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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
AN EXAMINATION OF THE ROLE OF THE PAINTER IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

by

ROSALIND A. SYDIE



A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
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DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

The position and the role of the painter has undergone many changes in Western Europe. One of the major changes in the role is seen to be the change from the medieval, craft role to the independent painter whose role is, to a large extent, dependent upon an "art public's" appreciation of his work. The change that, for convenience, may be depicted as proceeding from craft to independent status, is seen to have occurred during the "Renaissance" in Western Europe.

Several historians and some sociologists have discussed various art forms and the roles played by the artists during the Renaissance period. Sorokin, in Social and Cultural Dynamics contends that the Renaissance marks a period of general socio-cultural change; from an Idealistic (medieval) to a Sensate (modern) cultural phase. Within the general theory of the nature of socio-cultural change, Sorokin indicates that the fifteenth century marks a Sensate phase of development in Western Europe. For the role of the painter the theory involves the assumption that the role change towards independence had already occurred.

The assumption made by Sorokin regarding the timing of the role change for the painter is understandable in the light of some of the discussions by historians and art historians regarding the nature of the arts during the fifteenth century. The general conclusions of these works would appear to make two mistakes in their depiction of the role of the painter in the fifteenth century. First, the "Burkhardian" mistake which imputes to all other areas the same characteristics found in Italy during the

fifteenth century. Secondly, the mistaken assumption that all painters enjoyed an equivalent status in their various socio-cultural situations.

This study attempts to investigate, first the role of the painter in various delimited social and geographical areas during the fifteenth century. Secondly, to find out to what extent Sorokin's Sensate type is applicable to these areas during the fifteenth century. An attempt was also made to duplicate Sorokin's empirical investigation of the content of paintings for the period.

The investigation for the two areas in Italy, Florence and Venice, indicated minimal role change for the painter, and a doubtful association of the Sensate type to the two areas during the fifteenth century. For the areas, France and Flanders, not only was the assumption of a role change for the painter found to be inaccurate, but also the assumption that these areas evidenced Sensate characteristics was found to be inappropriate.

In conclusion, it was suggested that Sorokin's types may be more usefully applied within particular social systems, rather than utilized on a cross-cultural level. The investigation of the painter's role was also seen to have implications for research in the area of the sociology of knowledge.

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PART I

CHAPTER ONE

THEORETICAL BASIS FOR THE STUDY OF THE PAINTER DURING THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

In the study of the painter during the fifteenth century Sorokin's three cultural types will be used.¹ The elaboration of the three types with reference to the major variable in the study is undertaken with the view of testing the applicability of the three categories. The types--Sensate, Idealistic, and Ideational--represent generalised classifications of various socio-cultural conditions, and they will be examined in the present chapter as examples of "ideal types."

The present chapter will consist, therefore, of a discussion of the three socio-cultural systems; a critical review of the ideal type concept and its methodological applicability; a consideration of Sorokin's theory in the light of the points brought up in the discussion of ideal types. Finally, the hypotheses for the present study will be outlined.

Sorokin's Socio-cultural Systems

The basis for the classification of the three socio-cultural types is ontological, resting upon the question of the ultimate nature of reality. For the three systems it is the component of meaning that is decisive in determining the nature of any cultural phenomena and any causal or functional interdependence of the phenomena.

The concept of meaning provides the ordering principles for the

components of the system.

Among the vast ideological supersystems that are known, the vastest supersystem is built on the major premise concerning the ultimate nature of the true reality and value. Is the ultimate true reality and true value sensory, or supersensory, or partly sensory and partly supersensory? By its logical character, the problem of the ultimate nature of true reality and value is the ultimate and most general problem of thought. Being such, it serves as the major premise for building the vastest possible ideological supersystem, integrating into one consistent whole the greater part of the basic principles of science and philosophy, religion and ethics, law and politics, fine arts and economics.²

The major ontological premise of the Ideational system is of a super-empirical nature. All forms of social relationships and all referents to reality are subordinated to a superempirical factor, or reality, over and above the reality of the individual. The Sensate types are the opposite of Ideational systems in their major premise.

The Sensate mentality views reality as only that which is presented to the sense organs. It does not seek or believe in any super-sensory reality; ... Its needs and aims are mainly physical, and maximum satisfaction is sought of these needs. The method of realizing them is not that of a modification within the human individuals composing the culture, but of a modification or exploitation of the external world. In brief, the Sensate culture is the opposite of the Ideational in its major premises.³

Idealistic systems are regarded as the midpoint between Ideational and Sensate systems. That is, the major premise of such a system is a combination of sensory and supersensory reality. The manifestations of this type of system may, perhaps, be found in the beginnings of decline in one of the other systems.

The central premise for the three supersystems represents an organizational principle at a very general level of analysis. The system is organized around some component of meaning in the sense that the "parts" of the system, whether human or material parts, are provided with a raison d'etre.

When the essentials of each type of culture are understood, and the nature of an historical complex is diagnosed in terms of these types, then the peculiar personality of its members becomes comprehensible. Their multifarious traits, mores, mental patterns, and contents, hitherto unrelated and fragmentary, now appear intelligibly ordered into a single, meaningful Gestalt.⁴

Sorokin's general approach to the problem of cultural trends follows in the tradition of Spengler, Toynbee and Danilevsky. Sorokin, however, insists that there are crucial distinctions between his theory and those of the latter authors.

The basic difference between these theories and my own begins with the fundamental premise. They regard their "civilization" as a real unity; I regard it as a conglomeration of various systems and congeries, only in small part integrated meaningfully-causally, in larger part unified through indirect causal bond, in still greater part an unintegrated conglomeration of systems and congeries. They view each civilization as an organism or "species" that follow the life-cycle of growth, maturity, old age and death. For me such a life-cycle is neither logically nor factually tenable. Unintegrated cultures cannot grow, age, or decline; they need not have identical life-cycles, occurring only once and ending always with death. They cannot have a uniform life career. From their false premises many other fallacious conclusions are drawn by Danilevsky, Spengler and Toynbee.⁵

The attempt on Sorokin's part to distinguish his theory from those of, for example, Toynbee and Spengler is understandable in the light of the most persistent criticism of such large-scale theories, the criticism relating to change in the systems. Both Toynbee and Spengler postulate a linear, uniform progression for their civilizations or cultures. That is, the cultures are inevitably going to "decline and die" at some point. Toynbee does mitigate the last point to some extent in his conception of a civilization existing in a "petrified state" for many years prior to its eventual death. Historical data would suggest, however, that cultures and civilizations seldom "die," but rather they decline in "influence," the latter may be political, economic or territorial, but their general cultural influence may persist for a long

period of time.⁶

Sorokin's theory has been criticized for its cyclical conception of social change, and the assumption that there is some prearranged scheme of evolution that may be discussed in terms of the three super-systems he proposes. Sorokin himself, however, discusses the weaknesses of cyclical and linear theories of socio-cultural change and bases his theory on the principle of "immanent change and the principle of limits."

In application to the direction of sociocultural processes and to that of biological processes also, the conceptions of identically cyclical and limitlessly linear change can hardly be accepted as valid. For a limited span of time these processes may be linear; in the form of nonidentical rhythms or oscillations. ... they may contain recurrent "cycles," but an overwhelming majority of these processes are neither limitlessly linear nor eternally cyclical. ... All in all the variably recurrent pattern seems to be the only adequate master-pattern of the direction of an overwhelming majority of sociocultural processes.⁷

The principles of immanent change and limits are the major principles embodied in what Sorokin terms his "creatively recurring and integralist" conception of socio-cultural change. The principle of immanent change relates to the causes of change that exist in any system that is an active entity, and to the consequences of each change that transforms the original system. As such, the principle of immanent change contradicts the cyclical conception of change in systems.⁸ At the same time, the principle of limits is seen to invalidate the possibility of permanent linear change.

