enunciation of Venetian values. His emphases upon the liberty of the individual and individual participation in the activities of civil life are but a general statement of what he took to be the specific characteristics of the Republic which rendered it of value in man's quest for the perfection of his nature. Through his participants in the dialogue, he is the voice of Venice informing us of the value of a civil society ordered in such a manner as to facilitate man's moral development.

Politics is a moral endeavour for Paruta, then, in that it is an activity borne of the need which men, by reason of the moral aspect of their dual nature, have to practice virtue. The civil life provides the most appropriate forum in which men might exercise their various virtues in that, first, it provides the individual with the opportunities of participation in political activity; and secondly, it contains those things which Paruta seems to accept as moral ends unto themselves, i.e., family, friends and patria. The political activity associated with that civil life should, above all, be guided by the virtues of prudence, justice, liberality, temperance, magnanimity and meekness.

II

Paolo Sarpi

Little is known of the early life of Paolo Sarpi. He was born on August 14, 1552, to Francesco and Isabella, and was baptized Pietro. Francesco was a merchant and described as being "...of low stature, of brown hair and of a terrible aspect. Isabella was of great stature, of fair complexion, and of a countenance as humble and gentle as 'twas possible."⁵³ Nathanael Brent, in his introduction to the History of the Council published in 1676, states that the diversity of conditions which characterized the marriage were similar to those which "...we see among the Barbarians of Canada..."⁵⁴ Francesco died shortly after the birth of his son, and Isabella devoted her life to the Church. Sarpi was raised and educated by his uncle, Ambrosio Morelli, a priest. The boy was reputed to have keen memory, and an account of his education recalls to mind the education of John Stuart Mill at the hands of his father and Jeremy Bentham. Sarpi's uncle honed the boy's memory by forcing him to recite long passages after only one reading. It is no surprise to learn that, as a child, Sarpi was withdrawn and ascetic. He entered the Servite Order at the age of fourteen and was ordained at the age of twenty-two.

53. Paolo Sarpi, The History of the Council of Trent, translated by Nathanael Brent (London: J. Macock for Samuel Mearne, 1676), p. V.

54. Ibid.

After teaching philosophy while studying at the University of Padua, he became Provincial of the Venetian province of the Servite Order, and later Procurator-General of the entire Order. Leaving Rome at the age of thirty-six, he spent the next eighteen years in Venice devoting his time to study in the areas of anatomy, astronomy, optics and physics. All of his papers from this period were destroyed by fire in 1769. The Venetian interdict of 1606-7 jolted Sarpi out of his studious retirement and forced him into the world of political affairs. The conflict between the Church and the Republic taxed a dual loyalty within Sarpi, and brought into conflict not only two sets of ideals (those of the Church and those of the Republic), but also his position within the Church and that which he held in the government of the Republic. He had been appointed State theologian and canon lawyer to the Republic a few months prior to the publication of the interdict. His views, channelled to the Republic through this post, resulted in his excommunication during the interdict, an assassination attempt upon his life and the subsequent need for secrecy, and his inability to travel safely outside Venice or to despatch materials openly.

Sarpi is best known among scholars for his numerous histories of ecclesiastical institutions, and their contribution to the rise of what Peter Burke, in his preface to the Sarpi volume in The Great Histories series, calls problematic history or pragmatic history.⁵⁵

55. Sarpi, History of the Benefices and selections from the History of the Council, translated and edited by Peter Burke (New York: Washington Square Press, 1967), p. xxvii. Hereinafter referred to as Sarpi, HBHC.

By focusing his works in terms of a specific incident or situation rather than chronicling the rise and fall of empires or republics, Sarpi was able to draw in much more of the interplay between law, religion, social forces and individual action in the affairs of men, and was able to eschew much of the irrelevant chronicling of incidents which one finds in classical historians such as Cassius Dio. Sarpi's approach to historiography allows for a more "economical" treatment of his subject by dispensing with much that is of little value to the exposition of his chosen topic. This is not to say, however, that Sarpi's work is characterized by either carelessness or brevity. His works are both detailed and extensive.

Despite the extent of Sarpi's writings and (perhaps partially because of) their focused quality, the author himself remains a rather enigmatic figure.⁵⁶ He was embroiled in controversy in his own time, and the secrecy which he felt self-defense necessitated contributed to the confusion surrounding the problem of gaining a clear picture of the man from his works. He was, of necessity, often covert concerning his views and role. His earliest work, The History of the Interdict, had to be smuggled to England lest it be intercepted and forwarded to Rome. The History of the Council was published in London under the name of Pietro Soave Polano--which turns out to be an anagram of

56. William Bouwsma, "Venice, Spain, and the Papacy: Paolo Sarpi and the Renaissance Tradition!" in The Late Italian Renaissance, edited by Eric Cochrane (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1970), p. 354, states "Yet there is still no satisfactory general work on Sarpi, nor is there any generally accepted interpretation of his personality, his thought, and his purposes."

Paolo Sarpi Veneto. The authorship of one minor treatise, often attributed to Sarpi, remains in dispute.⁵⁷ Nor was this secrecy unwarranted. In 1607 three assassins attacked Sarpi, stabbing him twice in the neck and once in the temple. Of the attack, Sarpi commented

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57. I refer here to the pamphlet entitled Opinione come debba governarsi internamente ed esternamente la repubblica di Venezia per avere il perpetuo dominio. There is an English edition of this work under the title Advice given to the republick of Venice, translated by Dr. Aglionby (London: For Christopher Nobbes, 1693). Aglionby offers no proof that the author is Sarpi. He states in his prefatory note that "...there needs no other proof than the reading of it...", and goes on to assert that the 'style' and 'manner of thinking' are Sarpi's. This is quite patently absurd. The work is extremely short--consisting of only one hundred and nineteen very short pages--quite unlike the methodical and extended treatments which we find in works known to have issued from Sarpi's hand. Further, the thrust of the argument put forth in the pamphlet is in direct opposition to the themes which we find in Sarpi's work. Curiously, a number of scholars have accepted the pamphlet as Sarpi's without ever tackling the question of authorship. For example, Gaetano Mosca, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-98, condemns Sarpi as amoral on this basis. Luigi Salvatorelli uses the question of authorship in his article "Paolo Sarpi", in Contributi alla storia del Concilio di Trento e della Controriforma in Quaderni di 'Belfagor', Vol. I (1948), to portray the enigmatic character of Sarpi. "That a writing of the type and content, to use the words of Bianchi Giovani, of 'atrocious advice', has been repeatedly attributed, over a long period of time, to Fra Paolo is sufficient to demonstrate how little known...remains the highly moral personality of [Sarpi]." (p. 137) I am convinced that the work is not Sarpi's.

The English translation and its attribution to Sarpi raises a number of interesting questions which are outside the purview of this thesis. After pointing out that the work most accurately portrays the Republic of Venice and the character of Sarpi as well, Aglionby goes on to dedicate the work to Henry Viscount Sydney, the Lord Lieutenant to Ireland. The result is to discredit the Republic, Sarpi himself, and to implicitly raise a number of questions regarding the relationship of Catholics to the state. Is the attribution to Sarpi an unconscious error, or did Aglionby have some other purpose in mind when he dedicates such a work to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland?

"agnosco stylum romanae curiae"--I recognize the style (or 'dagger') of the Roman court. Although it is uncertain, speculation at the time considered the Pope's nephew responsible for the attack.

Sarpi's sustained criticism of the Roman Court and the Chiesa romana (which he constantly contrasted to the Chiesa di Dio) led to yet more speculation and confusion about the man. Bishop Bossuet referred to him as a Protestant in friar's clothing, and indeed, many of his closest friends and confidants were Protestant. His attacks upon the Catholic Church often have a resounding Lutheran or Calvinist ring. We know that in 1603 he discussed the possibility of introducing Protestantism into Venice with the German envoy.⁵⁸ But for all the evidence of a Protestant in monk's clothing, the more realistic appraisal would seem to be that of the historian Peter Burke, who characterizes Sarpi as a "Jansenist before Jansen."⁵⁹ His sustained attack upon the Church was motivated not out of Protestant leanings, but rather out of the concern that the Church, like more mundane political institutions, had gone through cycles which had led to its decay and corruption. His continued contrasts of the Church of Rome with the primitive Church helped to produce the aura of Protestantism.

58. Ibid., p. xvii.

59. Ibid., p. xviii. On this point, see also Frances A. Yates, Paolo Sarpi's 'History of the Council of Trent', in Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, Vol. 7(1947), pp. 127-128; and Salvatorelli, op. cit., p. 144.

Unravelling the mystery and confusion surrounding Sarpi is no straightforward task. His prime area of focus is that of the institutions of the Church, and it is only tangentially that we gain insight into his political philosophy. Further, Sarpi was a very subtle writer, and it is only by combing through the various histories, picking out pieces and fragments, and then fitting them together that we begin to gain an understanding of the man and his ideas. We find a central theme running through Sarpi's major works, and it is this which gives us the clearest picture of the man. This is the theme of the exercise of will in a free environment, and the obligation to be morally rigorous in the selection of courses of action. Sarpi repeatedly returns to the proposition that weakness and corruption in the church and in government are the result of moral laxity on the part of individual men. Choices have been made and courses of action followed, which are, in fact "wrong choices," Yates points to this theme in her discussion of the History of the Council: "If the right course had been pursued at Trent, Sarpi indirectly suggests, the Church as a whole would have been reformed... But the wrong course was pursued, and the Church, instead of being reformed, was deformed with new papal usurpations."⁶⁰ These "wrong choices" are, for Sarpi, the result of men's moral deficiencies and the strong attraction of wealth and power. We find this theme in

60. Yates, op. cit., p. 133.

his History of the Council and his History of the Inquisition. It is the basis of the History of the Benefices and his History of the Interdict.

This theme is important to Sarpi's treatment of the decline and debasement of sacred institutions because the question of the fallen state of the Church was not, for him, merely a question involving religion and clerical practices. It was, above all, a problem revolving around politico-moral considerations. Venice represented what the primitive Church had been, and the salvation of Venice and the Church were integrally tied to one another. Those forces which had led to the decay of the Church were the same which threatened both Venice and the Chiesa di Dio.⁶¹ The basis upon which the alliance of the Pope, the Jesuits, and the King of Spain rested was the absolutism which characterized the three members. The reform and salvation of the Church, according to Sarpi, rested with the laity through the mechanism of the State. If the Church was to be reformed, it was necessary first of all to maintain the Republic of Venice; for the ideals upon which the Republic rested were the very ideals requisite for a return to the spirit of the primitive Church in a changed age. Libby points to

61. I am employing Sarpi's term here for the sake of clarity. The Chiesa di Dio (Church of God) is best exemplified in the practices of the primitive church, before the enormous increase in wealth and power enjoyed by the Catholic Church during the medieval era.

this affinity between the republican theme of the Venetian myth and the problems of reform within the Church; and we see that the ideals embodied in the myth of Venice are utilized to illuminate and address greater issues--issues outside the purview of Venetian politics as someone such as Contarini envisaged that sphere:

After 1570, the republican theme in the idealization of Venice became merged with the ecclesiastical conception of the Protestant and Catholic enemies of the Counter-Reformation.⁶²

The interconnection between politics and morality, for Sarpi, was that political experience, like religious experience, was--or ought to be--essentially concerned with the development of the moral capacity of the individual.⁶³ The state was the embodiment of political life, just as the Church was the embodiment of the religious; and the proper raison d'etre of both institutions was to facilitate and encourage piety and the moral development of men. Like Paruta, Sarpi sees no conflict between state and Church provided--and this is the key issue--that both are properly organized and that men properly govern their own actions. Sarpi finds the model of the proper state organization in the Venetian example, and the model of proper ecclesiastical organization in the ancient Church. Both institutions concerned themselves with the moral development of men. Bouwsma, in dealing with the state of Sarpi scholarship, sees the failure to

62. Libby, op. cit., p. 44.

63. Chabod, Scritti sul Rinascimento, pp. 471-72.

recognize the relationship between these two institutions as a major impediment to gaining an understanding of Sarpi and his work.

The first problem, whether Sarpi's motives were essentially religious or political, depends on a tendency to distinguish between religion and politics, and hence between church and state. That distinction is characteristic only of more modern times. For Sarpi, as for the supporters of the pope, the struggle between Venice and the papacy was only one more chapter in the age-old debate about the location of supreme authority in Christendom.⁶⁴

Bouwsma, as we shall see, has overstated his case; for Sarpi does distinguish between Church and state. Although overstating his case, however, Bouwsma points to an important consideration; and that is that politics and religion are, for Sarpi, but parts of the same quest. Again, like Paruta, both phenomena are but aspects of the same grand task given to men by God. That task is the moral development and growth of men; and this is most effectively realized, for Sarpi, by allowing the individual the opportunity of operating with the spirit of the law.

Sarpi often displays a great optimism regarding the ability of men to act within the spirit of the law by tempering their appetites and governing their actions with the recognition of an equal claim by others, or the recognition of obligations to the spirit of the laws of God. The great vehicle for this tempering of one's appetites is, for Sarpi, that of faith. The modesty and humility which Sarpi sees as characteristic of the common man, are much more effective in terms of a guide to moral behaviour than is reason. Paruta, we recall, suggested

64. Bouwsma, "Venice, Spain, and the Papacy," p. 355.

that the appetites were modified by reason, and that the nature of men's actions should be governed by the coalescence of these two faculties. Sarpi's reliance upon modesty and humility as the operative modifiers of man's appetites is perhaps derivative of the values of his Servite background, and reflects a sense of morality which embodies tenets of behaviour different from those envisaged by Paruta. We shall see this difference in their respective treatments of wealth. Reason, for Sarpi, is often corrupted when one becomes accustomed to wealth and power. The loss of humility and modesty is the salient feature in the transition from "common man" to prince. Thus, for Sarpi, the moral essence of political activity is found in an active role by the humble and modest. His preference for Venetian republicanism and the direct democracy of the primitive Church is partially based upon this conception that those most fit to participate are those whose moral rigour is uncorrupted by ambition. For Sarpi, politico-moral life is one of choices of courses of action; and given the proper moral rigour, there is no difference between the two types of action. It is only when men become corrupted that a difference can be said to exist between the actions appropriate to political life and those of a moral life.

It is this theme of the obligation of moral rigour applied to the exercise of will which is central to Sarpi's work and which deserves closer attention. Sarpi sees intelligence and knowledge of the situation at hand as requisite to the proper exercise of will. Regarding the intelligence of man and his ability to correctly apprehend his situation, Sarpi appears ambiguous. On the one hand, he displays an optimistic outlook

regarding the ability of the common man to understand his situation if unimpeded by outside forces. On the other hand, reflected in his distrust of universalism, is his pessimistic view of the prospect of man's ability to synthesize this knowledge. The strong attraction of the primitive Church for Sarpi was the very fact that the laity played an integral role in its governance. Likewise, Venice was closest to this ideal of a democracy. The impetus to this optimism seems to stem from two attributes of the common man, which are lacking in those who are accustomed to power. Firstly, the common man is aware of local needs and variety more than it is possible for the leader of a great entity to be. The common man lives and works in his own area with its local customs, needs, and practices. The Pope in Rome as the spiritual leader of Christendom cannot possibly be aware of all of the spiritual needs of a mountain village near Brescia; nor, as the political leader of the Papal States, can he be fully aware of the political needs of all the citizens under his domain. Sarpi sees close and consistent contact with a community as requisite to an understanding of the needs of that community. Even the itinerant friar does not fill the bill according to Sarpi:

And so the flock remaineth without either Shepheard or Hireling, because these ambulatory Preachers, who to day are in one City, to morrow in another, know neither the need, nor the capacity of the people, and least of all the occasions to teach and edify them, as doth the proper Pastour, who liveth always with the flock, and knoweth the necessities and infirmities of it.⁶⁵

65. Sarpi, The History of the Council of Trent, p. 159. Also on this point see his A Treatise of Matters Beneficiary, translated by Will Denton (London: Thomas Hodgkin, 1680), pp. 40-41; and his The History of the Inquisition, translated by R. Gentilis (London: J. Oakes for H. Mosley, 1639), Chapter XXXIV.

The Pope is in a less strong position than even the itinerant friar with regard to this problem. Most often he has no direct knowledge of the community on whose behalf he is making decisions. Much of Sarpi's distrust on universalism--whether it be religious or political--is grounded in his belief that the common man is most familiar with the situation in which he lives and works.

The second attribute which the common man enjoys, but which leaders most often lack, is that he is uncorrupted by the habits of power and wealth. Here Sarpi combines classical notions of political degeneration with an Augustinian preference for humility and modesty. Because those accustomed to wealth and the exercise of power have lost the attribute of humility, they often begin to exercise that wealth and power in such a manner as to deviate from moral purposes. His faith in the ability of the common man to exercise his intelligence in terms of making proper choices is portrayed in Sarpi's oft quoted remark "...without Rome, religion would reform itself."⁶⁶

There are problems involved in Sarpi's treatment of these two attributes (awareness of local conditions and humility) of the common man. If the spiritual needs of a provincial community are so fundamentally different from those which surround the Pope in Rome that he cannot fulfill the office of a spiritual leader to the provincial community, it would seem to follow that Sarpi is arguing for what W. B. Gallie has called a 'polyarchic view' of morality in which there are

66. Cited in Sarpi, HBHC, p. xvi.

an indefinite number of valid moral standards; and that those standards which apply in Rome do not necessarily apply in other communities. Sarpi, however, does not pursue the argument to its logical conclusion, but falls back upon those standards and ideals derived from the very Church whose leaders he is attacking. His recourse to 'humility and modesty' as the necessary qualities to ensure that men do not deviate from moral purposes suggests that he is relying upon codes of conduct embodied in the Church; and that he retains the 'monarchic view' which Gallie characterizes as one in which "...in every moral situation there is only one right judgement to be made or action to be chosen..."⁶⁷ Sarpi is not, then, arguing for the polyarchic view of morality which his initial premise suggests. In the end he returns to the tenets of established Christian tradition, and shifts his argument to demonstrate that those in the provinces are more qualified to make the decisions which govern their lives, not because they are more familiar with their situation, but because they are the true holders of that Christian tradition while those in the Church hierarchy in Rome have allowed the ideals of that tradition to become corrupted. It is this which, in the end, necessitates his distinction between the Chiesa romana and the Chiesa di Dio.