Since every empirical sociocultural system is finite, and since there are limits beyond which any further change renders it unrecognizable and unidentifiable, therefore it is capable of only a limited number of basic variations or types of change. Having exhausted these types, the system either distintegrates or repeats these types in a new setting, with different secondary characteristics.⁹

According to the above two principles then, the direction of change in

the socio-cultural process cannot be either "permanently cyclical nor permanently linear, but varying recurrent, with incessant modification of the old themes."¹⁰

According to the above two principles the three supersystems are found to change. With reference to changes in art styles, Sorokin found that up to the twelfth century the ideational mentality dominated, that the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries are characterized by the idealistic mentality, and that the sensate mentality makes its appearance during the fifteenth century, and has proceeded to dominate up until the twentieth century. Sorokin's prognosis for the future is that a further Ideational phase is to be expected.

It is the prognosis that has, perhaps given rise to the criticisms of the cyclical nature of his theory.

... Sorokin's sociological approach to history reminds one of the methodology of the old unilateral evolutionists in ethnological theory, who started out with an assumed and prearranged scheme of universal evolution and then searched for the material to round out the skeleton outline and vindicate the evolutionary scheme, having little regard for the cultural context from which they wrenched their data.¹¹

With respect to the above criticism, it should be pointed out that Sorokin's theory is accompanied by extensive and careful empirical work as justification for his statements. At the same time the scheme proposed by Sorokin for European culture is a prognosis and need not necessarily be the correct one. The supersystems are in the nature of ideal types, and taking this into consideration with Sorokin's discussion of change, it would appear that the criticism is an over-generalization.

The scope of the evidence that Sorokin brings to support his theory makes it understandably easy to fault his work in terms of certain

details and omissions. This factor, and the "ideal" nature of the three supersystems, makes a re-examination of the work on an empirical level justifiable and important.

The "ideal" nature of the supersystems makes the problem of further investigation difficult. Insofar as the systems are classifications of general characteristics, the validity of the type may only be questioned on the basis of "more than" or "less than;" that is, by indicating the factors that should be added or subtracted in order to characterize the entity more adequately. By the very general nature of the type, clarification in the above manner becomes relatively difficult.

Sorokin's types, however, are based upon a particular view of socio-cultural reality. It is the component of "meaning" and "truth" that provides the basic underpinning of the supersystems. Clarification of the types can only be undertaken after a consideration of the validity of their basis. Timasheff points out, however,

... the choice of the cultural conception of truth, defined in sensate, ideational, or idealistic terms ... as the basic determinant of sociocultural development is not very convincing. It may be argued that it is possible to rewrite Sorokin's work, selecting alternative elements as the fundamental determinants of cultural growth, with almost similar results.¹²

Sorokin would counter the above criticism with the contention that the number of answers to the question of the ultimate true reality are limited, and in fact does not exceed five.

... first, the nature of the true reality is supersensory (Ideational premise); second, it is sensory (Sensate premise); third, it has both aspects inseparable from one another (Idealistic premise); fourth, it is entirely unknown and unknowable (premise of Scepticism); fifth, it is known only in its phenomenal aspect, while in its transcendental aspect (if it has such an aspect) is unknowable (the premise of Hume-Kant's Criticism and Agnosticism). There exists hardly any solution of this problem essentially different from these five possibilities. There is a much larger

possibility for various eclectic (unintegrated) mixtures of these five principles, but such eclectic solutions are not systems but congeries. As such they are not and cannot be a major premise of integrated forms of culture.¹³

As two of the answers are negative, they cannot, in Sorokin's view, form the basis for any long-term integrated culture. He concludes that the repetition of the five forms, with particular emphasis upon the three forms of Ideational, Idealistic, and Sensate, form the basis for the classification of developments in western culture.

Sorokin argues further that, the occurrence of the systems in history is a consequence of certain inadequacies in the major premises of each system. If one of the systems was entirely true in its premise then it is, "... hardly possible that an entirely false, and inadequate, system of reality and truth can dislodge the entirely true system, or that complete ignorance can overthrow complete knowledge."¹⁴ Sorokin concludes that the rhythm of the supersystems is possible only on the basis that each of the system premises is only partially true. In the development of any system, the error component is seen to be the factor leading to the decline of the system and the beginnings of a new system which purports to solve the error component of the former.

In order to investigate the validity of the types proposed by Sorokin it is the background to their formulation rather than the use of the type construct itself that should be looked at. Before discussing the details of the three supersystems elaborated by Sorokin, consideration will be given to some recent criticisms of the ideal type concept in the following section. The position of Sorokin's systems will be discussed in the third section in the light of the following remarks.

Review of the Concept "Ideal Type"

As a methodological device the ideal type has presented many problems. It is suggested that much of the confusion generated, and much of the criticism is related to a misconception regarding the reference for the concept. Weber's own conception of the ideal type is, in part, responsible for this situation, as Kaplan points out;

Weber makes the mistake, I believe, of concluding that, because an ideal type refers to an individual, albeit a fictitious one, it serves only in the study of individuals rather than of the generic kinds with which theory is concerned.¹⁵

The ideal type, like a model, is concerned with a simplification of reality for the purposes of prediction. The role of the individual case only enters into the process when " ... sooner or later we are committed to observations on individuals if we are to give our statements empirical anchorage."¹⁶ But the ideal type "... does not function as an observational term or even an indirect observable;" rather it serves as an indication of the significant factors in some situation or action.¹⁷

The question of the selection of significant factors introduces the problem of simplification. To simplify a situation does not necessarily destroy the worth of the analysis: what is important with respect to any criticism is to show that what was omitted seriously affects the type or model constructed. If the omission can be shown to be a serious defect for the understanding or recognition of the empirical reality, then the type construction may be an over-simplification.

The criticism that ideal types have a tendency towards "type atomism" is related to the problem of simplification. The latter

criticism was made by Parsons who felt that ideal types focus on polar situations and thus direct attention from the "social system as a balance of forces in equilibrium."¹⁸ To the extent that ideal types represent generalizations based on significant factors they do deviate from reality. However, this is not to say that such simplification always results in a polar type. On the contrary, generalization involves some degree of abstraction and this is characteristic of laws as well as ideal types. The extent to which the generalization deviates from reality and the degree to which the description "polar" may be applied is a matter of degree in each case.

Martindale illustrates the confusion with reference to Thomas and Znaniecki's The Polish Peasant;¹⁹

The criticism that the ideal type concentrates only on polar or extreme situations and hence is adequate only for the analysis of a "limiting type" of system seems to entail a confusion between the analytical sharpening of relations in the type with extreme social situations. W.I. Thomas and F. Znaniecki, for example, in The Polish Peasant advanced a series of types to express the adaptation of the individual to changing social organization. They distinguished between the Bohemian, the Philistine, and the Creative Man. ... These were types--analytical simplifications of adjustment possibilities. However, far from permitting the analysis only of extreme or polar types of individual adjustment to social organization and change they proved to be an elastic system of possibilities ranging from individual disorganization to mastery of one's life situation.²⁰

Insofar as the "middle" part of any type construction is the more likely empirical fact, then "polar" types are more likely to reveal the convergences and discrepancies in the actual data than might be the case with a more inclusive collection of factors. At the same time, to include too many details may destroy the effectiveness and usefulness of the type, to the extent that the result may not be classifiable as an ideal type.

Parsons continues his criticism with the observation that the focus on polar situations and the lack of classified, ordered relationships between types means that they are not conducive to theory building. As Martindale indicates; " ... this criticism holds only for those instances in which ideal types are mistaken for abstract theory. When theory is taken to be a logically interrelated body of empirical laws, types cannot be theories."²¹

An ideal type is abstracted from the actual phenomena and transformed in emphasis in order to make certain aspects of the phenomena more meaningful. It is the manner in which the type is used that may account for its confusion as a theoretical device or the basis for some theory. This latter point is illustrated by Willer in his discussion of ideal types, which he terms iconic models.

In iconic constructs it is always necessary to remember that data, not relationships, are apprehended. If relationships seem to be directly apprehensible from phenomena studied, it is a consequence either of unconscious conventional implication or of a consciously used rationale. Causes and effects and all seemingly necessary connections in our data are impressed as a consequence of our points of view, either systematically by tradition or systematically by the use of models. Thus, in iconic constructs the relationships which seem to be directly apprehended from the data are actually a consequence of the model.²²

Willer, in his discussion of ideal types as a variation of iconic models, actually sees them as classificatory devices. As such, they are incapable of dealing with relationships and quantitative concepts. It is on this basis that Hempel criticises the use of ideal types.²³

Hempel's criticisms are basically methodological. He distinguishes three sorts of types; classificatory, extreme types and models. The classificatory types are, according to Hempel, not ideal types and are not useful for the study of relations or quantities. Extreme types

are characterized by some criteria for judgements of "more or less," and are replaced once the operational criteria are found for the correct judgement of "more or less" on some continuum. In other words, both classificatory and extreme types are ultimately superceded by more refined methodological and statistical devices. Nevertheless, both types serve a useful function in description and the establishment of limits to relations that may be refined later.

With respect to models, Hempel distinguishes between legitimate and illegitimate idealized models. The legitimate models are the idealized models that are deduced from general principles. The former are usually found in the physical sciences. The illegitimate models or ideal types are illegitimate because the principles are, according to Hempel, intuitive rather than theoretical and often relate to a vaguely defined set of data. While Hempel's critique is acceptable from a strict methodological viewpoint, it must also be pointed out that often for sociology the necessary theoretical standards for the use of an axiomatic system do not exist. As Martindale points out;

If the only types of legitimate models are those representing interpreted theoretical systems, one can only conclude that it will be long before the social sciences can achieve them. The long-range objective of presenting a theoretical system as a special case of a more comprehensive theory may be fine, but it will be a long time before sociology reaches this stage. Meanwhile, once again, invidious comparisons are introduced between sociology and the physical sciences. Wherever statistical and experimental methods have not been developed to a point adequate to its needs, sociology can only institute the most precise comparisons possible. This is precisely what ideal types were intended to do. In areas where quantification is incomplete and inadequate, mathematical models are, as yet, unavailable and where one, on the other hand, is not able to experiment, there is no choice but to find bases on which one can compare cases. It goes without saying that if one's comparison is between some actual state of affairs and the type, about all that can be predicted is nonsense. Rather, one compares two or more actual

sets of affairs. The function of ideal types is to isolate the factors on which the comparison becomes critical. The degree to which the relations involved in the type are intuitive seriously curtails the extent to which one can generalize on the basis of them. However, in the early stages of science, one accepts help from whatever quarter.²⁴

The sort of ideal type found, for example, in economic theory is an isolated example of the possibilities in constructing adequate ideal types. Nevertheless, as Willer indicates, this particular model is somewhat fortuitous,

Reality too might be distorted and thus fit one ideal type closely. This was the case in classical economics. Their conceptualization was an ideal type of capitalism which assumed rationality of profit motive, a totally free market, and a large number of autonomous producers and consumers. It was under these ideal conditions that the balance of supply and demand could be hypothesized. This ideal type could be used alone since its distortion fitted the distortion of early capitalism. Whether this was a fortunate result of available ideas fitting accidentally with an existing reality or a result of a conscious structuring of the economic system to fit the type, the result was a single isomorphic model based on a type, the like of which has not been available in sociology.²⁵

Martindale's own position with respect to ideal types is that they are useful methodological devices and are not to be confused with theory itself.

The fundamental position taken in the present essay is that ideal types are neither experiments, mathematical models, nor theories but devices intended to institute comparisons as precise as the stage of one's theory and the precision of his instruments will allow.²⁶

Part of the problem involved in any discussion of ideal types is related to the historical tradition of its use by sociologists. The confusion surrounding the concept of ideal types and the precise manner in which they may be used in sociology has led either to a neglect of their value, or to a renaming process whereby ideal types are called typologies, or constructed types. The latter term was introduced by

Becker partly in an attempt to escape the negative connotations of the term "ideal." However, constructed types according to Becker are seen to have predictive power and are the product of some research rather than the methodological device used in the process of research.

"... the conception of science underlying constructed types is that scientific activity is essentially predictive; ... This point needs stressing, for some interpretations of "ideal types" (of which constructed types represent a closely related offshoot) do not hold the basically probable character of the "ideal type" clearly enough in view. (It is for this reason, among many others, that "constructed type" may eventually become the preferred term ...)²⁷

Constructed types become the final stage of research rather than the initial formulations. Becker's types may be distinguished from those of Weber in that they are seen to be either hypotheses or, in conjunction with hypotheses, to have predictive power. Such a reformulation of the Weberian type may have been useful; however, Hempel's critique of constructed types illustrates a serious logical error.

(Hempel) ... noted that Becker argued that types function as hypotheses in the form of "if P ... then Q" where P is the type evoked and Q is some more or less complex characteristic. However, in the nature of type construction, the consequence seldom, if ever, follows empirically, and the antecedent is then empirically false. From the occurrence Q, we can infer either that P was not realized or that the hypothesis "if P then Q" is false. Thus, when Becker has argued that all other factors being equal or irrelevant Q will be realized whenever P is realized, evidently no empirical evidence can ever refute the hypothesis, since unfavorable findings can always be attributed to a violation of the ceteris paribus clause. By contrast, in the formulation of a physical hypothesis, this clause is never used.²⁸

Weber's own approach to the ideal type construct which, as illustrated above, may account for some of the confusion about the concept is, first, directly related to the use of comparative method and to his discussion of verstehen. Secondly, Weber did not always utilize the ideal type in precisely the manner he had indicated. And third,

the ideal type in conjunction with the comparative method was related to Weber's attempt to synthesize two divergent positions regarding the status of, and methodology to be used in the social sciences. Weber accepted part of the idealistic viewpoint that the subject matter of the social sciences was a concern with meanings, at the same time agreeing with the neo-Kantian argument that the social sciences were as able as the natural sciences to establish causal connections.

The methodology appropriate to the social sciences was, according to Weber, the comparative method based on historical data. The manner in which the comparative method was best illustrated was seen to be through the construction of ideal types. Weber distinguishes the ideal type as a conceptual pattern in which historical relationships are contained within an internally consistent system.