In contrast to the faith in the intelligence of the common man, Sarpi often appears quite skeptical regarding the intellectual capacity of men to understand their world and act in a manner congruent with the demands of a moral life. Human reason, for Sarpi, is incapable of

67. W. G. Gallie, "Liberal Morality and Socialist Morality," in Philosophy, Politics and Society, edited by Peter Laslett (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956), p. 116.

passing from the immediate and concrete particular to general abstract principles.⁶⁸ It is this, in part, which led to his denunciation of the universalist doctrines emanating from Rome, and his preference for the republican traditions of Venice and the democratic practices of the Chiesa di Dio. In Venice, as in the Chiesa di Dio, were to be found practices wherein those directly concerned were participating in the decisions which governed their lives; and those decisions presumably were attuned to the concrete and particular circumstance rather than a universal, abstract--and Sarpi would argue, only vaguely understood--principle. Much of Sarpi's antipathy toward the Council derived from his view that it represented a move toward a revision of clerical practices to the end of re-asserting the universal nature of the Church. He viewed it as an attempt at a re-establishment of papal hegemony based upon a systematic set of generalized principles which held for all men; and he maintained that all system was presumptuous--that human experience could only consist of a number of concrete, particular experiences which could not be synthesized and systematized by human reason.

More important than Sarpi's distrust of man's rational capacities to systematize experience into general principles, however, is the reason

68. See Bouwsma, "Venice, Spain, and the Papacy," passim.

for this distrust. For Sarpi, man's intelligence could not be fully trusted because of men's moral defects. Moral weakness tends to interfere with man's intelligence and cloud his judgement; and choices and courses of action represent not moral concerns but more often, rather interest, greed, or pride. A common theme throughout the History of the Interdict and the History of the Council is the rampant reliance upon interest rather than ideals. Sarpi portrays the papal position at the Council as one of negotiations based upon worldly interest rather than questions of religion. The reliance upon interest and greed, rather than the purposes for which it was founded, was the basis of the decline and debasement of the clergy which Sarpi saw.⁶⁹ He pursues the problem in the History of the Benefices, and points to the interference of greed with man's intellectual capabilities;

...the great Devotion of Princes and of the people, as it caused the Wealth of the Clergy to encrease abundantly, so it excited a great Thirst in the Ecclesiastical Ministers, to Multiply it or heap it up; from which excess not so much as the wel-minded men were free;...⁷⁰

The inability or unwillingness of man to counter-balance the forces of greed and ambition interfere with his ability to correctly apprehend his situation and make the proper (i.e., moral) choices as to courses of action. The moral exercise of will requires intellect unclouded by greed and ambition.

69. Bouwsma, "Venice, Spain and the Papacy", pp. 373-74, discusses this "inversion of values" in the clergy.

70. Sarpi, A Treatise of Matters Beneficiary, p. 6.

The dichotomy between the rational capabilities of the common man, and perversion of that faculty by those in prominent positions most often appears to be based upon the absence of humility and modesty so central to Sarpi's adopted Augustinian model of man. Power, when connected with a sense of universalism--whether it be political, religious or intellectual--tends to corrupt the souls of men. Pride, greed, and ambition are the psychological attributes or personality traits which cloud the powerful man's intellect and lead him astray. They are the attributes which overpower the humility which Sarpi sees as one of the strongest characteristics of the common man who aspires not to greatness, but is content to look after himself, his family, and the community in which he lives and works. This central position of ambition, or pride, can be seen in Sarpi's objection to scholasticism. Bouwsma characterizes Sarpi's position as follows:

But Sarpi's objection to scholasticism was not only directed against its method, so inappropriate to Christian faith. He also held it in contempt... for moral reasons. He believed that the impulse to articulate and systematize religious beliefs was basically neither spiritual nor intellectual but chiefly expressed only pride and malice.⁷¹

The interference of greed and ambition with sound judgement is found in the political sphere as well. Sarpi speaks of the political actor "...who per ragion di Stato makes any thing lawfull, how contrary

71. Bouwsma, Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty, p. 575.

soever to the honour of God, and the maintenance of his holy Catholique faith..."⁷²

The basic distrust of the judgement of those accustomed to wealth and power led to Sarpi's preference for the republicanism which characterized the internal affairs of Venice; it enhanced his view of Venice as a counter-vailing force to the court of Rome; and it led to his advocacy of secular participation in the Church and Council. Peter Burke characterizes the view here as a "conspiracy theory of history", but this seems to miss the point.⁷³ Rather than seeing Sarpi as reductionistic, painting history as a conspiratorial power-struggle, it is more accurate to view him as portraying the ramifications of the departure from the Augustinian model when man is unable to overcome the attractions of wealth, power, and pride.

In sum, Sarpi's position is that men have the requisite intelligence for moral action. Moral activity, however, suffers to the extent that men allow their rational nature to be dominated by factors such as greed and ambition. In order to minimize the impact of these two factors, decisions which govern men's lives should be made by those

72. Sarpi, The Cruell Subtilty of Ambition, translated by Sir Thomas Roe (London: 1650), p. 36. This is an interesting and pregnant line. From it we can infer 1) that Sarpi does not see ragion di stato as a legitimate basis of law; and 2) while "honour of God" and maintenance of the Catholic faith may not be the basis of good law, they are, at least, congruent with it. See Salvatorelli, op. cit., p. 142, where he suggests that Sarpi might be considered 'Machiavellian' in that he exploits 'politics' for the sake of 'religion'.

73. Sarpi, HBHC, p. xxv.

not corrupted by power and wealth. In the political sphere, this is accomplished, according to Sarpi, through the republicanism such as that found in Venice. In the spiritual realm, Sarpi advocates the participation of laity. The democracy of the Chiesa di Dio offered a means of government in which greed and ambition were either minimal or non-existent. The civic perfection of Venice, for Sarpi, consisted in the fact that no group or faction dominated the whole for its own ends. The recognition of an equal claim allowed for a greater degree of individual choice and responsibility, and implied the denial of the papal notions of universalism which sanctioned the dictation of standards of behaviour for the individual by an impersonal, and often abstract, authority. This civic perfection was, for Sarpi, the basis of Venice's religious excellence.⁷⁴

Besides intelligence and the knowledge of the situation at hand, Sarpi's theme regarding the obligation of moral rigour also requires that action be based upon a consciousness of rectitude. For Sarpi, one can not properly speak of those actions precipitated by custom, habit or, most importantly, coercion as being moral choices. The individual must freely choose to follow a given course of action because he is conscious of it being the right course of action. Moral action, for Sarpi, is action congruent with the spirit of the law.

If the actions of an individual in obeying the law are precipitated solely by a consciousness of rectitude, we must, then, pre-suppose that he acts within a free environment; for in an unfree

74. Bouwsma, Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty, p. 550.

environment actions are often based upon other considerations. For Sarpi, a free environment was one which left the widest possible latitude to the individual and was necessary in order that men be given the opportunity of choosing which course of action they might follow. Sarpi speaks of this liberty as the power of the individual. It is the power of choosing to do or not to do.⁷⁵ Man can only exercise his will in an environment which allows him the opportunity of choice--of compliance with the spirit of the law or non-compliance. And it is the opportunity of choice which is the first pre-requisite to any form of moral action; for as Stumpf has pointed out, "...if the association of law with morality is too close, then the law will become the substitute for our moral standards."⁷⁶ Bouwsma characterizes this concern for the opportunity of choice as 'right' and 'duty' in the writings of Sarpi:

Moreover, Sarpi insisted on the right and duty of individual judgment in religious matters, which he held to be superior to the collective judgment of the Church as expressed by ecclesiastical authority.⁷⁷

Sarpi's concern for the opportunity to choose to obey the spirit of the law is perhaps nowhere more clearly portrayed than in his treatment of the Papal Index. Book VI of the History of the Council is largely devoted to a discussion of this topic. By pronouncing upon what books may or may not be read by the faithful, the Church,

75. See Luigi Russo, ed., I classici italiani (Florence: Sansoni 1970)1 Vol. II, Part II, pp. 49-51.

76. Samuel Enoch Stumpf, Morality and the Law (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1966), p. 219.

77. Bouwsma, "Venice, Spain and the Papacy", p. 371.

says Sarpi, has removed from them the opportunity to act in a pious manner with regard to this particular situation. This lack of freedom denied to the public the opportunity to act in the spirit of the law. Men could not elect to ignore certain writings out of a consciousness of rectitude, for the choice had already been made for them. What is lost in religion is the spirit of its practices. In the primitive Church, certain materials had come under a form of informal and personal censure which the individual exercised because of his own desires to act in a pious manner. The establishment and growth of the Papal Index had foreclosed that form of pious action. One therefore acted in an unfree environment, and not necessarily from a consciousness of rectitude. Sarpi sums up his disapproval of the Index: "In sum, a better mystery was never found, than to use Religion to make men insensible."⁷⁸ A free environment was, for Sarpi, the sine qua non for 'acting from a consciousness of rectitude'. If men are legally obliged to act in a pious manner they simply cannot be acting within the spirit of the law. Voluntary compliance with standards of piety can only take place in a free environment where one has the opportunity to choose to obey or to ignore. That is, the notion of freedom entails the possibility of at least two alternative courses of action

78. Sarpi, The History of the Council, p. 443. See also Sarpi, Scritti Giurisdizionalistici, edited by Giovanni Gambarin (Bari: Laterza & Figli, 1958), pp. 213-231. For an extended treatment of the history of censorship in sixteenth century Venice, see Giovanni Sforza, "La controriforma a Venezia," in Archivio storico Italiano 1935, Volumes I and II.

and voluntary compliance assumes that freedom.⁷⁹ The absence of such freedom robs the individual of the opportunity for choice, and thereby denigrates the spirit of his actions.

As a major threat to a free environment in Renaissance Italy, Sarpi saw the growing political influence of the Church, and this threat lies at the base of much of his writing. Angered and frustrated at the failure of the Council of Trent, and what he perceived to be its manipulation by the Roman court to gain temporal ends, he devoted much of his work, particularly after the Interdict, to fighting the counter-reformation, and to defending the Venetian heritage of local autonomy. Salvatorelli identifies the problem and points to inter-relationship of the political and religious aspects of that problem:

One thing was certain for him: the enemy was Rome. Political enemy? Yes, political inasmuch as the battle was necessarily carried out on political grounds; but religious if one looked to the ultimate motives of the battle through the eyes of Sarpi.⁸⁰

Central to his task is Sarpi's conception of the relationship of secular authority to sacred authority. He appears to begin with an Augustinian model of the two types of authority, modifying that position somewhat as his exposition takes on greater form. Sarpi sees the

79. See William E. Connolly, The Terms of Political Discourse (Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1974), pp. 146-51, and 158.

80. Salvatorelli, op. cit., p. 141.

two spheres of authority as separate and distinct, and often chastises the Chiesa romana for adopting both ends and means appropriate to the state. In his condemnation of a papal bull issued by Leo X in June of 1520, Sarpi alludes to a difference between the two types of authority which requires different forms of action: "First, concerning the form, that the Pope should proceed to a declaration with clauses of the Palace in a matter which ought to be handled with words to the holy Scripture;..."⁸¹ The Augustinian notion of the two realms did not coincide with a Renaissance papacy greatly interested in political and territorial aggrandizement.

Sarpi, at one point, delineates the two spheres clearly:

God has instituted two governments in the world, one spiritual and the other temporal, each of them supreme and independent from the other. One of these is the ecclesiastical ministry, the other is the political governance. He has given the spiritual to the care of the prelates, the temporal to the princes; thus it was well said by the ancients that the ecclesiastics are vicars of Christ in spiritual things, and the princes vicars of God in temporal things. Therefore, where the salvation of the soul is involved all men, including princes, are subject to the ecclesiastics; but where public tranquility and civil life are involved all men, including ecclesiastics, are subject to the prince.⁸²

A rather curious twist is given to this conception, however, when Sarpi attempted to reverse the Jesuit conception of the divine authority of

81. Ibid., p. 11.

82. From a consulto of 1608, cited in Bouwsma, Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty, p. 540. Cf. Bouwsma, "Venice, Spain, and the Papacy", p. 355.

the Pope and the human authority of political governors. He merely asserts that political authority is instituted by God. He employs a more circuitous route, however, to show that the ecclesiastical authority exercised by the clergy is not instituted by God. This is accomplished by reference to the primitive Church. While ecclesiastical authority emanated from God, it had originally been given to the body of believers. Those who occupied positions in the ecclesiastical hierarchy did so at the wish of the corpus of the Church, and the ecclesiastical authority continued to reside in the body of believers.⁸³ It was this authority, residing in the body, which allowed for, and demanded regulation by the laity of clerical abuses. In the Chiesa di Dio, the ecclesiastical hierarchy had a representative function. It was the representation of the body of believers and a mechanism of self-government. Those in positions of authority in the ecclesiastical hierarchy were there, not to dictate, cajole, and exploit, but rather to serve and lead. That the primitive Church had originally been a democratic republic indicated to Sarpi that the clergy were not of a special status, but rather were given a specific task by the corpus of the Church. As a step to the return to the spirit of this institution, he advocated the denial of any form of special status to the clergy. The clergy, then, is subject to the civil authority in civil affairs, and subject to the body of the Church with regard to spiritual abuses.

83. On this point, see Bouwsma, "Venice, Spain, and the Papacy", pp. 371-372.

The importance of this to Sarpi's theory is not only as an attempt to reverse the power-hold of the papacy and the Jesuits, but also as an attempt to provide a setting for a greater degree of moral action and obedience to the spirit of the laws of God. Encroachment upon the secular domain by the sacred powers had threatened not only to usurp that domain and render political life meaningless; but further it threatened the essence of sacred authority itself. As those in the ecclesiastical hierarchy devoted themselves to the realization of temporal ends, they became subject to the vices of the world such as greed for power and wealth, and deviated from their mission of service to the body of the Church. The blurring of the boundaries of authority was deleterious to both spheres, as the sacred tended to usurp the domain of the secular and, in the process, become corrupted.⁸⁴

This blurring of the boundaries between sacred and secular authority was, for Sarpi, an important issue which arose out of men's inability or unwillingness to govern their actions according to right rather than greed and ambition; and he leaves no doubt as to where he places the bulk of the fault for this state of affairs. As bishops had come to usurp the duties of deacons and became preoccupied with the temporal goods of the Church, matters of faith and duties such as

84. For example, Sarpi traces this problem of the blurring of boundaries with regard to the role of the bishop in A Treatise of Matters Beneficiary. The expansion of the judicial role of bishops had been legitimized through a series of imperial decrees, making the bishop, in fact, a functionary of the state. See Sarpi, HBHC, pp. 15-20, and The History of the Inquisition, Chapter XXXI. See also, Bouwsma, "Venice, Spain, and the Papacy", pp. 373-374.

alms-giving came to be of secondary importance. The problem of the neglect of these matters was compounded by the fact that the rivalry over temporal goods threatened the public peace. The authority of the prince was called for then, in that the interest of ambitious clergy in temporal goods was an impediment to the "quietness of the state."⁸⁵ Further, the authority of the prince was brought into the matter because the duty of the prince was seen to encompass the protection of the Church, and to assure that ecclesiastical matters were governed in a legal manner.⁸⁶ Sarpi's portrayal of the malevolence of the clergy is not limited to demonstrating their greed for temporal goods and the problems which arose out of this. The problem of the blurring of the boundaries of authority was also partially the result of ambition for greater power. While this problem might be viewed as one of two authority structures which serve the public in different manners, Sarpi's portrayal of the genesis of the problem is one of a naked ambition for power on the part of the clergy. The area of ecclesiastical jurisdiction had originally been a matter delegated by the prince, but with the passage of time bishops had come to view it as their right and prerogative. With the shift in the duties of the bishop came a shift in the de facto qualifications for one to succeed to the bishopric. One versed in rhetoric and canon law came to be preferred above the pious and those well versed in matters of faith, and a

85. Sarpi, A Treatise of Matters Beneficiary, p. 10.

86. Ibid.

tendency developed for those in power to overstep their jurisdiction and arrogate unto themselves more than was just. Again, greed and ambition lie at the heart of the problem. A strict division between sacred and secular authority was possible only so long as men were motivated by justice and the fulfillment of specific duties and responsibilities. Once greed and ambition came to be the prime motives of action, responsibility was shirked and a threat to the public peace ensued: "But because the desire of gaine is so unrul'd, that oftentimes exceeding, it doth induce men to commit things against honesty..."⁸⁷

Sarpi's preference is clearly for a greater scope of political authority. This is clearly manifest in his treatment of the inquisition and trials of heresy. The trial of heresy, he states, has three parts: 1) whether or not an opinion is heretical; 2) whether or not the person held that opinion; and 3) the sentence. Of the three parts, only the first, he says belongs to the ecclesiastical authority while the latter two properly belong to the secular authority.⁸⁸ Further, most cases of heresy contain a secular component because they disturb the public tranquility; and "...offences which trouble the publicke rest, doe belong to the Secular power, although the Persons bee Ecclesiasticall."⁸⁹ Even in what would appear to be

87. Sarpi, The History of the Inquisition, p. 86.

88. Ibid., p. 8

89. Ibid., p. 33

an essentially ecclesiastical matter then, Sarpi has made the widest possible allowance for the secular authority.

Sarpi's attempt to place limitations upon the power of the clergy is based upon two beliefs. Firstly, the historical development of the clergy had transformed it into an earthly institution, which had degenerated through the perniciousness of its members. Sarpi seems to say that they are, in fact, worse than other men: "... kingdoms and principalities should not be governed by the laws and interests of priests, who are more than other men interested in their own greatness and convenience."⁹⁰ Secondly, Sarpi's attempt to limit the power of the clergy appears to be based upon a belief in the divinity of the lay magistrate and his close connection with the situation at hand. The universalist claims of the Roman Church could most effectively be checked by placing limitations upon the bailiwick of ecclesiastical authority.