The ideal type concept will help to develop our skill in imputation in research: it is no "hypothesis" but it offers guidance to the construction of hypotheses. It is not a description of reality but it aims to give unambiguous means of expression to such a description. ... An ideal type is formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct. In its conceptual purity, this mental construct cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality.²⁹

There are two criteria for the construction of the ideal type, objective possibility and adequate causation. That is, any one factor in the ideal type construct may or will occur and with sufficient cause.

A methodological criticism of Weber's ideal types is advanced by Watkins. Watkins distinguishes between two forms of ideal type constructs in Weber's work, in the "holistic" and the "individualistic." The holistic type is characterized by,

... its simplification and aloofness from detail: it will be free from the detailed complexity of the actuality to be analyzed with its aid. As this kind of ideal type emphasizes the "essential" traits of a situation considered as a whole I call it holistic.³⁰

The individualistic type is constructed by " ... inspecting the situations of actual individuals and abstracting from these."³¹ In Watkins' opinion, the holistic type is of no practical use to sociology. The holistic type is seen as an a priori picture of reality indicating the general and essential features of that reality from which deviations from the type may be examined. If the "whole," or essential character of the type is known then the nature of its "parts" must also be known; if this is the case then the type serves no purpose.

The point that Watkins makes is related to the question of methodological individualism, which he believes is more appropriate for sociology. It is the emphasis upon a particular sociological viewpoint that results in Watkins overlooking the fact that ideal or holistic types, as a form of model, can never be identical to the abstracted phenomena.

An attempt to make a model identical to phenomena is not merely epistemologically incorrect but would certainly in many cases frustrate the construction of successful models.

.....
To assume that a model must be either "real" or "fictional" is to mistake a representation for the thing itself, to mistake the model for its phenomena. It is a wrong question to ask of any model its relative "reality;" instead the model must be judged as relatively useful or useless.³²

The criticisms advanced by Watkins are based, first, on a misconception regarding the purpose of types (and model construction in general), and secondly, upon a particular view of the type of methodology applicable to sociology.

... social process and events should be explained by being deduced from (a) principles governing the behaviour of participating individuals and (b) descriptions of their situations. The contrary

principle of methodological holism states that the behaviour of individuals should be explained by being deduced from (a) macroscopic laws which are sui generis and which apply to the social system as a whole, and (b) descriptions of the positions (or functions) of the individuals within the whole.³³

Having discussed some of the criticisms advanced with respect to the use and even the sociological respectability of ideal types, it would appear that the basis for many of the criticisms is cancelled out when it is remembered that, first, an ideal type is not a theory although it may be conducive to the development of theory or a consequence of the latter; secondly, that ideal types are isomorphic to the phenomena investigated; and finally, that they are classifications that bring together descriptive data. Although the ideal type may be a simple construct for a science, and in fact will undoubtedly be superseded by more viable techniques in time, it should also be recognized that for certain sociological data they represent the most practical mode of investigation available at the present time. One form of data that fits the latter description is historical data. It is not possible to investigate the actual phenomena, neither is it possible to obtain "objective" reports. In the latter regard the sociologist is largely at the mercy of accounts written at the time, or the interpretations of historians. As such, the reconstruction of the phenomena as "ideal" in the first instance is a useful technique. This is precisely the technique used by Weber in, for example, his largely historical account of the world's religions.³⁴ The control over the application of the types is to be found in the independent causal factor (or factors) that is allowed to operate.

The following section will investigate the use of the "ideal type" in Sorokin's theory, and the possibility that certain aspects require

reconsideration.

Sorokin's Theory and Ideal Types

As was indicated above, the ideal type does not represent a theory, rather it is a methodological device for the formulation of a theory. To say that no type is "ever found in reality" is the guide to their function for sociology. Ideal types are the essential elements of some social factor which may be used for the construction of some theory regarding these social facts.

According to Sorokin, the essential element in the study of large-scale socio-cultural units is the ontological factor. His study of various cultural phenomena may be seen as an effort at validating the basis for his types and as a result to present a workable theory for further empirical investigation. In fact it is on the latter basis that the present investigation or clarification of the supersystems is to be attempted.

The ontological basis for the three supersystems is an important factor in that it relates to Sorokin's general theoretical viewpoint regarding the study of culture. Sorokin points out that the majority of views regarding any cultural configurations agree on the point that there is some sort of integration amongst the elements making up the culture. The critical question becomes, what form does this integration take? Sorokin isolates four main types of integration: (a) Spatial or Mechanical Adjacency, (b) Association due to some external factor, (c) Causal or Functional Integration, and (d) Internal or Logico-meaningful Unity.

According to Sorokin, it is the internal or logico-meaningful

unity that is the most important and most useful form for sociological investigation. The logico-meaningful method indicates the basic principles of the culture that are part of and which supercede any causal connection.

The essences of the logico-meaningful method of cognition is, as has already been mentioned, in the finding of the central principle (the "reason") which permeates the components, gives sense and significance to each of them, and in this way makes cosmos of a chaos of unintegrated fragments. If in a given occurrence of cultural elements such unity exists, and if it is correctly discovered and the unifying principle accurately formulated, the formula is as important in its field from the cognitive standpoint as any causal formula in the case of causal coalescence. In one respect at least it is even more important: it is the only type of formula, and applies to the only sort of association, in which we catch a glimpse of the inward nature of phenomenal unity.³⁵

The method is essentially the illustration of the symbolic significance and logical relationship of a component for a particular cultural complex. The three supersystems represent the idealization of a component of meaning. The meaning component or central premise is the key element in socio-cultural systems and represents an organizational principle at a very general level of analysis. The organizational premise for the system as a whole, is not necessarily identical with the operation of any cultural system's parts.

Sorokin finds that the major premises around which a culture is logically integrated are, in general, contained within two polar types, with a third type that stands at the mid-point to the two polar types. These are the Sensate, Ideational and Idealistic cultures, respectively. None of the three supersystems is expected to be found in its "pure" form in reality.

The probability is that neither the Ideational nor the Sensate type has ever existed in its pure form; but all integrated cultures have in fact been composed of diverse combinations of these two pure logico-meaningful forms. In some the first type predominates;

in others, the second, in still others both mingle in equal proportions and on an equal basis. Accordingly, some cultures have been nearer to the Ideational, others to the Sensate type; and some have contained a balanced synthesis of both pure types. This last I term the Idealistic type of culture.³⁶

Sorokin has not labeled his supersystems as ideal types. Nevertheless, it is the opinion of this writer that any investigation of their validity, and Sorokin's own theoretical position, necessitates the recognition of their "ideal" character. First, as Sorokin points out, none of the types may be expected in their "pure" form.

Thus, in concrete social reality no one of the types designated above is often found in pure form, unmixed with others, either in an individual or in a group or culture.³⁷

Secondly, the construction of the supersystems is based upon the causal-functional relationship of the component parts and the logical validity of the major premise. These factors are the principles around which the systems are constructed. The major premise representing a generalized component of meaning is a model for and not of the actual cultural phenomena. The causal-functional relationship between the phenomena is predicted on the basis of this generalized meaning. For example, taking the Weberian discussion of the legitimation of power; in Sorokin's terms, the major premise is the character of the power structure, that is, legalistic, charismatic or traditional.³⁸ The power structure is the generalized or ideal component around which certain relationships or classifications are grouped in order to make up the ideal case or type. However, the content or classifications of the type and the empirical presence of the pure type, can rarely be expected in any investigation of actual phenomena.

Consideration of the supersystems as ideal types is seen to be more relevant when Sorokin's approach to systems is examined more closely.

Sorokin is concerned with a hierarchy of systems in the socio-cultural world. The "highest" or most important systems are the Sensate, Ideational and Idealistic systems. Each of these supersystems consists of five basic systems of language, religion, the arts, ethics, and science. Each of these five may be subdivided into further subsystems, and more subsystems. It is the major type or supersystem that affects the nature and type of any of the subsystems that it contains. The supersystems, then, represent the apex of a complex interrelationship of subsystems.

As was indicated in the first section of the present chapter, the above systems are all composed of three major components, the system of meanings (the symbolic level), the human agents, and the vehicles of meaning (the physical aspects of the culture or system). All of the above factors may represent systems in themselves. The various system levels within the major cultural systems are both integrated through the major premise but, at the same time, preserve a measure of independence.

One of the major features of the systems, at any level, is the inherent or immanent change. That is, the systems do not change only as a result of external, environmental pressures, but can also change as a result of their own inner operations. Systems are thus partly deterministic as a result of their own characters, structures and needs.

In the socio-cultural world there are various system levels all operating with some measure of independence from each other. Nevertheless, the total socio-cultural situation is integrated through the major premise of one of the supersystems. The supersystems represent the ideal classification around which the various system levels operate. The very nature of the independence and potential for change in the

systems and subsystems necessitates an ideal premise as the integrating factor.

Since the marriage between the system of meanings and its vehicles is "polygamic" and loose ...; since the same is true of the relationship between the system of meanings and its human agents, and between the vehicles and human agents; and since the same system of vehicles and human agents can, and often does, serve quite different systems of meanings - for these reasons the conductivity-interdependence between these components of the empirical socio-cultural system cannot be expected to be too intense or close. There is no doubt that any serious change in the system of meanings would reflect tangibly in the vehicles and human agents; and vice versa, ... But small changes in some of the meanings or in some of the vehicles or in some of the human agents can occur without tangibly affecting the other two components.³⁹

The supersystems provide the guide to the discussion of the various system levels. The fact that the various levels have a measure of independence explains why the ideal supersystem can rarely, if ever, be found in reality.

In the present study the applicability of the Sorokin types will be investigated in terms of the role of the painter and the character of the painting produced during the fifteenth century. It should be remembered that consideration of Sorokin's supersystems as ideal types is undertaken with the understanding that for these types the major factor revolves around the principle of meaning. The types represent the embodiment of the logico-meaningful unity that is implicit in all the parts. Consequently the relationship of the parts is not a one-to-one relationship but relies upon the meaning implicit in the parts that provides the ordering principle. The bases for the investigation and the hypotheses to be tested are outlined in the following section.

Hypotheses to Test Sorokin's Ideal Types in Terms of Fifteenth Century and the Role of the Painter

In this study an attempt is made to evaluate the ideal types

proposed by Sorokin in terms of their applicability to fifteenth century Italy and France, and more particularly, as they apply to the role of the painter. Sorokin contends that the fifteenth century was characterized by the Sensate mentality.

The present study investigates the idea that Sorokin's application of the Sensate type to the fifteenth century does not take into account two important factors that may alter the character of the period. The two factors relate to the rural-urban dichotomy and the division between Northern and Southern European countries during this period. Taking the two dichotomies into account, it is contended that the fifteenth century indicates the presence of both the Sensate and the Ideational types existing together. Taking all these factors into account, and applying them to Italy and France, it is hypothesized that:

1. France is most likely to approximate the Ideational type.
- 1a. As a consequence of hypothesis one, French painters are likely to retain the craft role.
2. Italy is most likely to approximate the Sensate type.
- 2a. As a consequence of hypothesis two, the Italian painter is likely to change his role from that of a craftsman.
3. Flanders is most likely to approximate the Idealistic type.
- 3a. As a consequence of hypothesis three, the Flemish painters are likely to show some evidence of role changes.

The number of urban areas in France and Flanders as opposed to Italy during the fifteenth century is small. The extent and differing rates of urbanization for the areas selected is seen to affect the socio-cultural nature of the area. In the fifteenth century the "pace" of urbanization was "faster" in Italy than was the case for Northern Europe. As the discussion in the following chapters illustrates, Italy

took the lead in the changes that characterized the Renaissance period.

In order to investigate the above hypotheses the content of a selected sample of paintings and the role or style of life of certain painters will be examined. By content is meant the subject matter of the paintings, a category that Sorokin uses in his assessment of European painting. Content rather than style or form is concentrated upon as being one of the least controversial measures for the ideal types in an area that is usually subject to a great deal of artistic and aesthetic debate. The role of the painter is examined in terms of the sociocultural situation. Insofar as the rural and Northern painter is hypothesized as producing Ideational art, his role may be expected to differ from the sensate painter in the urban and Southern areas. The role of the painter is examined in terms of the sensate or ideational characteristics of the wider social situation.

The following chapter discusses the social and historical research that forms the basis for the hypotheses in the study. The major point of the discussion revolves around the controversy regarding the concept of the Renaissance. This controversy is closely related to Sorokin's sensate type in that many of the characteristics of the type are ones that are often applied to the Renaissance period.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics (4 vols.; New York: American Book Company, 1937).

² Pitirim A. Sorokin, Society, Culture and Personality (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), p. 320.

³ Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, 73.

⁴ Ibid., p. 68.

⁵ Sorokin, Society, Culture and Personality, p. 643.

⁶ For example, ancient Greek philosophy is still seen to be relevant today, despite the fact that Greece as a powerful civilization has declined in "influence."

⁷ Ibid., p. 680.

⁸ The principle of immanent change is seen to be "an unfolding of (the systems) inherent possibilities," according to Sorokin, Society, Culture and Personality, p. 697.

⁹ Ibid., p. 701.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 703.

¹¹ H. Speier, Social Order and the Risks of War, Papers in Political Sociology (New York: G.W. Stewart, 1952), p. 210.

¹² Nicholas S. Timasheff, Sociological Theory: Its Nature and Growth (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 278.

¹³ Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 4, 738.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 741.

¹⁵ Abraham Kaplan, The Conduct of Inquiry (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1964), p. 83.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 82.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Talcott Parsons, Essays in Sociological Theory Pure and Applied (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1949), p. 91.

¹⁹ William I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, The Polish Peasant in Europe and America (2 vols.; New York: Dover Publications, 1958).

²⁰ Don Martindale, "Sociological Theory and the Ideal Type," in Symposium on Sociological Theory, ed. by Llewellyn Gross (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), p. 83.

²¹ Ibid.

²² David Willer, Scientific Sociology Theory and Method (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967), p. 64.

²³ Carl G. Hempel, Symposium: Problems of Concept and Theory Formation in the Social Sciences, Language and Human Rights (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1952).

²⁴ Martindale, "Sociological Theory and the Ideal Type," p. 87.

²⁵ David Willer, Scientific Sociology Theory and Method, p. 43.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 58.

²⁷ Howard Becker, "Interpretive Sociology and Constructive Typology," in Twentieth Century Sociology, ed. by G. Gurvitch and W. Moore (New York: Philosophical Library, 1945), p. 93.

²⁸ Martindale, "Sociological Theory and the Ideal Type," p. 86.

²⁹ Max Weber, "Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy," in Philosophy of the Social Sciences, ed. by M. Natanson (New York: Random House, 1963), p. 396.