Sarpi's work exhibits a dual thrust. He is concerned with a defense of Venice and her republicanism and local autonomy. Secondly, he is concerned with exposing and attacking the Counter-Reformation, which he viewed as motivated by greed and ambition. These two major concerns were not unrelated, as both problems had their roots in the same phenomenon. The development of the Church from an early democracy to a complex constitutional structure had rendered it into

90. Cited in Bouwsma, Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty, p. 589.

an earthly polity, and therefore subject to transformation through cycles of decay. This decay had taken place, according to Sarpi, and this was the basis of the need for reform within the Church, and also the basis of the need to defend Venice against attempted encroachment by the papacy. Temporal ambition on the part of the papacy was the essence of this decay.

Sarpi views the evolution of ecclesiastical polity as the slow degeneration from an original republicanism, of which Venice in his own time could be taken as the surviving model, into a tyranny such as (if one may read between the lines) had engulfed other republics, notably Florence in the last century.⁹¹

We see here a classical question of political philosophy: "How does a republic degenerate into a tyrannical principate?" Sarpi's answer is articulated through his histories; and it is that this degeneration comes about through the lack of moral rigour. At key points in history, men have failed to exercise due caution, and have allowed courses of action to be followed which were motivated by greed, ambition, or pride.⁹²

For Sarpi, those practices and values embodied in the Venetian tradition and what has come to be called the 'myth of Venice' offered the individual the greatest opportunity for development and action. Not coincidentally, these were the same practices and values

91. William J. Bouwsma, "Three Types of Historiography in Post-Renaissance Italy", in *Theory and History*, Vol. IV, No. 3 (1964), p. 313.

92. See Salvatorelli, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-140.

which Sarpi saw as characteristic of the ancient Church. Also not coincidentally, Sarpi saw the defense of those practices and values embodied in the Republic as the first step in defending against the attempted encroachment by the Court of Rome. The concerns and values which shape his conception of politics, then, have a dual legitimacy. They are legitimized by virtue of their being the practices of the ancient Church, and by the long tradition of the Venetian Republic. Further they were, at the time of Sarpi's writing, the very values and concerns which were at the forefront of the bitterly contested rivalry between the Republic and the papacy.

III

Both Paruta and Sarpi conceive of politics as, essentially, a moral endeavour. Politics, for Paruta, is an activity whose end is to ennoble men above other species and elevate them to that "more noble state." It is, for him, integrally tied to virtuous action. Sarpi also sees the end of politics as one of moral growth. The state, like the Church, existed to facilitate and encourage piety and moral growth of the individual. For these men, the raison d'etre of politics was bound up with an essentially moral endeavour.

These two writers focus on a common theme, which might be termed 'responsible action.' The theme consists of three areas of consideration: 1) choice; 2) responsibility; and 3) action. First, with regard to the choice of courses of action, both writers offer a framework of ideals or criteria by which the individual is to gauge his choice. For Paruta, the two criteria are those of 'prudence' and 'justice'.

These two ideals are, for him, the union of reason and will, and are the first steps to virtuous action. Individual choices of courses of action should, above all, be regulated by these considerations. For Sarpi, the choice of courses of action should be guided by humility and modesty. The motivation of action by greed and ambition was, for him, the great downfall of the clergy and the potential pitfall of all political actors. Diligence was required to assure that individual action was not motivated by ambition and greed. Further, both men share a preference for diversity and local influence in the choice of action. Paruta's emphasis upon individualism and the concomitant diversity in human behaviour shares much with Sarpi's distrust of universalism, his emphasis upon localism, and his great faith in the common man to comprehend his personal situation and act in a pious and moral manner.

Secondly, both writers emphasize the responsibility of the individual with regard to political action. For both men, the ultimate responsibility for action should, and did, rest with the individual. The necessitated a free environment where one had the opportunity of obedience or non-obedience, of acting within the spirit of the law rather than solely within the letter of the law. Sarpi portrays this individual responsibility in terms of acting from a consciousness of rectitude; and points out that the best situation is one where men are free to accept the responsibility of choice, but where there is an attendant moral obligation to temper those choices with a sense of piety, humility and faith, and to guard against the influence of greed, ambition and

pride in one's actions. Likewise, Paruta locates ultimate responsibility in the individual. While the state, or the Church, may offer guidance to the individual, ultimately action rests within the individual will; and the utilization of prudence and justice can only come from the individual man. It is the responsibility of the individual to guide his choices and actions by these two considerations. The use of prudence cannot be legislated by the state, nor forced by Church. Both men have seemingly recognized that acceptance of responsibility for one's actions is integral to the task of the 'elevation to a more noble state' or a moral development. They have located that responsibility for proper choices of courses of action within the individual.

The third area of consideration in the development of this common theme is the emphasis placed upon action. It is through acting upon one's choices that one achieves the greatest degree of happiness, and it is action which affords one the greatest opportunity for growth and the realization of diverse potentials. Paruta speaks of action to confirm habit, and portrays an ascending scale of conscious action which leads to the greatest happiness for men. Only by combining the contemplative virtues with action can men realize that more noble state which God has given to men. Sarpi, likewise portrays action as a keystone to happiness and development. Men cannot realize their human potential without making the qualitative step from willing to acting. His advocacy of the participation of the laity in the governing of the

Church was not merely as a means to counteract the influence of those accustomed to power and wealth, but also because it afforded to the laity the opportunity for development through this participation. As in the Chiesa di Dio, participation in the governing of the Church afforded the laity the opportunity to act on the basis of responsibly made choices. Sarpi's portrayal of the Church is one of an institution bent upon foreclosing this avenue of growth not only in terms of its own practices, but also within the political institutions of the Venetian state.

The theme of 'responsible action' is central to the works of both authors, and it is this theme which forms the basis of their view of politics as a moral endeavour. Politics, for them, is of value precisely because it affords men the opportunity for growth and ennoblement through action. Because politics is a moral endeavour whose purpose is to aid the individual in his quest for perfection, the central core of political action must be aimed at serving that purpose; and for both writers political action is centered around choice, an acceptance of responsibility for that choice, and the implementation of that choice through action.

This theme of 'responsible action' is of significance for it points to a fundamental break with the conception of politics as the lessons of history with regard to the nature of political man. Contarini, we recall, portrayed political man as a discoverer of patterns offered by nature and by history. Political action in that

conception of politics consists of discovering patterns and of adopting those patterns in the formulation of positive law. Within the conception of politics as a moral endeavour, however, we have a notion of 'man the actor' or 'man the participant' as opposed to 'man the discoverer'. We have seen that within the conception of politics as the lessons of history, the basis of positive law is outside the bounds of man's creation and is rather part of God's creation, and that this view of law leaves a relatively bounded scope of action for the individual political actor. Within the conception of politics as a moral endeavour, the greatest possible allowances are made in setting the scope of political action. Political man is no longer merely discovering; rather it is his right and duty to participate and to act. Further, that participation and action is properly bounded only by internal considerations such as justice, moderation, temperance, humility and liberality, and not by external considerations such as a vague notion of the patterns infused by God into nature. Those external parameters are beyond the comprehension of human reason, and men must guide their actions by that which they can comprehend.

At the base of the limitations of this view of politics is a conception of morality which is constructed largely in terms of the individual. Both Paruta and Sarpi attempt to transplant a conception of morality appropriate to the individual into the political realm by demonstrating that the virtues appropriate to the individual are

likewise appropriate to political life. They do not construct a separate and discrete public morality which is justified in terms of the civil community, but rather rely upon a notion of morality which speaks to the actions of individual men. This reliance upon an individualist morality applied to the political setting leads them to the conclusion of an identity between a reason of morals and the reason of state; and they have failed to speak to what might be termed a public or political morality justified in terms of civic life.

It is this initial focus upon the individual, and the way of life of the individual, which most sets these two men apart from Contarini and the conception of political life which he portrayed; and at the same time represents an extension of the ideals embodied in the myth of Venice. Contarini's reliance upon the traditional practices and institutions of the Republic can be viewed as a quest for civil order that men might lead happy and prosperous lives; but Paruta and Sarpi were acutely aware of the central role of individual emotions and attitudes in shaping that 'happy life'. This is perhaps most clearly seen in Sarpi's portrayal of the actions of the Roman court as guided by the emotions and attitudes of greed and ambition (which are traits manifest by individuals rather than political communities), and in Paruta's dedication of Della Perfezione della Vita Politica in which he recognizes that we are all created with diverse potentials and gifts, and goes on to state that the virtuous life, and that which will bring us happiness, is a proper accounting of ourselves.⁹³ While Contarini,

93. Paruta, PVP, p. 141.

then, focuses upon the institutions of Venice as a safeguard to insure against the translation of factional or private interests into governmental policy, Paruta and Sarpi begin by directing their attention to the individual and the emotions and motives which guide his actions. If, as Logan suggests, the writings of Contarini represent the perfection of the myth of Venice, the works of Paruta and Sarpi represent another facet of the myth, and the recognition that regulations and institutions are insufficient to insure the virtue of the decision-maker.⁹⁴ They begin their treatments of politics by exploring the role of such traits as faith, humility, and prudence in tempering man's appetites and guiding his choices--and these are traits of the individual rather than of governmental institutions. Government can best aid the individual by providing a setting in which he can exercise these virtues and realize his potential perfection.

The emphasis which these men place upon individual moral development is indicative of the multi-faceted nature of the myth of Venice. The Republic is noteworthy for them, not because it exhibits a mixed constitution blending the advantages of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy; but rather the Venetian Republic is exemplary in the opportunities which it affords men for moral growth. In this they have employed the model of Venice in a manner not unlike Savonarola, "... the most powerful spokesman for the adoption of the Venetian model by Florence."⁹⁵

94. Logan, op. cit., p. 5.

95. Gilbert, "The Venetian Constitution in Florentine Political Thought," p. 478.

Savonarola was not interested in the question of whether Venice was an aristocracy or a democracy or a mixed government...He looked upon these reforms from the point of view that they would result in moral improvement.⁹⁶

Although the three writers discussed thus far all drew from the Venetian experience to shape their thought, for Paruta and Sarpi the concerns of politics, the nature of political action, and the appropriate means to gauge that action are quite dissimilar to those which we find in the conception of politics as the lessons of history.

IV

When we view the works of Paruta who dealt with politics in terms of 'the perfection of humanity,' or Sarpi who saw the task of politics as the encouragement and facilitation of piety, we are faced with a conception of politics quite distinct from that which prompted Contarini to call for a restoration of the office of the Auditor in the Venetian judicial process. A conception of politics which views that activity as an adjunct to moral development draws from a number of intellectual influences either minimized or wholly omitted from alternative conceptions of politics. In sixteenth century Venice it partook of influences common to Renaissance Italy, but further it was coloured by Venice's unique position with regard to the Church and the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

96. Ibid., pp. 479-80.

The greatest single driving force behind the conception of politics as a moral endeavour may have been that of humanism. The impact of the humanists came through their re-definition of wisdom from contemplation to virtue. Rice notes the contribution of humanism:

This transformation of wisdom from contemplation to action, from a body of knowledge to a collection of ethical precepts, from a virtue of the intellect to a perfection of will is humanism's chief contribution to the development of the idea of wisdom...⁹⁷

Political wisdom, as it is portrayed in the works of Paruta and Sarpi, shares in this humanist notion of a "perfection of will," and these writers place their emphasis upon the realization of the perfection of will through action.

Moreover, if political wisdom had undergone a transformation 'from a body of knowledge to a collection of ethical precepts,' those ethical precepts were drawn from an observation of individual human needs. Again Rice provides the starting point for our argument. He says of the Italian humanists that they re-defined wisdom

...from a knowledge of divine things or of divine and human things and their causes to a code of ethical precepts indistinguishable from prudence, on how to live well and blessedly. The result was an active, moralized wisdom more obviously in harmony with many contemporary needs.⁹⁸

97. Rice, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

98. *Ibid.*, pp. 155-6. It will be noted here that the terminology employed in this section assumes an inter-relationship between human needs, ends, values and capacities.

But Rice does not pursue the argument to its conclusion. The result was not merely 'an active, moralized wisdom in harmony with many needs' but rather, in the case of political wisdom, a moralized wisdom built upon those needs. The humanists of Italy not only drew heavily from classical political theory, but also derived much from Stoicism and Christianity. A. P. d'Entreves points to the vital contribution of Stoicism and Christianity as being "the new consciousness of individual values and ends..."⁹⁹ In the late medieval and Renaissance period, this consciousness of individual values and ends found a ready complement in the revival of Aristotelian political ideals which posited the raison d'etre of the state as the fulfillment of human needs and the realization of human capacities.

Here was a clear and definite doctrine of the state not as a conventional, but as a natural institution, which allowed of a rational explanation and gave to social and political institutions the very highest value as being necessary for the fulfilment of human capacities and ends.¹⁰⁰

We have, then, a notion of the state whose purpose is to serve the individual, not only in terms of material needs, but also in terms of providing a pattern of how one might 'live well and blessedly.' This characterization of the state is reflective of the broader tension which Roland Bainton points out: "The consuming problem of the sixteenth century was whether the state is to be regarded as a moral

99. A. P. d'Entreves, The Medieval Contribution to Political Thought (New York: The Humanities Press, 1959), p. 14.

100. Ibid., p. 16.

organism or simply as a power bloc."¹⁰¹ Clearly, in the conception of politics as a moral endeavour, the state is viewed as an entity closer to the former than the latter. It was an entity whose raison d'etre was tied to man's potential for moral action; and for Paruta and Sarpi there existed no better model than that of Venice.

A further critical point at which humanism, with its concentration upon human capacities and end, shaped this conception of politics is in the identity which it forges between private and public. If the state, and hence the public sphere, derives its supreme value from being necessary for the fulfilment of human capacities and ends, then public actions are, above all else, attuned to the ends and potentials of the individual.

Starting from this assumption, it was possible to overcome the old idea of a contrast between human nature and political conditions, and more important still, of a contrast between the ends of the individual and those of the state.¹⁰²

The contribution of humanism here, in theory at least, would seem to be to facilitate the identification of the public good in that it was viewed as identical to the good of the individual. The public good should be attuned to the achievement of the best possible life for the individual. In practice, however, we see that the public is made up of a number of individuals who do not necessarily share the same needs, ends, values or capacities. Despite the problems involved in putting this principle

101. Roland H. Bainton, The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century (Boston: Beacon Press, 1952). p. 231.

102. d'Entreves, The Medieval Contribution to Political Thought, p. 16.

into practice however, the salient point is the implicit notion that the primary function of the state is to serve the individual in his quest to meet his needs and goals.

Moreover, the role of humanism in shaping the conception of politics as a moral endeavour goes beyond its concentration upon human needs. We have seen this in Rice's characterization of wisdom as a 'code of ethical precepts indistinguishable from prudence,' and when d'Entreves speaks of the fulfilment of human capacities. It is this ethical capacity which the humanist tradition brings into focus and incorporates into the political philosophy of Renaissance Italy. There is perhaps no clearer Renaissance statement of the potential for men than that of Pico della Mirandola, when he makes God say to Adam:

Thou, constrained by no limits, in accordance with thine own free will, in whose hands we have placed thee, shalt ordain for thyself the limits of thy nature...We have made thee neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, so that with freedom of choice and with honor, as though the maker and molder of thyself, thou mayest fashion thyself in whatever shape thou shalt prefer. Thou shalt have the power to degenerate into the lower forms of life, which are brutish. Thou shalt have the power, out of thy soul's judgment, to be reborn into the higher forms, which are divine.¹⁰³

Man, a free agent, is unbounded in his potential or capacity, and it is this which gives to the conception of politics as a moral endeavour the notion of a morality which is greater than duty. It is a notion of morality which encompasses what H. L. A. Hart has identified as

103. Pico della Mirandola, *op. cit.*, p. 225. See also, Roland H. Bainton, "Man, God, and the Church in the Age of the Renaissance," in Metropolitan Museum of Art, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-96.

'ideals', and Lon Fuller has more fully treated under the rubric of a 'morality of aspiration'.¹⁰⁴ The 'code of ethical precepts', then, deals not only with duties to one's fellows, but also with the realization of one's human potential, and encompasses a "...conception of proper and fitting conduct, conduct such as befits a human being functioning at his best."¹⁰⁵ The difference between a conception of law which is concerned with duties and one which is concerned with man's potential is reflective of Aristotle's concern that the polis must encourage goodness. "Otherwise, too, law becomes a mere covenant--or (in the phrase of the Sophist Lycophron) 'a guarantor of men's rights against one another'--instead of being, as it should be, a rule of life such as will make the members of the polis good and just."¹⁰⁵ The focus not only upon earthly needs, but also upon the realization of human potentials is a hallmark of the humanist influence in the Renaissance era. We have seen this emphasis upon the potentials of the individual man in the works of Paruta and Sarpi.

104. See H. L. A. Hart, The Concept of Law (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), pp. 176-80; and Lon L. Fuller, The Morality of Law (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964).

105. Fuller, op. cit., p. 5.

106. Aristotle, Politics, III, ix, Sec. 8. See also, VII, i-iii, where Aristotle treats not only human needs, but also human potentials.