³⁰ J.W.N. Watkins, "Ideal Types and Historical Explanation," in Readings in the Philosophy of Science, ed. by H. Feigl and M. Brodbeck (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1953), p. 724.

³¹ Ibid., p. 726.

³² Willer, Scientific Sociology, pp. 23-24.

³³ Watkins, "Ideal Types and Historical Explanation," p. 729.

- ³⁴ Max Weber, The Sociology of Religion (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963).
- ³⁵ Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, 33.
- ³⁶ Ibid., pp. 67-68.
- ³⁷ Ibid., p. 78.
- ³⁸ See the discussion in Reinhard Bendix, Max Weber, An Intellectual Portrait (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1962).
- ³⁹ Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, p. 53.

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH RELATING TO THE "RENAISSANCE"

The present chapter is concerned with the research relating to the concept of the Renaissance. The discussion of the views regarding the Renaissance, and the questions raised with regard to its significance rely heavily upon historical research. It will be seen that the period gives rise to a great deal of debate, and the position taken with respect to the Renaissance as an historical period is an attempt to find a logical basis for the present study in the light of what is essentially a question of historical methodology.

The debate regarding the Renaissance is followed by an examination of "medieval" society prior to the fifteenth century. Again questions are raised which are essentially historical questions and which relate to the character of medieval society in Western Europe. In order to discuss the period the concept of an ideal type is introduced. The description of medieval society does not pretend to take into account the many variations that, for example, feudalism took in Western Europe. The account is an attempt to present a coherent picture of socio-cultural conditions prior to the fifteenth century, with particular emphasis upon the sociological implications of feudalism and the condition of the arts during this period.

The Concept of the Renaissance

The period under review in the present study, the fifteenth century,

is part of what is often termed the Renaissance. As an historical term the Renaissance presents problems in that many historians dispute the unique character of the period and the applicability of the term. One of the major factors in the disputes regarding the status or the character of the Renaissance period has been its relationship to the Middle Ages. In the past the Renaissance has been compared to the Middle Ages as the "rebirth" or the development of a new social and "ideological" order and compared on this basis to the detriment of the "Dark Ages." Recent historical work suggests, however, that the impression of the Renaissance as a radically different and "better" period is a one-sided thesis that is not substantiated by recent research of the period.

That the Renaissance was different in some way to the periods preceeding it is not really in dispute; rather, it is the static conception of historical frameworks that divides the periods so absolutely that is now discounted. Ferguson's position regarding the character of the Renaissance sums up this particular viewpoint;

The Renaissance, it seems to me, was essentially the age of transition, containing much that was still medieval, much that was recognizably modern, and also, much that, because of the mixture of medieval and modern elements, was peculiar to itself and was responsible for its contradictions and contrasts and its amazing vitality.¹

Baker supports the position taken by Ferguson,

For I shall maintain that in its basic view of man the Renaissance preserved the continuity of medieval and pagan thought, and that, although this view was inevitably a synthesis, it derived its characteristic optimism from those Christian and pagan assumptions² that had underlain nearly two thousand years of European thinking.

Part of the confusion generated around the concepts of the Renaissance and the Middle Ages are less historical than partisan ideological viewpoints. For example, in Hauser's view,

The Renaissance discovery of nature was an invention of nineteenth century liberalism, which played off the Renaissance delight in nature against the Middle Ages in order to strike a blow at the romantic philosophy of history. For when Burkhardt says that the "discovery of the world and of man" was an achievement of the Renaissance, this thesis is, at the same time, an attack on romantic reaction and an attempt to ward off the propaganda designed to spread the romantic view of medieval culture.³

However, the contrast between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance was, as Chabod points out, already established by the fifteenth century;

The tendency to draw this distinction is already clearly perceptible among Italians of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, who reveal a lively sense of the difference between the praesens tempus and the media aetas and, at any rate when they come to speak of literature and the arts, consider the era immediately preceeding their own to have been rude, uncultured and puerile.⁴

The "periodization" mentioned above is discussed by Ferguson in relation to the humanists interpretation of history.

Several important studies in recent years have demonstrated, ... how frequently the humanists of both Italy and the northern countries employed the metaphors of rebirth, revival, or resuscitation, all of which imply a previous death, or the contrasting metaphors of darkness and light to denote their conception of the history of literature, learning and the fine arts from antiquity, through the Middle Ages, to their own time.⁵

The interpretations of the Renaissance were given further partisan coloring by the effects of the Reformation, as Ferguson again indicates;

Where the Italian humanists had been generally content to pass over medieval culture as though it were nonexistent, the Erasmian humanists of the North added a positive factor to the conception of medieval darkness by a vitriolic attack upon scholasticism... After the Reformation, the Protestant historians seized eagerly upon the conception of medieval culture thus developed by the humanists and used it as a propagandist weapon against the Roman Church. For two centuries or more, Protestant interpretations of medieval history were oriented by the necessity of proving that the light of the Gospel had been progressively obscured by the malign influence of the popes and their scholastic agents, with the result that Western Christendom had remained for a thousand years sunk in barbaric ignorance, superstition, and spiritual sloth.⁶

The sense of a radical distinction between the Middle Ages and the

Renaissance is found, also, in the commentaries of the writers on art; for example, Vasari saw the advent of Giotto as the restoration of art after the incompetence of the past ages. The most important exponent of the distinction between the two periods is Burckhardt. His discussion of the Renaissance had a lasting effect upon historical research for many years.⁷

Burckhardt was concerned with the illustration of the particular mentality or Volkgeist applicable to Italy and the Renaissance period. The major thesis of his Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy revolves around the political innovation of the age and the corresponding "individualism," both related to the revival of interest in antiquity. The resulting conception of the Renaissance was a comprehensive view of a society dominated by the cult of individualism, the latter reflected in all aspects of the political and artistic situation.

The profound influence that the Burckhardtian interpretation of the Renaissance had upon both historians and art critics for many years has been indicated above. Ferguson indicates the basic faults in the interpretation that have been part of the historical debate regarding the occurrence and particular character of the Renaissance.

It was too static, too sharply delimited in time and space, the contrast with the Middle Ages and other European countries too strong. It was limited ... to the upper classes of Italy. It omitted the economic life of Italy almost entirely and underestimated the effect of economic factors. It overstressed the individualism, and with it the immorality and irreligion of Renaissance society, as well as its creative energy. Finally, the whole synthesis was built upon an insecure foundation, upon the doubtful assumption that there was a specific spirit common to Italian society for a period of two hundred years, that it was born of the mystical cohabitation of the antique spirit with the Italian Volkgeist, and that it was essentially modern, the prototype of the modern world.⁸

In recent years the Middle Ages have not been without their champions. Attempts were made to find the origins of the Renaissance in the Middle Ages, particularly those attributes stressed by Burckhardt as most characteristic of the Renaissance. Various historians have discussed the "Renaissance" of the twelfth century, according it an importance comparable to Burckhardt's Renaissance.⁹

Huizinga, in The Waning of the Middle Ages, finds that the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are periods of termination of the Middle Ages rather than "rebirth."¹⁰ However, Huizinga's thesis is confined to France and the Burgundian Netherlands, the latter being compared in economic and social form to Italy of the same period.