While humanism might be the greatest single driving force in the conception of politics as a moral endeavour, there are other intellectual influences which, particularly in the case of the Venetian writers, shaped this conception. We have seen that, in the case of Sarpi particularly, there was something of a 'national' character which differentiated the Venetian from his peninsular counterparts. But this differentiation on the basis of a unique character embodied a number of influences related to the Venetian position vis-a-vis secularism, laicism, and the spirit of the Reformation. The long-standing Venetian tradition of a relative autonomy from Rome in ecclesiastical affairs prepared the ground for a greater spread of the ideals of the Reformation here than was possible elsewhere in Italy. Further, the state--particularly as we have seen in the case of Sarpi--was charged with many of the duties which other states most often viewed to be the function of the Church. It was the duty of the state to encourage piety and repress vice. Figgis points to the religious duties of the state:

The prince officially 'most religious', within a nation unitary in religion, in finance, in bureaucratic management, striving to secure morality, and to repress vice as well as crime, is the ideal alike of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation... This is true even of the 'Catholic kings', as is obvious in the case of Venice...¹⁰⁷

That the state should take on the task of securing the moral behaviour of its people is perhaps the most salient feature of the conception of

107. John Neville Figgis, Studies of Political Thought from Gerson to Grotius: 1414-1625 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), p. 56.

politics as a moral endeavour.

While much of medieval philosophy had also often viewed a close inter-relationship between the state and the securing of pious behaviour, this derived from a notion of the prince which embodied this duty by virtue of his place in the hierarchy of authority. It was part of the status of the medieval prince to secure piety among his subjects--and he was charged with this duty by God from whom his authority ultimately emanated. Despite Sarpi's assertion, in Renaissance Venice we are faced with an essentially secular notion of the state which does not owe its genesis of authority to God but to its citizens.

A conception of 'the people' as the source of political authority was part of the tradition inherited from Roman law historians...some of the glossatori maintained that the people retained the power to create custom which had the force of law. The Venetians felt that they as a community had done that legitimately for themselves.¹⁰⁸

The state, then, assumes the burden of the guarantor of pious behaviour not by virtue of its relationship to God, but rather from its duty to provide for the fulfilment of human capacities and potentials.

Another phenomenon acted to reinforce the secular and lay characteristics of this concern with morality. The power of the laity as opposed to ecclesiastical hierarchy in such matters had been

108. Frederic C. Lane, "Medieval Political Ideas and the Venetian Constitution", p. 288.

asserted in the conciliar movement; and even though that movement had met with eventual failure, the notions of the sanctity of lay power continued, and re-asserted themselves in the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Protestantism was but one manifestation of the view of the appropriateness of lay authority in the matters of faith.¹⁰⁹

Many of the prominent issues faced at the Council of Trent likewise center upon this growing laicism. Sarpi's example of the Papal Index is but one. The assertion of the laity in matters of religion provided a ready complement to the idea of a secular state arrogating unto itself the task of assuring moral conduct and eliminating vice.

Within the conception of politics as a moral endeavour we have found a coalescence of a number of intellectual influences. We have found what Rice characterizes as "three fundamental tendencies of Renaissance wisdom:" humanism, moralism, and secularism.¹¹⁰ We have seen also that Sarpi incorporates a view of history similar to that which played such a central role in the writings of Contarini. Of importance here, though, is the fact that this conception of history was not central to Sarpi's conception of politics while it was of paramount importance to Contarini. The differing accounting which these two writers have made of the role of history accounts, in part, for their differing conceptions of politics. They have drawn from

109. See ibid.

110. Rice, op. cit., p. 180.

different intellectual traditions in varying degrees, and we find an alternative cluster or framework of ideas to that which we saw in the conception of politics as a quest for order through the use of tradition and history.

To conceive of politics as a moral endeavour, and political activity as an adjunct of moral development, is to cast that activity in a light which is focused upon some of the benefits and requirements of the civil society, yet will not illuminate other major pre-requisites and benefits of the state. The most important of those pre-requisites not illuminated by this conception of politics is that of power. The power configurations of sixteenth century Europe were increasingly becoming those of the larger nation-state unified under the grand monarchies, and the city-states of Italy were rapidly becoming an anachronism. While Paruta's statement that "...the perfection of Government lies in making a City vertuous, not in making her Mistress of many Countries"¹¹¹ may be taken as a rejection of the notions of imperialism as being proper to the political regime, it ignores the need for some given minimal level of power by which the civil society might maintain itself against foreign hegemony. The perfection of government cannot take place without the first consideration being that of the maintenance of that government--and we have seen that Paruta's notion of virtue does not lend itself to this task. Likewise, the

111. Paruta, Politick Discourses, p. 10.

virtues of modesty and humility which we find in the writings of Sarpi did not speak to the realities of political life in sixteenth century Europe. They could not address the problems of maintaining political independence in the face of hegemony from greater political powers with vast revenues and armies. The conception of politics as a moral endeavour posits the moral virtue of its people as the highest good; and in sixteenth century Venice that conception of moral virtue was based upon the older Christian virtues of humility, liberality, charity and magnanimity--virtues singularly inappropriate to political survival in that historical context. The survival of any political entity requires some minimal level of power, and this conception of politics does not speak to that requirement, but only to the direction that government should take once that minimal level is secured. In sixteenth century Venice we see that that required minimal level of power was escalating, and this conception of politics could not speak to that need. The Venetian state was being stripped away by foreigners, and the virtues of temperance and magnanimity could not reverse that situation.

Political power (or political influence) vis-a-vis other states is not, however, derivative solely of revenues and armies, as can be seen in the modern day example of Switzerland. Political power and influence can be derived from the relationship which the state has with other states. For centuries Venice has served as the trader to the continent, and this relationship afforded a certain degree of security as continental powers had relied upon her for the importation of goods

from the east. With the shift in trade patterns, and the translocation of trade centers to the Atlantic, this relationship was lost and Venice could no longer rely upon it as a source of security from foreign domination.

Another aspect of the loss of the role of trader to the continent wrought by the new trade patterns was the drying up of traditional sources of wealth. Of the two writers dealt with here, Paruta clearly treats personal wealth as a tool which men might utilize to fulfill their duties and to realize their full human potential. Sarpi, on the other hand, sees wealth as detrimental to the individual as it clouds one's judgment. The important point is that while this conception of politics, which focuses upon the individual, is able to speak to the role of wealth in respect of the individual, it cannot address the situation wherein the economy of an entire society is jeopardized. A conception of politics which focuses primarily upon the needs and potentials of the individual most often fails to accommodate the requirements of the larger society.¹¹² We have seen

112. This position, of course, rests upon the argument that the whole is equal to more than the sum of its parts; i.e., the ends of the civil society (which are presumably reflected in the political actions of that society) are more than the aggregate of the ends of the individuals which make up that society. Societal goals reflect the purpose for which men enter into the civil society and the collective ideals which are embodied in societal institutions. See H. R. G. Greaves, The Foundations of Political Theory, Second edition (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), Chapter VII.

the manifestation of this problem in Paruta's and Sarpi's failure to deal with an adequate differentiation between the public and private spheres. As Venice came to face the crises of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the complex of ideas manifest in the conception of politics as a moral endeavour were unable to address the issues embodied in these crises. Such a conception could not speak to the problems of the state faced with increasing piracy, the threat of foreign hegemony, a precariously tottering economy, and papal incursions upon her sovereignty. Like the conception of politics based upon the value of tradition and history, the conception of politics as a moral endeavour failed Venice in this respect.

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CHAPTER IV

POLITICS AS THE RATIONAL MANAGEMENT OF SOCIETY: Patrizi and Agostini

I

The multi-faceted myth of Venice was utilized by another group of writers to portray yet a third conception of politics. Focusing upon the aristocratic nature of Venice, and her exemplary institutions of public utility, these men portray politics not as a moral endeavour, nor as something akin to the lessons of history. Rather the conception of politics, and the nature of political activity, which they offer can best be characterized as 'the rational management of society.'

Within this third conception of politics, human reason is the primary measure of action. Reason has supplanted the patterns of history and nature, as well as the notion of man's moral development, as a guide to politics. Political activity here is ordered according to man's rational capabilities.

Secondly, politics, here, is a managerial activity. These writers portray politics as an activity devoted to the utilization of

the state to provide for the goods of the body. They view the state as a 'tool' to be used by man in his quest for the physical amenities of life, and the political actor as one who facilitates the use of that tool.

Lastly, this third conception of politics is directed to the society at large. It is concerned with the co-ordination of the various functions which is reflected in an entire society. As such, politics is not limited to a relatively restricted sphere of operations, but rather is seen to encompass whatever activities might impinge upon the material well-being of society; and this focus opens the way for the consideration of a number of areas which other writers clearly considered to be outside the realm of politics.

II

Francesco Patrizi

The name Francesco Patrizi da Cherso¹ evokes a good deal of confusion in the history of ideas. Patrizi was what we have come loosely to term a "Renaissance man". His writings range over the fields of natural philosophy, history, poetry, theology, military affairs and political philosophy, as well as technical matters such as navigation

1. Francesco Patrizi bears the same name as the earlier Sienese bishop of Gaeta who also wrote extensively in the fields of philosophy and political theory.

problems. The line separating the Renaissance man from the dilettante is, in reality, most often founded upon success, and while the one is admired, the efforts of the other are often denigrated. Patrizi was not entirely successful in his endeavours, yet he was, by no means, amateurish.

Born in 1529 on the island of Cherso on the Dalmation coast, his youth was occupied by extensive travel in the company of his uncle. He studied in Bavaria and, from 1547 to 1554, at the University of Padua, where his interest in Platonism--gained in his youth through his travels in Greece--was reinforced and heightened. During the latter part of his stay at Padua he served as secretary and administrator to a number of Venetian noblemen.

Patrizi taught philosophy in France and Spain, and in 1578 was appointed to a chair created specifically for him in order to promote a revival of Platonism, at the University of Ferrara. In 1592 Clement VIII summoned Patrizi to teach at the Sapienza in Rome. During the next two years Patrizi undertook a number of emendations to his major work, Nova de universo philosophia, and was involved in a protracted series of dealings with papal censors in an attempt to prevent the inclusion of the work on the Index of Clement VIII. The review process seems to have involved a number of individuals among whom there was little agreement, and even less comprehension of Patrizi's work. The bulk of the revision was carried out under the

supervision of Benedetto Giustiniani, a man possessing a juridical background. Giustiniani apparently supported an expurgated version which was later totally condemned by the Jesuit Cardinal Toledo. In the end, Patrizi's work was included on the Index, donec corrigatur, published in 1596.² Patrizi died the following year.

Patrizi's writing displays a cross-current and mixture of ideas as varied as his subject matter. The most prominent thread in the weave of his thought is neo-Platonism and his attempt to place reason in the foreground of those factors which influence, or ought to influence, the actions of men. The Platonism of Patrizi was coloured by the influence of Catholic doctrine, and Patrizi's own efforts to demonstrate the compatibility of the two strains of thought. A third influence upon the political views of Patrizi was that of the Venetian Republic. Indeed Arcari, who has done the most extensive work on Patrizi's political thought, asserts in her opening line that 'Patrizi has one prime characteristic: he is a Venetian.'³

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2. For an account of this process, see Luigi Firpo, "The Flowering and Withering of Speculative Philosophy--Italian Philosophy and the Counter Reformation: The Condemnation of Francesco Patrizi," in The Late Italian Renaissance: 1525-1630, edited by Eric Cochrane (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1970), pp. 266-84.
 3. Paola Maria Arcari, Il pensiero politico di Francesco Patrizi da Cherso (Rome: Zamperini and Lorenzini, 1935), p. 7.

Carlo Curcio, in his Utopisti e riformatori sociali del cinquecento, sums up this conflux of influences:

...Venice provided the example of the optimal aristocratic regime, in substance adopted by Patrizi in his happy city, as he thought fusing together the best of Plato and the republic of the Venetians, with the addition of the divine regulating laws of the soul and of the body.⁴

Widmar echoes this appraisal:

...not only the Republic of Plato served Patrizi as the model of his republic, but also the principles of the Catholic religion and the living example of the Republic of Venice which, with her institutions, taught how one could happily preserve a state and its social organization.⁵

The interweaving of various strains of thought is not limited to Patrizi's main political work, La città felice. His works in natural philosophy, theology and history display the same tendency. Frederick Copleston, in his A History of Philosophy, characterizes Patrizi's philosophy as "...a curious and bizarre amalgam of neo-Platonic speculation and an attempt to explain the empirical world by reference to certain fundamental material or quasi-material factors."⁶ Patrizi's

4. Carlo Curcio, Utopisti e riformatori sociali del cinquecento, (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1941), p. xvi.

5. Bruno Widmar, Scrittori politici del '500 e '600 (Milan: Rizzoli, 1964), p. 62. See also Grendler, op. cit., p. 165: "La città felice was an aristocratic utopia modeled on Plato, Aristotle, and the Venetian state."

6. Frederick J. Copleston, A History of Philosophy, Vol. III, part II (Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1963), p. 62.

interest in the empirical and physical world around him is also reflected in his thought. We find this mixture of physical science and metaphysical speculation particularly in his Nova philosophia where, for example, much effort is expended on a discussion of light--both its physical and meta-physical properties.⁷

Patrizi is perhaps best known among historians for his efforts devoted to a new methodology and philosophy of history which would make history a useful tool for the political actor. His efforts here were devoted to introducing a greater degree of certainty into historical propositions and reforming the methodology of history, so that this type of knowledge could be used with a greater degree of reliability. Patrizi's attempt was to move historiography from the rhetorical recitation of heroic deeds of the past to verifiable propositions which would serve as a measure of actions--past, present and future:

But, following views publicized by Patrizi, Venetian historiography had tended to throw off the rhetorical and ethical preoccupations of the earlier part of the century...it aimed less at the inculcation of individual and civic virtue than at the formation of a political prudence.⁸

The concern with the 'formation of a political prudence' rather than the inculcation of individual and civic virtues separates Patrizi from that tradition, represented by Contarini, which sought civic virtue

7. For a discussion of the blending of the physical and metaphysical in the writings of Patrizi, see Paul Oskar Kristeller, Eight Philosophers of the Italian Renaissance (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964), Chapter 7.

8. Bouwsma, Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty, p. 357.

through a glorification of the past; and from that tradition, represented by Paruta and Sarpi, which aimed at the inculcation of individual virtues. The disparities between Contarini and Patrizi with regard to the role of history is alluded to by Bouwsma:

Patrizi's sceptical tendencies undermined the authority of history as a repository of examples for the guidance of men in all ages, and at the same time he emphasized the importance of the formal elements in historical thought....: organization, the selection of detail, the subordination of all elements to a major theme.⁹

Of interest for our purposes, however, is not the Pandora's box of epistemological considerations which we find in Della Historia or La amorosa Philosophia; rather we want to see how Patrizi views specifically political experience. What is the basis of political action? Who is the political actor, and what is his task?

Patrizi's La città felice¹⁰ is his main political work, but a minor part of his entire career. It is relatively early--written in 1551 while Patrizi was at the University of Padua, and originally published in 1553. The work suffers from the fact that it is relatively

9. Bouwsma, "Three Types of Historiography in Post-Renaissance Italy," in Theory and History, Vol. IV, No. 3 (1964), p. 310. See also Giorgio Spini, "I trattatisti dell-arte storica nella Confraternita italiana," in Quaderni di 'Belfagor', No. 1 (1948), pp. 109-136.

10. The edition used here is collected in Bruno Widmar, op. cit.

short, and does not present us with a fully articulated model of Patrizi's ideal society. The gaps in the work are significant and appear to represent areas which Patrizi felt were either manifest and in no need of explanation or, alternatively, readily deducible from his broad outlines of the ideal society. For example, perhaps deriving from the Venetian experience, Patrizi never considers a governmental form for his ideal society other than an aristocratic republic; nor does he ever justify his choice here.

The work is utopian in nature, but unlike the multitude of utopian works at the time, Patrizi's model is not a utopia which seeks equality above other goods. The position of prime importance is occupied, for Patrizi, by reason. The influence here is, obviously, that of Plato's Republic:

The ideal state of Patrizi is a republic ordered according to reason, and therefore are excluded from the political life merchants as well as peasants, inasmuch as, according to the platonic scheme, they represent the irrational part of life.¹¹

The significance of the centrality of reason is that it enables us to give greater substance to Patrizi's conception of politics. To characterize his work as 'utopian' tells us only that it is of a given genre of political writing. By exploring the substance however, we

11. Widmar, op. cit., p. 62.

gain a fuller understanding of his view of politics. We shall see that Patrizi's ideal society is, above all, ordered according to human reason--and this has implications for questions concerning the direction and nature of political action.

Patrizi opens La città felice with the mixture of empirical thought and metaphysical speculation that we have noted. Man, he says, has two principal parts. The soul, which is immortal and incorruptible, is self-sufficient for its own maintenance.¹² The maintenance of the body, on the other hand, is dependent upon the soul, in that the soul provides guidance and direction for the body. Further, the body is dependent upon external goods such as food, drink, and shelter--goods which can best be attained within the bonds of civil life. Those, therefore, who do not wish to be in the company of other men are, as the ancient proverb states, either gods or beasts.¹³

The greatest good for men, according to Patrizi, consists in seven things--three of which relate to the soul, three relating to the body, and the last being time for the unification of body and soul.¹⁴

12. Patrizi, op. cit., p. 63. This position raises serious problems regarding the role of the Church. If the soul is incorruptible and self-sufficient, there would appear to be little value in the Church other than as a temporal institution.

13. Ibid.

14. See ibid., p. 65. The number seven is most probably used here because of its believed mystical or spiritual qualities. The list would be more manageable and straightforward if it were reduced to six, or possibly even five. As it stands, Patrizi's list is as follows: 1) the soul, in and of itself; 2) the soul to the extent that it governs the body; 3) the soul, to the extent that it provides for the externals of the body; 4) the body, in and of itself; 5) goods that maintain the body; 6) the instruments to gain these goods; and 7) time for the unification of body and soul.

The soul, being immortal, incorruptible, and self-sufficient, is in no need of provision, and these three aspects of the greatest good can be attained regardless of men's condition. Those aspects of the greatest good relating to the body however, and the time for unification of the soul and body, are more readily attainable given the proper social environment. As we begin to look at the body, the things that maintain the body, and the instruments by which we may gain those things that maintain the body, the value of a properly organized civil life becomes apparent. The well organized society, then, will be one in which the realization of these goods becomes an organizing principle. The purpose of civil society is to aid man in his quest for these goods associated with the body (as well as the time required for unification of body and soul), and the best civil society is that which most facilitates this quest.¹⁵ The civil society is thus an aid in the provision of essentially individual goods (such as food, shelter and clothing) as well as the collective goods (such as peace and security) without which individual goods are

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15. See Luigi Firpo, "Political Philosophy: Renaissance Utopianism," translated and edited by Eric Cochrane, in The Late Italian Renaissance: 1525-1630, edited by Eric Cochrane (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1970), p. 160. The original of this article, "L'utopia politica nella controriforma," is found in Quaderni di 'Belfagor', No. 1 (1948), pp. 78-108. Cf. Plato, The Republic, Book II, Sec. 1: "Society originates, then, said I, 'so far as I can see because the individual is not self-sufficient, but has many needs which he can't supply himself' ".

of little or ephemeral value.

Having laid this groundwork, Patrizi moves away from any metaphysical speculation to a very concrete, albeit abbreviated, treatment of the conditions and structure characteristic of his ideal society, and it is here that we begin to gain the image of the task of politics as being something which corresponds to the notions of planning and management. Since all things necessary for the body come either directly or indirectly from the land, it is necessary, first of all, to have land capable of producing these goods in abundance. A division of labour is required that some may work the land, others process food, others manufacture tools, and yet others command and oversee these people. Patrizi postulates a six-fold division of people according to task. Peasants, artisans and merchants comprise the servile part of society; while soldiers, magistrates and priests make up that segment of society which directs the other.¹⁶ The dividing line between the two types of people is the Platonic notion of leisure time to devote to one's energies to the polity. Of the directing segment of society he states:

...with minds quiet and free from the anxiety of procuring food, they can give all their soul over to the civil and contemplative virtue.¹⁷

16. See Patrizi, op. cit., pp. 80-81. Cf. Plato, The Republic, Book II. See Arcari, op. cit., pp. 95-102, for a discussion of agriculture in Patrizi's happy city.

17. Ibid., p. 80. See Hannah Arendt, op. cit., Chapter II.

This division between the servile and directing segments of society has many ramifications for Patrizi. The anxiety associated with procuring the goods to sustain life appears to be an insurmountable barrier to happiness in that, in the classical Greek sense, the cares of the household placed limitations upon men's abilities. Because of their inability to participate in the full benefits of civil life, the orders of peasants, artisans and merchants do not enjoy all the privileges associated with the higher orders. They cannot be called citizens in the full sense of that word because of their inability to participate in the civil life to the fullest extent. Patrizi allows them the title of citizen, but only in the restricted sense in which servants and serfs can be considered part of the household.¹⁸ Not only is the servile segment of society restricted in its citizenship, and consequently the degree of happiness to which it may attain, but these people (like the soldiers) are also limited due to an absence of reason. Only the magistrates and priests possess the reason necessary to lead the bulk of society, and it is this segment of society with which Patrizi concerns himself.¹⁹

The different degrees of happiness to which the two parts of society can attain represent an elaboration upon the Venetian model of an ideal Republic. Venice represented the ideal of a well-

18. Ibid., p. 81.

19. Ibid.

ordered commonwealth which provided a just and serene life for its inhabitants.²⁰ Patrizi's bi-partite division of society explores that general term of "inhabitants" and breaks it down according to the Platonic notions of leisure time and the opportunity to develop one's reasoning faculties. While Venice represented the ideal in the provision of happiness to its inhabitants, it also displayed this same sense of different levels of happiness among its people. For Patrizi, this was an outgrowth of different degrees of citizenship. Firpo points to the Venetian influence in Patrizi's bi-partite conception of society when he states that Patrizi "...clearly takes pleasure in underlining the identity of aspirations between the oligarchy of his polis and that of the Republic of Venice."²¹ Further, we have, here, an indication of the shifting nature of the role of Venice as a model polity. While other writers had viewed the Republic as exemplary because it exhibited the qualities of the mixed state, or because it provided a greater latitude for individual action, Venice was viewed by some as the model state because of her aristocratic elements. Gaeta states that "to find in Venice the model of an efficient and quasi perfect aristocracy was the easiest thing in the world...", and goes on to point out that "...the humanist idealization

20. Curcio, *op. cit.*, p. xvi, points out that "...Venice became the myth of an entire generation of politici that could not find a better civil regime."

21. Firpo, "Political Philosophy: Renaissance Utopianism," p. 161.

of the mixed state was succeeded by an aristocratic orientation: a new field (and more fertile) for the life of the myth of Venice..."²² Venice provided Patrizi with a model exhibiting an aristocratic orientation and which could accommodate a bi-partite division of the inhabitants into a servile segment of society and a directing segment which possessed superior leadership qualities and had the opportunity of achieving happiness. Patrizi offers no means by which individuals are placed within one segment of society or the other but, rather, devotes his discussion to the arrangements which should obtain within the directing segment. He is speaking to the potential political actor, and is concerned to inform him of the optimal patterns of political leadership. "Patrizi is profoundly convinced that the labouring classes cannot participate in the government in any manner,"²³ and, hence, devotes little counsel to them.

Happiness, for Patrizi, consists in the activity of virtue. There are, he states, three parts of virtuous activity: 1) the natural inclination to virtuous activity; 2) the habit of virtuous action; and 3) reasoned action.²⁴ The full extent of virtuous action is unattainable to all but the magistrates and priests because the lower orders, by definition, lack the quality of reason. Whereas Paruta gave

22. Gaeta, *op. cit.*, p. 70. See also Felix Gilbert, "The Venetian Constitution in Florentine Political Thought," pp. 470-71.

23. Arcari, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

24. The three parts of virtuous activity delineated here are very similar to those employed by Paruta. The major difference is in the third part of virtue. Where Paruta relies upon conscious action to confirm habit, Patrizi emphasizes that action is based upon reason.

pre-eminence to the role of will and reduced reason to the role of counsellor, Patrizi has reversed the positions: "Of the powers of the soul, then, the most attractive and sublime is the speculative;..."²⁵

We are faced, then, with the proposition that the highest form of virtuous activity is reasoned action; and further, that the capacity of reason is limited to magistrates and priests. The emphasis upon the rational orders as leaders and directors of civil life calls forth the image of a climate of expertise. Action by the experts is the hallmark of Patrizi's ideal society, and we are left with the notion of politics as the activity of the management of society by those with the greatest expertise. Political action is the task of managing society in such a way that it will offer the maximum benefits (in terms of those earthly goods for which it exists), and this task falls to those best qualified to direct the society. Patrizi's utopia is one ruled by a benevolent elite who occupy their positions of authority because of their wisdom and prudence:

Because the health of the republic depends wholly upon its governors, and on the prudence with which they govern, it is necessary to have in the government of the city the most wise and prudent.²⁶

The prudence seen as a requisite for those who would govern comes partially from nature and partially from experience, according

25. Patrizi, La città felice, p. 83.

26. Ibid., p. 74.

to Patrizi. It is best, then, that the older men be elected to the higher levels of government, "...their long age having taught them the management [il maneggio] of the things of the world." Younger men, lacking the prudence and wisdom which comes from experience, should be given the task of administration at the lower levels where they may learn from their experiences. Besides perpetuating a continual pool of wise and prudent men to direct the republic, this practice has the benefit of quieting civil dissension which arises out of the ambitions of men to govern. The "...fire of youthful ambition will be dampened with the water of the certain hope of ruling," says Patrizi.²⁷

Patrizi offers us a vision of government by the most rational and experienced, and a partial view of the recruitment of those who are to govern. His account of the actual substance of political activity is, however, rather piecemeal. He speaks of the necessity of the use of force and fear to maintain order;²⁸ he speaks of the inadvisability of the utilization of mercenaries and the need for fortifications;²⁹ and he speaks of war and employment as the two greatest needs to keep people occupied and thereby prevent internal strife and sedition.³⁰

27. Ibid., p. 75.

28. Ibid., pp. 72-4.

29. Ibid., p. 75.

30. See ibid., pp. 84-85.

There are other areas, however, with which he deals which give us the impression of a totally managed society. For example, in a discussion of the effects of diet and temperature upon the health of the body, he advocates that, in order for the state to be populated with healthy citizens, two areas should come under legislation. One is the diet of the nursing mother, and the other is the timing of indulgence in sexual activity for the purposes of procreation. By correlating the time of sexual activity with the most propitious temperature, Patrizi felt the state would have healthier children.³¹ That these areas should be seen as part of the substance of political governance is certainly remarkable, and it appears that Patrizi viewed politics as something closely akin to the total management of society.

Patrizi's mixed epistemological framework is evident in his plans for 'the happy city'. The concerns with diet and temperature derive from his empirical approach to many problems. Further, the equation of public and private seems to be made on the basis that what is beneficial to the individual is also beneficial to the state. Proper diet, is quite obviously, beneficial to the individual; and it is also beneficial to the state in that it provides healthy citizens. Likewise, efforts should be made to conserve and maintain heat as this will help cure the common cold. Heat, he says, has prophylactic and curative properties against illness, as well as producing vigour and strength in the people. The emphasis placed upon the world as

31. See ibid., pp. 84-85.

it is--the need for armour and fortresses, the ways in which to guard against illness, the most propitious moments for sexual activity for procreation--is a deviation from classical Platonism. The utopian world of a purely speculative nature was modified by the exigencies of life in late Renaissance Europe, and Patrizi's La città felice is an antecedent of those 'heavenly cities' that we find so prominent in the eighteenth century.

Perhaps the most striking feature of Patrizi's utopia, and that which gives the impression of a totally managed society, is the relatively restricted role of will. This is possible for Patrizi because of the identity which he poses between individual good and public good. Will, he says, is composed of the love of one's individual well-being and the well-being of the patria. Actions aimed at the well-being of one will be identical to those required for the well-being of the other. For example, the urge to defend one's private property from outside invaders has the concomitant effect of defending the patria from those same invaders.³² Implicit in Patrizi's discussion of education is the hint that individual will has at least some area for movement. He advocates that places be set aside for the instruction of youths, and that these places be staffed with people who can offer good examples of virtuous behaviour.³³ His concern

32. Ibid., p. 75.

33. Ibid., p. 87.

with exemplary behaviour would indicate that a certain degree of latitude of action is left to the discretion of the individual. On the whole however, the role of individual will appears greatly constricted when compared to its position in the writings of Paruta or Sarpi. Paruta's concern with individual action led him to emphasize the role of will, while Sarpi's concern that men be given the opportunity to act within the spirit of the law brought him to the same conclusion. Patrizi, on the other hand, elevates reason at the expense of will. His concern for the most rational society dictates that individual will must be restrained in those areas where it interferes with the achievement of the best possible society. Nowhere is this more clearly portrayed than in the discussion of sex and procreation. Patrizi gives himself over to the task of creating the most rational society--and that task necessarily deprives the great bulk of individuals of that sphere of action which Paruta and Sarpi saw as being of paramount importance. Firpo places Patrizi within a group of writers which he terms 'idealist', and notes the restricted role of will amongst these writers.

And they proposed..., not without a good bit of anachronism, a happy aristocratic republic, one usually inspired by the tenacious myth of a wise and well-balanced constitution of Venice... And absolutism, which they condemned in terms of a monarchical constitution, was reintroduced under different headings, and in a form even more burdensome and inquisitorial and even less respectful of individual autonomy...³⁴

34. Firpo, "Political Philosophy: Renaissance Utopianism," pp. 154-5.

Grendler echoes this appraisal when he speaks of "the slave society of Patrizi..."³⁵

Patrizi's initial premise of the self-sufficient nature of the soul, and his concomitant focus upon the goods of the body as the substance of politics and the civil society, place him within a tradition which Hannah Arendt characterizes as the rise of society in which there was a "...transformation of the private care for private property into a public concern."³⁶ Whereas classical political thought had viewed the provision of bodily goods as an activity associated with the household--and therefore a pre-political activity--Patrizi has made this the substance of his politics, and has abandoned altogether a notion of political activity which is divorced from, and comes after, the provision of bodily needs. We see, here, not merely a sublimation of the classical notion of politics by the rise of society, but its complete denial. By positing the aim of civil society to be the attainment of the goods of the body, Patrizi has construed the function of civil society to be the equivalent of Aristotle's notion of the purpose of the household; and the realization of that purpose is carried out, for both men, through the activity of management. The notion of 'household management' which we find in Book I of Aristotle's Politics is the notion of directing the acquisition and utilization of the goods necessary to sustain

35. Grendler, op. cit., p. 106.

36. Arendt, op. cit., p. 60.

men and provide for a commodious living. This notion of the art of directing and regulating is integral to the writings of Patrizi. Patrizi would seem to be much like those of whom Aristotle speaks in Chapter III:

They believe (as we said in the beginning) that the management of the household, the control of slaves, the authority of the statesman, and the role of the monarch are all the same.³⁷

Patrizi could view the role of the statesman as equivalent to that of the classical Greek householder because the function of both entities was, for him, identical.

Patrizi, then, views the political task as the creation on the most rational society in order to provide for the goods of the body. Political society exists because it is an aid in fulfilling human physical needs. That society which can best fulfill those needs is one which is organized and directed by the most rational. This elite group of men, by virtue of their superior wisdom and prudence, are the ones who can best direct the acquisition and utilization of those earthly goods for which the civil society exists. And the nature of political action is that it is an activity which can best be characterized as the rational management of society.

37. Aristotle, Politics I, iii, Sec. 4.

III

Ludovico Agostini

The writings of Ludovico Agostini represent a departure from the exclusively secular rational management conception of politics that we have portrayed as characteristic of Patrizi. The consummate writer, Agostini accomplishes this as much through the form of his writing as through the content.

Agostini was born in Pesaro in the year 1536 into a family of humble origins, but which had more recently become wealthy and ennobled. He received his education at the University of Padua where he studied jurisprudence. In 1582 he retired to a small family farm near the town of Sosia where he began work on the Dialoghi dell' Infinito. His work was interrupted in 1583 for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and the task was completed in 1585. Agostini died in 1612, for the most part unknown. It was not until 1941 that we had an edition of the Repubblica immaginaria, which forms the political content of the work. A second and more accurate edition appeared in 1957, edited Luigi Firpo.³⁸ That Agostini's work should lie unused and largely unacknowledged for three and a half centuries appears to be one of those tricks that we play upon the dead--or more probably, one of those tricks that the dead play upon us. Given the fact that the work lay buried for so long, it is only with a good deal of irony

38. See Curcio, op. cit., and Agostini's La Repubblica immaginaria, edited by Luigi Firpo (Turin: Ramella, 1957).

that we can accept Grendler's characterization of Agostini. He states:

More, Guevara, and Agostini were counselors to kings who attempted through their books and civil careers to persuade rulers to follow a more humane Christian policy.³⁹

The Repubblica immaginaria draws upon three major currents of influence to portray what was chronologically the first in a number of post-Tridentine utopias. Neo-platonism, the spirit of the Counter-Reformation and the Venetian experience all colour the work of Agostini. Curcio points to the influence of the Venetian Republic here and, as in the case of Patrizi, we see that that influence is one of an aristocratic orientation:

Venetian influence...in Agostini substantially delineates a type of regime of theocratic aristocracy where above all, the various social classes could live happily and virtuously.⁴⁰

The tension and cross-current of ideas and influences is reflected in the dialogue format which Agostini employs. That which Firpo characterizes as "the great drama of the century"--the tension between nature and the supernatural, between reason and revelation--is reflected in the dialogue between Finito which represents human reason on the one hand, and Infinito which represents divine knowledge or revelation of divine precepts, on the other.⁴¹ The tensions between the Renaissance and the Counter-Reformation--between authority and liberty, dogma and

39. Grendler, op. cit., p. 177.

40. Curcio, op. cit., p. xvii.

41. Luigi Firpo, Lo stato ideale della controriforma (Bari: Laterza & Figli, 1957), pp. 263-69.

religion, political power and religious power, and riches and poverty--come alive in the exchange between the two interlocutors.

Beyond portraying the tension between the two abstractions of "Renaissance" and "Counter-Reformation", the form and development of the dialogues is most significant. Throughout the early part of the Dialoghi dell' Infinito, Finito plays a very passive role, asking for clarification of certain points and raising rather superficial objections which are immediately countered by Infinito. This initial part of the work is concerned with the early history of mankind, and such questions as why God permits evil in the world, and whether or not the Christians of the apostolic age were better than contemporary Christians. However, when we come to the Repubblica immaginaria--the specifically political part of the larger work--Finito suddenly comes alive and takes over the bulk of the task of giving us the outlines of the ideal society. When we begin to address the problem of civil society and the just laws which must govern human society, this hitherto low-key figure suddenly takes on the role of mentor and leads us through a labyrinth of considerations relating to the establishment of a just society. Infinito is not entirely passive in the discussion here, but he is clearly the less active participant while Finito is the dominant figure. The significance of this shift in the role of the two participants is that it provides us with a distinction between the types of questions and topics appropriate to divine knowledge or revelation represented by Infinito, and those appropriate to human reason. For example, Agostini views revelation as more appropriate when one attempts to tackle the problem of why God permits evil in

the world; but when we come to the problem of the delineation of a constitutional structure for the ideal society on earth, it is human reason, in the person of Finito, upon which we must rely. That Agostini dealt with both types of considerations would appear to be a recognition of the disparate nature of the two types of knowledge and, further, of the fundamental role played by each. That both were required for his exposition of the ideal society is a significant shift from the position held by Patrizi.