With each attempt to draw a sharp line of demarcation between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, this borderline has receded further and further backward. Ideas and forms which one had been accustomed to regard as characteristic of the Renaissance proved to have existed as early as the thirteenth century. Accordingly, the word Renaissance has been so much extended by some to include even Saint Francis of Assisi. But the term, thus understood, loses its genuine meaning. On the other hand, the Renaissance, when studied without preconceived ideas, is found to be full of elements, which were characteristic of the medieval spirit in full bloom. Thus it has become nearly impossible to keep up the antithesis, and yet we cannot do without it, because Middle Ages and Renaissance by the usage of half a century have become terms which call up before us, by means of a single word, the difference between two epochs, a difference which we feel to be essential, though hard to define, just as it is impossible to express the difference in taste between a strawberry and an apple.

To avoid the inconvenience inherent in the unsettled nature of the two terms Middle Ages and Renaissance, the safest way is to reduce them, as much as possible, to the meaning they originally had --for instance, not to speak of Renaissance in reference to Saint Francis of Assisi or the ogival style.¹¹

Baker also presents a case for the presence of Renaissance characteristics during the Middle Ages.¹² The idea of a Renaissance is again, as for Huizinga, not totally rejected, but qualified.

Behind these views of the Renaissance and the Middle Ages and

the relationship of the two periods, lies a methodological problem for the historian, and hence for the sociologist concerned with aspects of the periods. Chabod sums up this problem,

Historical thought, then, is based on two distinct premises, each of them fundamental and irrefutable. The one maintains that any movement or event should be considered in itself, as possessed of a precise but limited individuality. (This is what Leopold Ranke called seeing things "exactly as they have occurred"). The other recognizes the links between the same movement or event and the movements or events that precede and follow it--in other words, it detects its living and active individuality against the general background of human history. Present-day historians often tend to concede only the second of these premises. Now if we adhere exclusively to the concept of things "as they have occurred" as though they were self-contained, we may be led to isolate them and to regard the human story as a series of fragments, each detached from the rest, without connecting links and hence also without meaning; and similarly, if we seek "continuity" at all costs, forgetting to distinguish very clearly the peculiar and individual characteristics of a given period and engaging exclusively in a search for the connection between ideas and actions of different ages--which, though they may be related and in form almost identical, have nevertheless been felt and "lived" with varying degrees of emphasis and intensity and are therefore not equivalent--then we shall find ourselves in the long run spreading a grey, uniform veil over the experiences of humanity and robbing history itself of all its meaning. And history, though it is a concatenation of events, also stands for continual change, novelty and differentiation.¹³

The methodological problem discussed by Chabod has affinities with the problem of "ideal types" in sociology. As was indicated in the previous chapter, one of the criticisms of the ideal concept was the problem of the relationship between the factors contained in the types. That is, the ideal type tended to isolate certain factors without indicating a relationship or a continuity between these factors. It is felt that this criticism of ideal types and periodization is not only a methodological problem but also a problem of interpretation. Insofar as the "reality" is not as selective as the type or the defined period, a recognition of the fact also indicates the relative weight to be given

to the discussion of the type. For example, Ferguson, although an advocate of the "transitional" view of the Renaissance, does not deny the particular character of the period that sets it apart from the character of the Middle Ages. The particular character of the Renaissance period is, according to Ferguson, to be found in the effects upon the total social life of an expanding urban life and money economy.

Ferguson holds a sympathetic position for the sociologist in his view of the socio-economic developments of the period under review and their consequent effects upon the total cultural life, rather than approaching the period exclusively from the point of view of the development of the arts, or the development of the individual. He takes the position that his approach indicates the fundamental difference between the two periods, at the same time offering "the broadest basis for periodization."

... it points to the most fundamental differences between the civilization of the Renaissance and the Middle Ages, while recognizing the dynamic character of both. At the same time, by suggesting a broad theory of causation in the gradual transformation of the economic and social structure of Western Europe, it tends to reduce the controversial questions regarding the primary influence of the classical revival, of the Italian genius, Germanic blood, medieval French culture, or Franciscan mysticism to a secondary, if not irrelevant, status. Finally, such an approach to the problem might make it possible to take what was genuinely illuminating in Burckhardt, without the exaggerations of the classical-rational-Hegelian tradition, and also without the necessity of attacking the Renaissance per se in attacking Burckhardian orthodoxy.¹⁴

Ferguson's suggestion regarding the influence of socio-economic factors is reinforced by the work of Pirenne, Baron, Schevill, and Gilmore.¹⁵ Pirenne's analysis of the development of commerce and the extension of the money economy concentrates upon the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, his analysis indicates the factors that contribute to

the developments considered typical of the Renaissance.¹⁶

The historical debate regarding the nature of the Renaissance period would appear to be related to the question of "difference" or "continuity." In the opinion of the author, both approaches can contribute to a clarification and understanding of the period. For the present study, both approaches are recognized and an attempt is made to transcend the methodological problem they present.

In the present study it is proposed that the background material to the analysis of Sorokin's types and their applicability be divided along the conventional historical lines, at the same time, indicating the relationship between the two periods. In other words, we shall attempt to take the "transitional" view elaborated by Ferguson. For the sociologist, venturing into what might be regarded as the historians preserve, the following analysis is open to the type of criticism and debate indicated above. Nevertheless, the following discussion is, necessarily, indebted to the historians research, and as such must be faulted on this basis. It is a different matter with respect to the sociological interpretations that are made in terms of this material.

The following section is an account of the character of medieval society. The account is presented in ideal type terms, that is, the characteristic forms of medieval society are discussed and the "local" or regional variations upon the type are not specifically taken into account.

Medieval Society: An Ideal Type Description

To describe medieval society in Western Europe as "feudal" introduces a controversial point, as controversial as the use of the term

Renaissance. Feudalism, as a social form, may be applied as a descriptive term in both a social-economic and a political-legal manner. As a social-economic term it relates to the question of ownership of land and the relationship held by the individual to this commodity. As a political-legal term it refers to the hierarchial structure of obligations and services embodied in the typical social structure of the period. The various definitions and descriptions of Western European feudalism rely upon one or other of the above positions, and it is the basis chosen for the definition that is the occasion for the debate.

The discussion conducted by Sweezy et alia, although basically concerned with the decline of feudalism, illustrates the conflict relating to the definition of feudalism. Dobb characterizes feudalism as,

- (1) a low level of technique in which the instruments of production are simple and generally inexpensive, and the act of production is largely individual in character; the division of labour ... being at a very primitive level of development;
- (2) production for the immediate need of the household or village community and not for a wider market;
- (3) demesne-farming: farming of the lords' estate, often on a considerable scale, by compulsory labour-services;
- (4) conditional holding of land by lords on some kind of service-tenure;
- (5) possession by a lord of judicial or quasi-judicial functions in relation to the dependent population.¹⁷

Dobb's outline of the characteristics of feudalism relies largely upon the economic conditions. Sweezy's criticism of Dobb's work appears to rest upon his contention that the relationship of exchange rather than the relationship of production is the crucial feature of the feudal system.

The definition which I was using in my Studies was advisedly in terms of the relations of production characteristic of feudalism: namely the relations between the direct producer and his overlord.¹⁸

Nevertheless, as Takahashi points out, the debate may be resolved by a consideration of what he terms "the social existence-form of labour power." The basic form the labour power takes is that of serfdom;

Although the peasant's lack of freedom, as serfs, naturally showed variations and gradations according to region or stage of feudal economic development, serfdom is the characteristic existence-form of labour power in the feudal mode of production, or as Dobb puts it, "exploitation of the producer by virtue of direct politico-legal compulsion."¹⁹

The above debate is one of many regarding the definition of feudalism in Western Europe, the characteristic form that it took, and the bases for its development. One common element seems apparent in most of the discussions, the relationship of men to the major economic resource. The Dobb-Sweezy debate revolves around this question as Takahashi illustrates. The major economic resource was land during the medieval period. In order, therefore, to illustrate medieval society in "ideal type" terms the basis for the present discussion will revolve around the economic, social, religious and political consequences for a society with ownership of land as the major power base.