The early part of the Repubblica immaginaria is devoted to an abstract discussion of the basis and origin of law. Here it is Infinito who leads a discussion largely based upon the text of Exodus and the New Testament. There are, he says, two laws of nature--one given to all nature by God, and the other given to the rational part of nature, i.e. human nature. Because men are participants in the common nature they are obliged by the first type of natural law which leads to self-preservation and propagation of the species. Further, men as rational beings are obliged by the second form of natural law which leads to the preservation of civil life and protection of the patria from offensive forces.⁴² The point of interest here is the unstated equation of a rational life with civil life. Agostini does not deal with the leap from rational being to social being, but he seems to accept that since man is a rational being he

42. Agostini, op. cit., p. 22.

is therefore (or also) a social animal. The basis of this natural law given to rational beings is an injunction to action in such a manner that will lead to the preservation of civil society: Quod tibi non vis fieri, alteri ne feceris, et alteri facias, quod tibi fieri vellis.⁴³

It is this natural precept which should be at the base of all law. Revelation, or divine knowledge, is also relied upon for the beginnings of positive law. The norm for positive law was given to men by God through the prophet Moses. The decalogue serves as a model of civil law and gives us a civil law which is, at once, a set of rules to regulate the social life of men as well as a set of norms to enhance men's spirituality.⁴⁴

Agostini delineates four divine aspects of civil law and four human aspects of that law. The divine aspects of civil law--prudence, temperance, justice, and strength--are dealt with in the context of the ensuing discussion which is centered around the framework of the four human aspects of civil law--health, form, force, and wealth.⁴⁵

It is interesting that the divine aspects of civil law can only be discussed within the context of very concrete proposals for the regulation of human behaviour. For example, temperance is never discussed directly as a virtue, and we only get references to it as Infinito interjects into the framework set out by Finito. It is in

43. Ibid., p. 23. Cf. Luke VI, 31. See also Firpo, Lo stato ideale della controriforma, pp. 266-68.

44. Agostini, op. cit., pp. 27-8.

45. Ibid., p. 21.

Finito's discussion of health that Infinito raises the question of a twice weekly partial fast.⁴⁶ The balance of the work is devoted to the discussion of these four human aspects of civil law, and forms the bulk of the work.

In his discussion of "health" Agostini considers such wide-ranging topics as hygiene, diet and food supplies, personal habits and a form of city planning. The site of the city, he says, must be well chosen to allow for temperate seasons, healthy air, sufficient clean water, and enough fertile land to produce the agricultural products necessary to sustain the city. He discusses how the houses should be built, and advocates a uniform building code to be overseen by a city architect. Agostini allows for deviation from the uniform building pattern if, for instance, a nobleman seeks to construct a larger or more sumptuous residence; but even here the applicant must obtain approval and specifications from the city-appointed architect. Agostini's plans for the physical layout of the city also call for an orthogonal street pattern, with the streets to be flushed every eight to ten days with running water.⁴⁷

To insure the physical health of the inhabitants, Finito suggests the institution of a programme which places a physician in each section of the city so that no citizen is excessively distant in the event of a medical emergency. Further, each physician is to have

46. Ibid., 92-3.

47 See ibid., pp. 82-7.

an assistant in training who is placed in the section of the city, not to learn his craft as much as to become well-acquainted with the inhabitants of the area to learn of their special illnesses or needs. The programme allows for the perpetual provision of a physician to each quarter of the city who is knowledgeable of his patients. This rather remarkable medical system also boasts provisions for consultations with other physicians in particularly difficult cases, and a system of periodic food inspections to ensure that agricultural products are not tainted or rotten.⁴⁸

It is in the discussion of health that Infinito raises a number of proposals which incorporate a spirit of religious asceticism. He advocates the prohibition of wine to those not mature enough to "resist this acute liquor." Adults, he says, should be prohibited from attending inns and taverns except on nuptial or festive occasions, and then only with moderation. It is at this point that we can sympathize with Finito as he exclaims, "I see that you want to tear out all of my pleasures by their roots!"⁴⁹ Infinito replies that he seeks not to prohibit enjoyment, but only reduce the number of enjoyments to those which are honest; and he goes on to state that no one should sleep more than seven hours per day, no one should have pallets or mattresses of feathers, and there should be prohibitions against

48. Ibid., pp. 99-101. Cf. Contarini's account of contemporary Venetian practice, supra, pp. 81-82.

49. Ibid., p. 51.

sumptuous dress. These restrictive provisions are complemented by a series of prescriptions dictating such things as an exact mealtime lasting one hour in which everyone will eat. The hour of eating is to be initiated and concluded by three blasts from a cannon, after which everyone immediately returns to work. (Noblemen and "contemplative scientists", it will be noted, are to enjoy an extra half hour of rest after the mealtime.)⁵⁰

The proposals put forth by Agostini here in the guise of Infinito call up the image of another "utopia" further to the north. There are parallels between Agostini's imaginary republic and Calvin's Geneva, both in terms of the method and the substance of governance. Despotism and asceticism are hallmarks of both. We are left with the image of Agostini's citizens living in identical houses, regimented to the extent of a uniform mealtime, and greatly restricted in their use of leisure time with regard to the question of what activities they may engage for pleasure.

This compulsory collective asceticism aims to put into effect simultaneously the dictates of medicine and those of religion: temperance, sobriety, and fasting...keep the intellect clear no less than they lift the spirit to the heavens; a hygiene, that is physical and spiritual together, assures a healthy and long life in this world and eternal blessedness in the next.⁵¹

50. Ibid., p. 94. See E. P. Thompson, op. cit., pp. 79-84, where he discusses attempts to regulate 'work-time' in early British capitalism and the attendant penchant to portray this as morally unlifting for the individual.

51. Firpo, Lo state ideale della controriforma, p. 278.

The secular rational management image of politics that we saw in Patrizi appears to be somewhat different from Agostini's conception of the political realm. There is, in his writing, less reliance upon a purely human reason and, at the same time, a greater reliance upon revelation to set the goals of civil life. The human reason of Finito is supplemented by the divine reason of Infinito in setting those goals. Politics in Agostini's republic is characterized by concrete planning and regimentation. It provides an image of the political leader as the manager of society to attain the ends of civil life; and the task of governing is essentially the same as that we have found in the writings of Patrizi. It is the task of management.

The next aspect of civil law to which Agostini turns is that of the form or structure of the state. The influence of the Venetian Republic is profound here. The ideal republic, he says, should be an aristocracy made up of two classes, with provisions for class mobility. At the pinnacle of his broad based pyramid is the prince who serves a representative and coordinating function. Immediately beneath the prince are twelve counsellors who compose the senate, and are obliged to sit in the council at least eight times per month. The third level of Agostini's pyramid is that of the judiciary, consisting of six judges for criminal cases and six for civil cases. The fourth level consists of the twelve tribunes concerned with the grain supply;⁵² the fifth consists of six extraordinary observers

52. This office parallels that of the Venetian institution described by Contarini. See supra, p. 82.

charged with the duty of overseeing commerce and the arts. The lowest level of the governing body is that of the six "conservators" who oversee such matters as marriage ceremonies and the issuance of various licences, and attend to the hygiene of the city.⁵³ All of the above governmental officials, including the prince, are to be elected for a period of one year and no more, in order that the composition and order of the members may change "...in infinite number."⁵⁴ The parallels of Agostini's ideal structure for the state with the contemporary institutions of Venice lend credence not only to the role that the Republic played in influencing his thought, but also to the general influence and power of the myth of Venice. Despite current troubles, the Venetian political institutions were considered well worth preservation and emulation.

At this point in the dialogue Infinito proposes a parallel structure of ecclesiastical offices within the republic which would be headed by the bishop of the city. At each level he proposes an equal number of officials to oversee the spiritual aspects of the corresponding state task. For instance, corresponding to the twelve tribunes charged with supervising the grain supply, Infinito proposes an equal number of prelates to assure that the needs of the poor are met with

53. See Agostini, op. cit., pp. 103-104. It is interesting to note that of the forty-nine governmental positions delineated by Agostini, thirty-six are strictly bureaucratic in nature.

54. Ibid., p. 103.

regard to "spiritual bread."⁵⁵ While this sounds quite unobjectionable, potential problems arise when he suggests that the bishop also convene a "parliament" of judges to decide cases which "occur daily." The blurring of the boundaries between Church and state are significant, and one sees the movement of the clergy into a judicial function, not only with regard to ecclesiastical and sacred matters, but also in terms of civil law. Finito raises a mild objection, pointing to the possibility of the rise of scandal in the execution of their duties. Infinito replies by stating that the ministers will be able to circumvent this problem by the establishment of an hierarchical system whereby smaller matters are judged at lower levels, while more grievous matters are handled by the higher courts. The differentiation is made not along sacred versus secular lines, but rather with regard to the severity of the matter under judgement. Finito, unfortunately, allows the matter to drop here.⁵⁶ Grendler views this ecclesiastical component as a dominant feature of Agostini's republic: "The dominating feature of his utopia was the close religious supervision exercised by the bishop and parish priests..."⁵⁷

Agostini constructs his aristocracy so as to minimize what he takes to be the basic weakness of the Venetian aristocracy. The perennial power-hold of one class did not allow for the ascendancy of the most virtuous, but more often those of greater wealth. Agostini's

55. Ibid., p. 104.

56. Ibid., p. 105. Cf. Exodus, XVIII.

57. Grendler, op. cit., p. 166. While this is certainly a noteworthy feature of Agostini's imaginary republic, it hardly qualifies as a 'dominant' feature.

aristocracy is tempered with a certain levelling of wealth, to be accomplished largely through governmental control of commerce and industry. Further, in order to prevent the type of tyranny often associated with the perennial rule of one class, Agostini advocated the institution of agricultural "communities" which would represent the interests of the agricultural workers associated with a given castle. Artisans would also be organised into guilds, each of which would have a spokesman to represent the group before the government.⁵⁸ The significance of this portrayal of the relationship between the two classes is that while the peasants and artisans do not directly participate in the direction of the polity, they are not reduced to the servitude which Patrizi portrays in his utopia. The division between the classes based upon the Platonic conception of a difference in function is modified here by a spirit of Catholic humanism and noblesse oblige.

The salient feature of Agostini's proposed structure or form of the civil government is its provision for a nearly total management of society. Arts and commerce, food supply, hygiene and even codes of dress come under governmental supervision. There is a relatively large degree of egalitarianism in Agostini's imaginary republic--but it is the equality of total management. It is the task of the political leader to oversee and implement the management of society which Agostini delineates.

58. Ibid., pp. 70-71.

Agostini spends relatively little time in his discussion of force, the third human aspect of civil law. Here he advocates a number of specific provisions for the defense of the city against aggressors--among them, sufficient armaments, the provision of adequate ditches and walls, a site for the city which is selected with defensive considerations in mind, and the independence of the city from an aqueduct system. Amidst these provisions, Infinito predictably points out that it is better to rely on the "army of the spirit" than to make earthly provisions. Finito effectively cuts this line of argument short with the adage "God helps those who help themselves", and continues to delineate the necessary measures for the effective defense of the city.⁵⁹

The last area of consideration in Agostini's Repubblica immaginaria is that of wealth; and it is here that we gain a clearer picture of the role of the state. He identifies three sources of wealth--agriculture, commerce, and industry. The first requisite of agriculture is fertile land, and Agostini maintains that the city must have sufficient fertile land that it need not depend upon its neighbours for the agricultural products necessary to maintain the city. The drive toward agricultural self-sufficiency is to be aided by the implementation of "prescribed obligatory and rational cultivation"⁶⁰ according to plans set down by a salaried public over-

59. See ibid., pp. 105-109.

60. Ibid., p. 113. On this point see Firpo, Lo stato ideale della controriforma, pp. 285-95.

seer:

...we will ordain this law: that everyone possessing real estate, urban as well as rural, would be obliged to set themselves to that cultivation which is ordained by the public-salaried masters of the field and architects;...⁶¹

These mastri de'campi, or "agricultural planners" are to have scientific and practical knowledge of the terrain, the air, and different types of plants, fodder and vines. Again we gain the image of a climate of expertise where "rational planning" dictates activity within the society.

Commerce comes under the direction of the state no less than agriculture: "Following our reasoning in giving laws to the industry of the fields, I will go on to those of commerce..." Agostini distinguishes between commerce connected with the importation of goods into the republic, and commerce between two foreign markets. The first type of commerce is strictly governed by law. Only those goods that are needed by the city may be imported; and the price of these goods is to be set by the state in order to protect both domestic producers and consumers from foreign monopolies. Dealings between two foreign markets are relatively unimpeded by Agostini's civil authority. Only two considerations apply here. First, the risks of this type of commerce must be covered exclusively by insurance contracts with foreign banks; and secondly, because this is a morally suspect occupation, one tenth of all profits from commerce between foreign markets is to be used to rescue Christian slaves from the hands of the

61. Ibid., p. 115.

infidels.⁶²

Agostini identifies the third source of wealth as industry, by which he means the manufacture of goods; and this also comes under civil management in his ideal republic. Care must be taken, he says, to insure that those arts of industry are practised which will avoid the necessity of relying upon the importation of needed goods. As in the agricultural sector, here too the commune should strive to become self-sufficient. Everyone, for instance, must choose a profession by age fourteen that there will be a sufficient labour pool. The quality and price of manufactured goods are also subject to regulation by the six extraordinary overseers. For this purpose, periodic checks will be made to insure the quality of the product, and to adjust prices as the cost of materials change. Agostini sets the price formula as twice the cost of the materials involved, to insure a "reasonable and competent price." The artisan, then, would earn the equivalent of the cost of materials involved in any given project.⁶³

62. Ibid., pp. 113-15. Cf. Aristotle's similar division of the art of acquisition in Politics I, x, where he distinguishes between that which is laudable and necessary as it is connected with the management of the household, and that which is justly censured as it is connected solely with retail trade. Agostini's position here is identical if we view the city as an enlarged 'household'.

63. Ibid., p. 120. It is not our purpose here to critique this price formula, but the fact that he sets a price formula at all is indicative of the detail and specificity which Agostini saw as appropriate to the management of society by the political leadership.

Agostini closes his section on wealth with proposals to limit the amount of interest charged on loans to three or four per cent, the registration of private property to curtail disputes within and between families, and prohibit the "pomp and games" which are the two principal doorways to "infamous poverty" for the rich.⁶⁴ It is here that Agostini closes the dialogue with the two participants agreeing to meet again in the future; and we are left without the benefit of any kind of conclusion or summing up on Agostini's part.

Agostini's Repubblica immaginaria portrays political experience much in the image of the task of the rational management of the affairs of men that they may live in harmony and comfort in the civil society. His position, however, is not strictly identical to that of Patrizi. Unlike Patrizi, Agostini does not rely solely upon a secular humanism. His rationally managed society is based upon the groundwork laid out by Infinito and taken from the Bible. The decalogue and the Golden Rule form the foundation upon which Agostini constructs his ideal republic, and "at the crown of this ideal edifice are supreme religious values."⁶⁵ Agostini has combined the asceticism of his religious experience with the sense of rational action and planning so characteristic of the early modern era.

64. Ibid., pp. 125-28.

65. Firpo, Lo stato ideale della controriforma, p. 299.

Agostini's republic, however, seems to fall short of its purpose. The primary obligation of the civil power, he says, is "...to instruct the people in all those Christian rites approved by the Church."⁶⁶ His portrayal of the republic, though, gives no sense of education or instruction. Rather, one is left with the sense of management, regimentation and conditioned reflex. The civil power assumes responsibility for the greater portion of human behaviour. It regulates, to a very great extent, the instrumental relationships of men as well as the activities of each individual with regard to those Christian rites. All are obliged to attend mass at a given hour, and (as Sarpi would argue) that civil obligation denigrates the spirit of the rite. Even the social relationships of men are under threat of control when Agostini discusses the registration of property to prevent familial discord. Agostini's efforts appear to be not so much for the goal of instruction as for that of management or even direct control to gain the end of civil harmony.

The task of the statesman, for Agostini, is much the same as that which we find in the writings of Patrizi. It is the task of the management of human affairs in order that men may live the best possible life within civil society; and that task is best accomplished by rational action on the part of men. For Agostini, human rationality is

66. Agostini, op. cit., p. 45.

supplemented by divine reason in the a priori foundations of the state-- but when it comes to the reality of political action, it is human reason and human action which must be relied upon.

IV

The view of politics and the political task portrayed by the two writers dealt with in this chapter is quite different from the conceptions of politics that we find in the works of Contarini, or in the works of Paruta and Sarpi. The most significant bond between Patrizi and Agostini is their belief in the capacity of man, through the use of his rational faculties, to construct, direct and maintain a civil society whose raison d'etre is the amelioration of man's physical existence. This belief reflects what Firpo characterizes as the 'colour of the time' in the cinquecento:

The colour of the time, the spiritual current which joined the most vital and profound consciences, is, without doubt, humanistic rationalism, that anxiety and joy of human autonomy, that fierceness of the recognized supremacy and quasi-omnipotence of the intelligence, which manifested itself in a productive optimism and an unrestrained, heroic concept of life.⁶⁷

Given such an optimistic, if not arrogant, view of the capacities of man, it is but a short step to attempt to place those rational capabilities of man at the very cornerstone of civil society, and to construct that society unaided by all but human reason. Patrizi has

67. Firpo, "L'utopia politica nella controriforma," p. 80. Cochrane's translation of this passage (p. 153) is less than satisfactory.

taken that step, while Agostini has kept one foot in the camp of Christian dogma and revelation. Despite Agostini's initial hesitancy, however, he has overtaken Patrizi in the everyday activities of politics. These men focus upon leadership and the actions to be taken by the sovereign and his subordinates. They rely not upon history, nor upon individuals acting according to some form of moral consciousness in order to ameliorate the life of the body politic. Rather, they put their trust in the man of action, the wise sovereign who orders his polity according to the dictates of reason.

Another aspect of that bond which joins these two writers, yet separates them from other traditions of political discourse, is their view of politics as an activity concerned primarily--if not solely--with the provision of man's physical needs. We find in their works no concern for man's potential or aspirations which marked the conception of politics as a moral endeavour. Politics and political activity, for these writers, are not endeavours which make us more human, or better men, or more godlike. It is a remedy for human failings--an earthly necessity because men are as they are.

These writers are more specific in their discussions of political activity than the writers discussed earlier--and in this sense they may be said to be more extensive. These works are more extensive with regard to the degree of concrete planning and injunctions to activity. We find Patrizi including in his political writings such things as diet and sexual activity, and we see Agostini

laying down plans covering the rational planning of agricultural production, the construction of housing, and city-planning. Their political concerns cover very specific areas which writers from other perspectives would consider to be outside the proper realm of politics.

At the base of this difference in the conceptions of political activity appears to be a fundamental conception of human nature which is different from that of those who base political experience on moral experience. The emphasis upon manipulation and regulation that we find in these writers betrays a relatively ignoble view of the larger part of mankind when compared with that of Paruta and Sarpi. Patrizi's emphasis upon the irrationality of the peasants, artisans, merchants and soldiers, and Agostini's penchant for regulating everything from mealtimes to pastimes, give us a view of the larger part of mankind as being incapable of self-direction, sound judgement, and discretion. The political task is, then, largely to compensate for these shortcomings.

Men being as they are, it is necessary to have those who can lead and manage the civil society; and these two writers share a similar notion of political leadership. That leadership is, above all, based upon expertise. Patrizi places rational action at the pinnacle of virtuous activity, and we see Agostini delegating areas of leadership or management to qualified experts such as the city architects and the mastri de'campi. The political task is concerned with the

management of human affairs, according to a rational pattern; and this necessitates a cadre of men of superior reason and training to assume that task.

The political leader, concerned as he was with the production and distribution of goods and services, is much like the head of the household in classical Greek writing. The medieval interconnection between "political" and "social" has transformed the notion of a public realm from one unconcerned with wants and needs to one which is founded upon the fulfillment of those very wants and needs. Speaking of the classical Greek household, Arendt states:

The distinctive trait of the household sphere was that in it men lived together because they were driven by their wants and needs.⁶⁸

If the political task for these sixteenth century men is seen to encompass the purposes formerly relegated to the household, it is not surprising to find that the methods of the household--the manner of ruling, the activity of management--are seen as equally appropriate to that political task. The civil society then becomes one in which political activity is not concerned with actions between equals as much as an activity based upon a subordination of function. The overseers of agriculture, the city architects and food inspectors all possess a political status (defined in terms of function) delegated to them by the ultimate authority of the sovereign who acts as the

68. Arendt, op. cit., p. 29.

paterfamilias to the enlarged family of society. The civil society is, in effect, an enlarged household which exhibits a political authority antithetical to the Greek conception of political authority, but very much in keeping with the notions of authority characteristic of the medieval era whereby the sovereign took it upon himself (or was appointed by God) to watch over, protect, and guide those under his domain. As Patrizi posits the raison d'etre of the civil society as being the realization of the goods of the body, we can see the degree to which politics and government have taken on tasks and functions associated with the household in classical theory and with the manor of the medieval era. The methods appropriate to these tasks and functions have likewise been adopted into the political realm--and these are the methods of management.

V

The conception of politics as the rational management of society draws from many of the same intellectual traditions and influences which we have found in the conceptions of politics as the lessons of history or as a moral endeavour. As well, the cluster of ideas which coalesce to form this conception of politics draws from a number of intellectual influences which are of negligible importance--or are totally ignored--in the writings of those who portrayed politics

as a different form of activity.

The conception of politics as the rational management of society is based upon a Renaissance notion of wisdom, elements of which we have seen in the writings of Contarini, Paruta and Sarpi. It is a notion of wisdom which encompasses three key elements: action, earthly utility, and expertise. It is, first of all, tied to action, in that it is a pre-requisite to action. As Rice points out, wisdom in the Renaissance "...is active. It controls, manipulates and governs all things."⁶⁹ It is of value, then, in that it provides a basis for action. (We can, perhaps, see the beginnings of the separation of, and later confusion between, 'wisdom' and 'prudence' here.) The re-definition of wisdom to something akin to background knowledge for an activity narrows the scope of wisdom to that which is useful to the actor and his purposes. Panofsky points to that relationship between wisdom and action in the natural sciences:

In short, the Renaissance bridged the gap which had separated the scholar and thinker from the practitioner; it has been said, not without justification, that in the Renaissance the greatest advances were made by engineers, instrument-makers and artists rather than professors.⁷⁰

For the political writer of the Renaissance the scope or purview of knowledge was, as we have seen, greatly influenced by the humanist

69. Rice op. cit., p. 87.

70. Panofsky, op. cit., pp. 134-36.

tradition and focused upon human needs and desires. That knowledge was most worthwhile which could serve men in the acquisition of earthly happiness. The emphasis upon utility--the second key element in this notion of wisdom--seems to anticipate the eighteenth century philosophes as well as the later utilitarians. Again, the earthly nature of this utilitarian aspect of wisdom in the Renaissance is pointed to by Rice when he cites Jacopo Saldoletto's De Philosophia, written in 1533:

Wisdom is the art of acquiring those things
which are most often esteemed and sought
after by the men with whom one spends one's
life.⁷¹

There was, in the Renaissance notion of wisdom, an element of what Myron Gilmore characterizes as a "note of optimism" with regard to the possibility of "...increasing the sum of temporal well-being on this earth."⁷² This optimism was borne of the prospect of a return to an earlier golden age, or, alternatively, the establishment of a new era of dynamic growth and confidence in man's ability to change his lot for the better. The conception of politics as the rational management of society draws from--and is a manifestation of--this optimism. That confidence in man's capabilities to change his lot for the better through the application of technical knowledge is pointed to by Firpo:

71. Rice, op. cit., p. 87.

72. Myron Gilmore, The World of Humanism: 1453-1517 (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962). p. 268.

Old problems, like that of death and economic inequalities, are now resolved by technical improvements; and the result is an optimistic and fervent faith in progress among the inhabitants.⁷³

The third key element of the notion of wisdom which lies at the base of this conception of politics is that of expertise. The wise man here was not what we have come to term the 'Renaissance man', but rather one who exhibited a wisdom more closely akin to Aristotle's notion of 'conditional wisdom'. It was a notion of expertise and a wisdom which is

...a limited perfection, the mastery of a particular art or science. The man who best assures the success of the desired end of any art or science is wise in respect to that art or science.⁷⁴

Men came to prize that knowledge which could be transformed into useful action, and different forms of activity required different forms of knowledge to guide that activity. The replacement of a broad universalist wisdom with a specific, activity-oriented technical expertise offered new opportunities to the layman who exhibited talent.

Ferguson speaks of "...the pursuit of education for practical ends and as a necessary qualification for a career in business, politics or the secular professions..." and goes on to state that:

73. Firpo, "Political Philosophy: Renaissance Utopianism," p. 167.

74. Rice, op. cit., p. 60.

...the revival of Roman civil law and the study of medicine in the Italian universities gave the layman a prominent place in the institutions of higher learning. Professional careers for educated laymen were also opened up by the growing complexity of city government...⁷⁵

We have seen this pursuit of career-oriented expertise in the laws of Venice which required that bureaucrats in the employ of the Republic receive their education at the University of Padua rather than elsewhere. Wisdom, then, was not so much the domain of the detached universal man of leisure as it was the tool of the expert. He possessed the technical knowledge to perform a specific activity or function. He may not have been wise with regard to a great many things, but in his particular field--be it medicine, law, statecraft or painting--he was considered to be an expert.

Beyond the three key elements of action, utility and expertise, there are other influences and intellectual traditions which shaped this conception of politics. The influence of humanism, with its emphasis upon the dignity of man, helped to focus expert action upon man's secular world. The pursuit of the 'good life' defined in earthly terms is, as we have seen, of paramount importance to those writers who conceived the political task as that of the management of society. The inter-relationship of ideas here is interesting; for it is precisely the pursuit of the good life defined in earthly terms which is most

75. Wallace K. Ferguson, The Renaissance (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1940), p. 61.

amenable to the notions of expertise, manipulation, management and action. The pursuit of salvation, for instance, is not a quest for which these types of activity are readily appropriate. It is when we concern ourselves with our earthly existence that the value of planning, management and expertise manifests itself. There was, then, a mutual reinforcement of ideals which lent credence to the conception of politics as the rational management of society. The pursuit of an earthly good fostered specific patterns of activity, and those patterns, in turn, were applicable only to certain types of problems or situations. The pursuit of civil happiness could best be carried out through well-planned governmental administration, but a reliance upon good administration dictated that civil happiness be defined in terms of the earthly benefits which the civil administration was capable of providing.

There was a further reinforcement of ideals within this conception of the political task in that the good life defined in earthly terms paralleled the sentiments of the larger society. Ferguson has pointed out the growth of a secular and acquisitive spirit particularly among the upper classes. Life was not a transitional period of sorrow on one's way to the grave, but rather something to be used, enjoyed, cultivated and exploited.⁷⁶ A conception of the political 'good life' devoid of metaphysical, religious or mystical notions regarding man's

76. Ibid., pp. 66-71.

place in the cosmos was reinforced by the values of the larger society which emphasized material goods and earthly happiness.

The conception of politics as the rational management of society as we have portrayed it here drew heavily from a neo-Platonist tradition particularly strong in Italy from the fifteenth century. The initial humanist tradition inspired men to look at the works of the ancient writers, and those particularly relevant to the Italian city-state were those of Plato and Aristotle. The growth and influence of neo-Platonic philosophy, with its emphasis upon the use of reason to make man's life intelligible and to order his world, was greatly fostered through the founding of the Platonic Academy in Florence by Cosimo de'Medici. Marsilio Ficino and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola were the great proponents of this blend of Platonic reason and idealism with Christian dogma in the fifteenth century; and by the sixteenth century the theme had been taken up by a number of lesser figures whose work reflects this Platonic influence. We have seen it in Patrizi's conception of his ideal republic wherein the prime virtue and principle of order is that of reason. Kristeller has pointed out that More's Utopia, "...however original in its content, could hardly have been conceived without the reading of Plato's Republic".⁷⁷ Patrizi's La città felice surely required more than a casual reading of Plato's work.

77. Kristeller, op. cit., p. 62. For a general discussion of the role of Platonism in the philosophy of the Renaissance, see Chapter III. See also, Copleston, op. cit., Vol. III, Chapter XIII.

The efficacy of human reason as the touchstone of a wisdom become expertise was reinforced through the success of the architectural and engineering feats which remain a hallmark of the Italian Renaissance. It was human reason which stood behind Brunelleschi's dome and Leonardo's canals connecting Milan with her outlying districts. If man, through the use of his own rational faculties was capable of such feats, to what heights might he not attain? The use of human reason was not restricted to such projects. Indeed, it became the standard 'tool' for a great many pursuits--from the acquisition of material goods to the construction of the ideal society. Ferguson speaks of men as being "...more consciously and rationally preoccupied with the pursuit of this world's good..." (emphasis added).⁷⁸ A major item in 'this world's goods' is the civil society, and human reason was viewed by many--particularly following Machiavelli--as the great tool to be used in designing that civil society. It was through the use of reason that men were able to clear away much of the myth and the mysticism that had surrounded the concept of political society and which had been an inheritance from the medieval era. Patrizi's prescriptions regarding the goods of the body, and Agostini's architectonic idealism alike are based upon the use of human reason.

The notion of politics as a managerial form of activity, which is perhaps the most original Renaissance contribution to political

78. Ferguson, op. cit., p. 67.

thought, is based in the logical outcome of a series of ideals held with regard to the purpose of civil society, to action and to wisdom. If we accept the purpose of civil society as the provision of a happiness defined in terms of material well-being, then that civil society takes on the character of a 'use-object',⁷⁹ i.e., it has no objective existence apart from its relationship to serving man, and it can be treated only in terms of a 'tool', of an object to be used by man for his purposes. The important point here, as Arendt points out, is that if the state is seen as a 'use-object', then men can only be viewed in terms of man the user and instrumentalizer.⁸⁰ He is a user of the tool of civil society; and he uses that civil society to gain a happiness defined in terms of earthly utility. Besides the notion of civil society as a 'use-object', we must take into account the notions of a wisdom which is conceived in terms of an expertise. The comprehension and direction of civil society is viewed in terms of a specialized wisdom or expertise quite apart from such phenomena as moral philosophy or theology. The political actor, if he is to be successful, must be the possessor of this specialized wisdom regarding the state. He must be the expert. Armed with his specialized wisdom, he must direct the functioning of the civil society in such a manner that it will produce the desired results for men. Now, if we have an 'expert' directing and co-ordinating the functioning of civil society conceived in terms of a 'use-object' or 'tool' then we are faced

79. See Arendt, op. cit., pp. 133-39.

80. Ibid., p. 138.

with the essential notion of a 'manager'; i.e., one who co-ordinates the use of tools in order to insure the production of the desired results. The notion of politics as a managerial form of activity, then, is not derived directly from an older political tradition or from another intellectual influence. It is, rather, the result of the coming together of various ideals regarding the nature of civil society, of wisdom, and of the nature of action. This is not to say however, that the notions of a managerial activity were original to the Renaissance. As we have seen, they were evident in classical Greek writings. That which is original to the Renaissance is the transplanting of this type of activity into the political realm, and the basing of that task upon human reason. In the Greek experience this type of activity had been viewed as appropriate only to the household; and in the medieval era the notions of management by expertise were inappropriate to a conception of civil society which rested upon the notions of status and authority in an unbroken and immutable chain of hierarchy which culminated in God. It was only when the state came to be viewed in terms of a 'use-object', subject to expert manipulation, that the notions of a rational managerial activity were appropriate. And it was the notion of politics as an activity amenable to expert management which was the great legacy of the Renaissance to the modern era.

Within this conception of politics there is, at least

implicitly, a mechanical imagery which we do not find in either of the two alternative conceptions of politics which we have examined. The writings of Patrizi and Agostini leave one with the impression of civil society as an artificial construction which men have pursued because of the benefits which it was able to confer upon them. As an artificial construction, it was subject to continual adjustment and/or re-building by man the artificer. Such notions would appear to be out of context for Contarini, Paruta or Sarpi. For Contarini, the time of building was over and the task had been completed by those apotheosized founding fathers. Paruta and Sarpi portray the civil society in terms of an organic imagery which sees the civil society as an adjunct of man's moral potential given to him by God. The notions of control and manipulation which attend the imagery of management are directly applicable to a mechanical conception of political society, but only so to a lesser degree when one conceives of civil society as an organic entity.

The mechanical imagery attendant to this conception of politics points to a larger issue of man's position vis-a-vis the state. Within the conception of politics as the lessons of history, we found a notion of the state as an entity greater than man, which properly exhibited those patterns given to nature by God. The state, as a whole, was beyond the creation of man, and he could but attempt to discover external patterns and infuse them into his civil society.

Within the conception of politics as a moral endeavour we see that the relative positions of 'man' and 'state' have changed; and that the two now occupy a somewhat equal elevation. The state remains god's creation, but man is viewed as a participant and actor in the civil life, and he is no longer a discoverer of externally prescribed patterns. When we look at the conception of politics as the rational management of society, we see that the process of the relative elevation of 'man' vis-a-vis the 'state' has continued. The state does not owe its genesis to God, but it is rather man's creation. Further, political action does not rest upon externally prescribed patterns of nature or of history, but only upon man's rational faculties. The state owes its genesis, maintenance and future solely to man.

The latter position, wherein man is the creator of the state, is the subject of what is probably Burckhardt's most noted piece of writing--"The State as a Work of Art."⁸¹ In his account of the Venetian Republic, Burckhardt speaks of "institutions of public utility", by which he means such things as hospitals, retirement programmes, food inspections and the like. He states that these "...institutions of public utility were nowhere so numerous as at Venice,"⁸² and goes on to generalize: "Public institutions of every kind found in Venice their pattern..."⁸³ Libby echoes this view, and ties it to the role played by Contarini: "Largely through Contarini

81. Burckhardt, op. cit., pp. 21-142.

82. Ibid., p. 84

83. Ibid., p. 85.

the Venetian state became an important example for the utopian political thought of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries..."⁸⁴ If these institutions of public utility are viewed as part of the substance of governing, then we have a notion of the state as an entity to serve man in terms of earthly utility. Further, the establishment of such institutions is a task which can best be accomplished within a conception of politics which relies upon human reason and which offers a mechanical imagery wherein man is the prime builder. For example, the establishment of a hospital can be accomplished without an ethereal quest for God's patterns in nature or history, or without a concern for man's moral potential. Human reason informs us of the need for such an institution, and provides us with the knowledge of how to establish it. It is a strictly temporal endeavour to serve current and projected, rather than past, needs. The prevalence of concern for these institutions of public utility in the writings of Patrizi and Agostini point to the degree to which the state is viewed by man as an entity constructed by him to serve his earthly needs. As well, it is yet another indication of the extent to which the Republic of Venice has served these men in terms of a model.

The major limitations of the two alternative conceptions of politics which we have examined are not evident in the conception

84. Libby, *op. cit.*, p. 44. See also, Firpo, "Political Philosophy: Renaissance Utopianism," p. 164.

of politics as the rational management of society. Unlike the conception of politics as the lessons of history, this view of politics is capable of addressing the positive as opposed to the preservative exercise of power. That is, this conception of politics focuses upon what man might achieve rather than exclusively upon what he might preserve and maintain. Further, given such a focus, it is capable of accommodating a fundamentally altered historical context such as that which faced Venice in the sixteenth century. It could accommodate--perhaps not solve, but accommodate--for instance, a situation wherein traditional sources of wealth were no longer viable and shifting power configurations made old political postures untenable. Likewise, the conception of politics as the rational management of society does not manifest those shortcomings which we have identified with the conception of politics as a moral endeavour. Unlike the latter conception, a view of politics as the rational management of society can address the central issue of power. Here power is a pre-requisite to the civil leader, and it is one of his tools of management. Although the managerial conception of politics does not exhibit these major deficiencies, and despite the fact that the Venetian Republic served to an extent as a model which shaped this conception of politics, it could be of little use to Venice herself. We have taken note of the situations which faced Venice in the sixteenth century such as the

decline of trade, enlarged power configurations on the mainland, and the growing naval threat of the Turks. It is important to recognize these phenomena as 'situations' which presented problems rather than as problems in and of themselves. To characterize something as a 'problem' leads us to look for 'solutions'; and often it would appear that certain phenomena are not amenable to a problem-solving technique. There are limitations to man the artificer, and situations wherein no amount of human reason, planning and calculation can avail. Venice in the sixteenth century faced such a series of situations. No amount of effort, no matter how well planned or calculated, could remake the geography of trade routes for the benefit of the Venetian economy. That cornerstone of the economy was gone forever, and if Venice was to flourish economically new sources of wealth would have to be found. But here again, there appear to be inherent limitations. The Veneto was not rich in minerals or other resources to foster manufacturing, and increased piracy had limited the ability of Venice to import the needed raw materials. The shift to a tourist economy began in the seventeenth century,⁸⁵ and Venice seems to have been doomed to this role out of the lack of viable alternatives. Likewise, the growing power and centrism of antagonistic neighbours was a situation not readily amenable to 'solution'. At best, one could hope to fight a 'rear-guard' action, attempting to minimize the impact of this phenomenon. Lacking a viable economy and an extensive domain from which one might gain revenues and recruits for armies, the political

85. See McNeill, op. cit., pp. 3-47.

leaders of the Republic could only hope to minimize losses to these more powerful and antagonistic armies. The major limitations of the conception of politics as the rational management of society, then, center upon the degree to which man can manipulate his environment.

The crises of sixteenth century Venice appear to have been not 'problems' as much as they were 'situations'; and, as such, they were not amenable to the rational, calculated and planned action which this conception of politics emphasizes.

There is, within this conception of politics, a further limitation which would seem to negate the possibility of a transition to some other form of 'greatness' for the Venetian Republic. The basis of the greatness of the Republic had been defined largely in terms of her ability to provide an orderly society and the amenities of life which allowed men to pursue their own ends unhindered by civil dissension, foreign hegemony and want. As long as the civil society continued to be viewed as such a 'use-object', and man continued to be conceived in terms of the user, a re-formulation of political greatness was impossible. Not only could the Republic no longer provide these benefits to the same degree, but there was little in the Venetian situation to recommend it as a tool which man might use to better his life. For example, effective defense against foreign powers would have necessitated ever-increasing military budgets through increased taxation. There is a point, however, at which the state then loses its character as a 'tool' and becomes a burden. At this point, the conception of politics as the

rational management of society breaks down, for the state can no longer be viewed as an aid to man's earthly existence. The state must then be conceived in alternative terms; and the conception of politics as the rational management of society in sixteenth century Venice offered no alternatives to a political greatness founded upon earthly utility.

There is further criticism to be made of this conception of politics: it is, in fact, a negation of an older notion of politics which was an activity conducted between equals and served an integrative function uniting the people into one body. To conceive of politics as the management of society is to integrate functions rather than people. The well organized and administered civil society takes on the imagery of the machine, each part performing a specific function. The division of labour and concomitant division of authority are nowhere integrated into a view of the whole except at the very upper echelons of that authority structure. The individual is then left without the sense of participation in an integrated whole. Contarini allowed for that sense of integration with the ideal of participation in the greater patrimony of the body of Venetians and through the specific mechanisms of the election. Paruta and Sarpi, likewise, integrated the individual through an emphasis upon individual participation in civic action. Within this third conception, however, politics does not serve its original integrative function for the great majority of men; and the classical notions of a common interest and enterprise have given way to the administration of specialization.

CONCLUSION

Our investigation into the political thought associated with the myth of Venice has sought first of all to provide a fuller understanding of that 'myth' and its role in shaping the works and ideas of a number of political writers in the sixteenth century. Secondly, this work has attempted to provide a framework for analysis which might be used to view these various writings and which might provide us with a better understanding of them. A third objective of this investigation has been to bring to the fore a number of political works which have largely been ignored in the history of ideas, yet which are able to tell us something regarding men's conceptions of politics and the civil society in the sixteenth century.

We have seen that the myth of Venice was a protean and polymorphous phenomenon which was employed by a number of writers to lend substance to their arguments and to make palpable various ideals regarding the nature

of the civil society. The Venetian experience has served these men in different manners, depending upon the purposes which they have attributed to politics and the civil life. For Contarini, who sought order and harmony of the civil society, Venice offered a ready blueprint for government organization which had withstood the test of time. Contarini's is the voice of tradition, and through him we can gain an appreciation of a civil society whose basic features not only provided the Republic with a long and stable history, but which also provided the individual with a political identity by linking him to a greater patrimonial heritage. Alternatively, Paruta and Sarpi saw in Venice the archetype of a political society which offered the greatest prospect of human perfection through individual participation and action. For them the true purpose of civil life was reflected in those Venetian institutions which allowed and aided the individual in his quest to become a better man. Lastly, for Patrizi and Agostini, Venice provided an exemplary model of an aristocracy efficient in the provision of the goods and services for which men enter into the civil society. The example of the Republic amply demonstrated the material benefits which might accrue from a properly organized civil administration. The fact that the experience of the Venetian Republic could be employed to speak to such a wide diversity of concerns testifies to the strength and power of her reputation, as well as to the polymorphous nature of the myth of Venice.

The multi-faceted nature of the myth of Venice is largely derivative of the fact that Venice was a mixed polity, and hence one could find

in Venice the model for a number of considerations. If one sought order of the civil society one might focus upon the whole, for no polity could claim the longevity and stability for which Venice was famous. Alternatively however, one could focus upon specific elements of the Venetian Republic to draw the lessons necessary to the realization of other ends. Paruta and Sarpi could focus upon the democratic elements and the participative nature of the model to bolster an Aristotelian notion of perfection realized through action. Similarly, Patrizi and Agostini could draw upon the aristocratic element of Venice and upon her reputation for the efficient provision of goods and services in their advocacy of a managerial conception of political life while eschewing the democratic features of the model.

While the mixed polity afforded the opportunity of emphasizing all or only certain aspects of the Venetian constitution, significantly the myth of Venice was never employed to speak to one key element of the mixed polity. The myth could not be made to address the benefits of monarchy; for more orthodox examples of that form of government were in great abundance, yet these monarchies lacked the stability and longevity which Venice had attained and which were, curiously, most often cited among the chief benefits conferred by monarchy. Seemingly, if the Venetian example could inform the monarchists at all, it could only advise them that monarchy, in order to be stable and longlasting, must be tempered with aristocratic and democratic elements. Thus, while the example of Venice might be employed to bolster the notions of aristocracy, democracy, republicanism or the mixed polity, it could only denigrate the notions of monarchy.

The fact that the myth of Venice could be employed to speak to fundamentally disparate conceptions of political life points to the power and cogency of the reputation of Venice in the sixteenth century. Rome, Florence, Pisa, Genoa and Naples all provided ample evidence of the fragile nature of man's civic institutions, and seemed to indicate that unless the civil society were ordered just so, it stood little chance of survival against the odds of fortune and the vagaries of history. Venice proved herself as the one bright spot in this otherwise bleak picture, affording men a vision of civic creation which had seemingly overcome those odds. The power of the myth of Venice, then, is certainly comprehensible within this context. Moreover, the myth of Venice had become a touchstone of political wisdom and provided a pattern for political action throughout much of Europe, and the assertion that the cinquecento was an impoverished era for political thought in Italy is unfounded. We see that aside from representing a fertile field unto itself, Venetian political ideals had provided a basis for much of the political thought of sixteenth century Europe.¹

The second, and major, objective of our investigation into the political thought associated with the myth of Venice has been to provide a framework within which to view the works of a number of individual political thinkers. We have attempted to articulate this framework through

1. See supra, p. 11n.

the conceptual apparatus of alternative conceptions of politics, each of which highlights key elements of a given approach to the problems of politics and the civil society. Those key elements are reflected in a series of questions regarding man and the civil society. What is the purpose of civil society and what is man's relationship to it? What are political acts? Who are the political actors? And what is the nature of political man? These are questions which go to the very core politics, and the answers to them which we are able to draw from the various writings, point to fundamental disparities with regard to the nature of that phenomenon. Unless and until we can articulate those disparities, our understanding of the individual writings in question will be less than it should be. For example, the writings of Paruta and Patrizi cannot be fruitfully compared unless we are aware of the different notions which they held regarding the nature of civil society, its purpose, and proper organization. To view the civil society as an entity whose purpose is to aid men in their quest for the perfection of their essential humanity is quite dissimilar to positing the provision of the goods of the body as the goal of civil life. Any political theory arising from such fundamentally opposing initial premises will be so qualitatively different as to render simple comparisons of little value. We must investigate those basic differences which animate the works of these two men.

In our formulation of three alternative conceptions of politics we have found three different views of man's relationship to the civil society.

We have seen political man treated as a discoverer of the patterns infused into nature by God and whose task it is to replicate those patterns in the construction of civil institutions. Alternatively, we have seen political man portrayed as a participant in a mode of living which promotes and encourages his moral development and the realization of his human potential. Thirdly, we have seen political man as an artificer who constructs and maintains the mechanism of the state and ensures its efficient functioning. Each of these characterizations of political man could be evidenced within the Venetian model primarily because of the varied levels of participation evident in the functioning of the Republic.

The varied levels of participation within the Republic not only addressed the question of the nature of political action, but also the question "who are the political actors?" For Contarini, as for Patrizi and Agostini, political activity is an activity engaged in by a small number of people. For these men, the requisites of political action effectively limited the number of people who could participate in that activity. Contarini, addressing his fellow patricians, posits a full awareness of the historical roots of the Venetian heritage as requisite to effective political action. Similarly, Patrizi and Agostini limit political action to those possessing the rationality and expertise required to organize and manage the civil society. The aristocratic element of the mixed state of Venice is reflected here. Paruta and Sarpi, on the other hand, portray political activity as appropriate to all men. It is an

activity borne of the nature of man and his need to exercise his potential for virtue. The lowly and humble could, and should, participate in the public life of the society no less than the great and the wealthy. (Indeed, we have seen that Sarpi argued that the former were better fit to do so than the latter.) We find that the Venetian example could be employed to address the question of "Who are the political actors?"; and the experience of the mixed state offered that answer in terms of "the few" or "the many" but, again, not in terms of "one". The alternative conceptions of politics which we have attempted to formulate focus upon these central questions of politics; and in so doing, may provide us with a more rigorous and concise approach to the works of individual men. They bring into relief the major differences in the initial premises of our writers and give us an appreciation of the impact of those differences.

Beyond providing a context and perspective from which we might compare specific writings, the analytical models which we have built up are of value in helping us to understand political writings of another genre. They provide a greater degree of specificity with regard to three separate traditions of political discourse than is attainable if we employ such analytical categories as 'utopian' or 'mirror of princes'. These latter characterizations are so broad as to be of little or no value, and serve only as catch-phrases. By utilizing a framework of alternative conceptions of politics which highlights key elements, we are able to go beyond the necessarily general notions embedded in characterizations such as 'utopian'; and we are able to ascertain not merely a

literary style but, more importantly, ideas regarding the purpose and proper form of political action, and regarding man's relationship to the civil society. For example, to characterize the works of Patrizi and Agostini as 'utopian' places those works within a given genre or literary style, but tells us little of substance regarding their view of politics. The characterization of their works as a manifestation of the conception of politics as the rational management of society, however, provides us with a clearer picture of their substance. It is in this area of increased specificity with regard to different approaches to politics that the present study perhaps offers the greatest potential to the scholar seeking an understanding and appreciation of the political works of another era and setting, for the approach employed here calls into question a number of central issues which are in danger of being overlooked due to the difficulty of removing oneself from his own intellectual milieu.

A framework of alternative conceptions of politics, because it highlights key elements of political thought, also helps us to bring into focus the influence of earlier writers and traditions, and to see the role which these have played in shaping an individual's thinking regarding the civil society. For example, if we view the works of Paruta and Sarpi as a portrayal of politics as a moral endeavour we can more readily see the role of Aristotelianism in Paruta's thought, or the influence of the Christian tradition within the work of Sarpi. We can replace the question 'Why did Paruta think of politics as he did?' with

the questions 'What did Paruta mean by a more noble state for man?' and 'Where did he come by these notions of moral perfection?'; and our task is thus brought into manageable proportions and our findings will be more specific and telling. In our attempt to understand why an individual thought and wrote as he did, this framework for analysis points to those areas in which we must seek connections to other writers and older traditions of political thought. It aids us then, in gaining a contextual picture of our authors, not only vis-a-vis other conceptions of politics, but also in terms of how the thought of these men is related to a history of ideas which preceded them.

In the formulation of three alternative conceptions of politics surrounding sixteenth century Venice we have identified and articulated one conception of politics which, with slight modification, would appear to have a much wider applicability, and which has been ignored in the commentary upon Italian Renaissance political writings. The conception of politics as the rational management of society, as evidenced in the work of Patrizi and Agostini, drew upon the myth of Venice in two specific areas: Venice provided the model of an aristocracy whose governmental organization was bureaucratic in nature and an example of a state highly efficient in the provision of the material goods of life. The analytical construct does not necessarily stand or fall with the notions of a bi-partite society such as that which Agostini and Patrizi elected to portray. Indeed, they might equally have elected to emphasize

the mixed quality of the Republic. The chief criterion is one of expertise, and for them the most able men were to be found in a nobility which had attained the wisdom which comes of experience. The analytical construct, however, is equally appropriate to other political thinkers of the Italian Renaissance and early modern eras. Giovanni Botero, for example, portrays politics as the rational management of society and finds the quality of expertise in the wise prince. Likewise, Campanella's La città del sole might be taken as an example of society managed by an elite whose expertise derives from idiosyncratic interests and specialized instruction. The use of the analytical construct which we have built up might, I suggest, prove a more useful and more appropriate manner in which to view these writings than we find in the current secondary literature. It can, I believe, provide a greater specificity and depth to our analyses.

The formulation of the conception of politics as the rational management of society may offer yet a further clarification to our understanding of the history of political thought; for it emphasizes the major contribution of the Italian Renaissance to political theory. The transference of the concern for the provision of private goods into the public realm represents a major departure from both classical and medieval political theory. That the state should assume the burden of the orderly and efficient flow of the goods and services of private welfare presages the introduction of our modern connotations of the realm of politics. Further, the task was harnessed to a mode of action

theretofore appropriate to the household or the manor. While in classical Greek theory that mode of action had been characterized as 'pre-political', within this conception of politics it has become the over-riding trait of public activity. Here the task of the statesman begins with an assessment of the material needs of the citizenry; but in classical theory we recall that the term 'citizen' could only fully apply to those characterized by a lack of such needs. Having met the requirements of the household they could participate in the affairs of the polis without the burden of private want. The outcome of the transference of the care for private wants to the public realm has shifted the entire nature of politics. Politics no longer served a primarily integrative function, but rather one of provision.

The shift in the basis of politics from that of 'integrating' to that of 'providing' was, no doubt, engendered by a number of factors. The great strides in technical achievement are often cited as evidence of man's confidence in his ability to ameliorate his temporal existence and indicative of his ability to do so. No doubt those same achievements inspired men to look to see what else they might plan and execute to change their lot for the better and these sentiments were reflected in the tasks accorded to public authority. But there are two other considerations which have been overlooked, and which may well have played a part in leading the men of the Italian Renaissance republics to look to their governments for the provision of earthly goods rather than the provision of a sense of integration into a larger entity. Because those

republics were small they already possessed the latter, but lacked-- or were in constant danger of being short of--the former. We have seen that particularly the Venetians were acutely aware of their political identity and possessed a sense patrimony by which they shared in an ancient and honourable heritage. The strong sense of tradition within the small state had performed that integrative function and it was no longer necessary that the state assume that task. On the other hand, because the state was small in area constant vigilance was required to keep in order those arrangements which provided for the importation of needed goods. The city-based republic of the Italian Renaissance was simply not self-sufficient in the production of the material goods of life, and it relied upon keen and foresighted governmental administration to ensure that those goods were forthcoming. This shift in the nature of political activity from one of integration to one of provision is reflected in the conception of politics as the rational management of society.

That this conception of politics has been ignored in the commentary upon the political writers of the Italian Renaissance is both indicative and derivative of the prevailing sentiment that there was a paucity of political thought worthy of note in Renaissance and early modern Italy--² a sentiment which quite simply does not accord with the facts. There is, in fact, a relative paucity of translations of these materials, and one suspects that herein lies the problem for the English speaking scholar. Certainly Italian scholars such as Carlo Curcio and Luigi Firpo find no scarcity of notable political theory in the era.

2. For example, see Allen, op. cit., pp. 502-03.

There is, I suggest, a further factor in accounting for the failure of modern scholars to recognize this tradition of political discourse for what it is. The notions of management and administration are the very notions by which politics in the modern era is most often characterized. In our rush to avoid the errors of anachronism we have shunned these notions on the assumption that what is applicable to our own conceptions of politics could not, in any way, be appropriate to the sixteenth century. Again, this is simply not the case. We have seen that the very terms are those used by a number of writers in the sixteenth century to denote precisely that which those terms denote today. The modern era holds no monopoly upon the conception of politics as the rational management of society, and this construct is not simply a metaphor applied to the sixteenth century. It is rather a characterization, drawn from the writings of that time, which connoted a specific way of thinking about politics and the civil society. This analytical construct, in particular, provides fertile ground for future research and calls for a reformulation of the manner in which we view a number of major political works.

The third consideration in the attempt of the present study to offer a contribution to our understanding of the political philosophy associated with the myth of Venice is in bringing to the fore writers whose works have undeservedly hitherto largely been ignored by the non-Italian speaking scholar. The work of Contarini enjoyed a popularity

amongst English scholars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but its fortunes waned with those of the Venetian Republic. Sarpi's work continues to be read by students, but mostly only by those whose work leads them to Church history. The other writers dealt with in this study, however, have largely been passed over, and their works dismissed without a close scrutiny. Yet these men have something to tell us of their times and of the nature of politics in it. Translations are desperately needed. That task requires an initial interest in these men and their work and, again, this can only come about once the characterization of Renaissance Italy as a barren field for political philosophy is eschewed. The modest aspiration associated with this work is that it will go some length in dispelling that characterization and kindling an interest in the works of these men.

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