The religiously defined class lines of medieval society have their basis in the economic importance of land ownership. The expression of the situation is best exemplified in the work of Augustine. The basic assumptions for Augustine revolved around the weakness or original sinfulness of man and the omnipotence of God.

Upon the first was built the institution of the Holy Catholic Church as the indispensable agent of salvation; upon the second was built the notion of a theocentric (and theocratic) universe in which everything existed for the fulfillment of God's will.²⁰

The social form that evolved from the Augustine view was, in general, the institutions of the three estates: the nobility, the clergy, and the peasant. The task of the nobility was the protection of man's physical well-being, that of the clergy, the protection

of his spiritual being or soul; and the task of the peasantry, the maintenance of the other two estates by their work on the land. Of the three estates, the most important was the Church, which also ensured its domination by its important economic position.

In this strictly hierarchial society, the first place and the most important, belonged to the Church, which possessed at once economic and moral ascendancy. Its innumerable estates were as superior in extent to those of the nobility, as it was itself superior to them in learning. The Church, alone, moreover, thanks to the gifts of the faithful and the alms of pilgrims, had at its disposal financial resources which allowed it, in times of scarcity, to lend to necessitous laymen. Furthermore, in a society which had relapsed into general ignorance, it alone still retained those two indispensable instruments of culture, reading and writing, and it was from churchmen that kings and princes had necessarily to recruit their chancellors, their secretaries, their "notaries," in short, the whole lettered personnel without which it was impossible for them to function. From the ninth to the eleventh century the whole business of government was, in fact, in the hands of the church, which was supreme here, as in the arts.²¹

The position of the Church was consequently supported by the economic position it held in the society; at the same time, by its teachings, it maintained the status quo of land distribution and the relationship between classes. Land was given by God in order that men might live, and the purpose of labour was not to gain more wealth, but to maintain the position into which one was born. The Church's dogma reinforced the status quo in a society in which the Church itself had a large vested economic interest.

With such a point of view, "usury" or lending at interest, was not condoned by the Church.

It is easy to see how well these principles harmonized with the facts and how easily the ecclesiastical ideal adapted itself to reality. It provided the justification for a state of things by which the Church itself was the first to benefit. What was more natural than the reprobation of usury, commerce, and profit for profit's sake, in those centuries when each estate was self-supporting and normally constituted a little world of its own? ... Of course, theory and practice are miles apart and the monasteries

themselves very often transgressed the Church's order. But, for all that, so deeply did it impress its spirit upon the world, that it took men centuries to grow used to the new practices demanded by the economic revival of the future and to learn to accept as legitimate, without too great a mental reservation, commercial profits, the employment of capital, and loans at interest.²²

For example, as Gombrich indicates, a large part of the motivation for much of the building patronage of Cosimo Medici arose from his guilt feelings regarding his acquisition of wealth. His patronage, usually in the form of churches or monasteries, may be seen as an attempt to atone for his worldly success.²³ In Lorenzo's memorial, quoted in Roscoe, Life of Lorenzo de Medici, the accounts for much of Cosimo's lifetime are illustrated, and the relationship of the Medici patronage to art is made very clear with the inclusion of the buildings with charities, taxes and other expenses.²⁴ In other words, the account is an indication of the "returns to the poor," amongst which is included Cosimo's artistic patronage.

Not only was the economic supremacy of the Church assured, but also, to some extent, its political strength. As Pirenne indicates above, the clerical orders represented the sole source of administrative help. Education was largely in the hands of the clergy, and the clerks and chancellors for the king's and prince's establishment were largely recruited from these sources. Although the administrator's loyalty may have been with his lord, nevertheless, by virtue of their education, they were indoctrinated in the Church's dogma regarding the relationship of the earthly prince to the representative of St. Peter. Such a situation is compounded by the fact that the Pope was as much an earthly lord concerned with the Church's vast holdings, as well as being the spiritual overlord. The classic case to be cited in this instance

regarding the conflict that could arise between a man's allegiance to his earthly and spiritual overlords is the quarrel of Thomas Beckett with Henry II.

The Church's teachings and the conditions of social life curtailed mobility to a certain extent.

The immobility of the forms of society and the rigidity of the barriers separating the various classes is in perfect accordance with the traditionalism and irrationalism of its economy. The classes which make up the society are regarded not only as having their own intrinsic significance but as ordained by God--that is to say, it is almost impossible to rise from one class into another; any attempt to disregard the frontiers between them is equivalent to rebellion against the Divine will for man.²⁵

The social immobility was compounded by the fact that urban life during the medieval period was minimal, and as such offered little basis for potential mobility. As Pirenne indicates, from approximately the ninth to the eleventh centuries Europe was largely rural, the great estate being the most common form of socio-economic existence, to which both the peasant and the landlord were tied by traditional obligations.

Thus, from every point of view, Western Europe, from the ninth century onwards, appears in the light of an essentially rural society, in which exchange and the movement of goods had sunk to the lowest possible ebb. The merchant class had disappeared. A man's position was now determined by his relation to the land, which was owned by a minority of lay and ecclesiastical proprietors, below whom a multitude of tenants were distributed within the framework of the great estates.²⁶

It would, however, be more true to say that social mobility was difficult but not impossible. One avenue of potential mobility was the Church itself. Certain of the early popes were from the peasant class. The feudal wars also offered a mobility potential in terms of prize money and reward for exceptional service. Also the urban areas, despite their small scale, did offer opportunities for advancement not found on the lord's estates. The problem, of course, in the latter regard

was for the peasant to evade the lord's jurisdiction and the latter's right to return the peasant to the estate. As Sweezy indicates with respect to feudalism,

We must not conclude, however, that such a system is necessarily stable or static. One element of instability is the competition among the lords for land and vassals which together form the foundation of power and prestige. ... It generates a more or less continuous state of warfare; but the resultant insecurity of life and possession, far from revolutionizing methods of production as capitalist competition does, merely accentuates the mutual dependence of lord and vassal and thus reinforces the basic structure of feudal relations. Feudal warfare upsets, impoverishes, and exhausts society, but has no tendency to transform it.

A second element of instability is to be found in the growth of population. The structure of the manor is such as to set limits to the number of producers it can employ and the number of consumers it can support, while the inherent conservatism of the system inhibits overall expansion. This does not mean, of course, that no growth is possible, only that it tends to lag behind population increase. Younger sons of serfs are pushed out of the regular framework of feudal society and go to make up the kind of vagrant population--living on alms or brigandage--which was so characteristic of the Middle Ages. Such a surplus population, however, while contributing to instability and insecurity, exercises no creative or revolutionizing influence on feudal society.²⁷

As was indicated in the above, the great estate or manors were largely self-sufficient, conservative units. In this situation the scarcity of trade is not a problem in a situation that produces little in excess of immediate needs. The major problem in such a situation relates to the potential for population increase that could disrupt the social stability of the manorial system.

In a society that may be characterized as conservative, with fairly rigid class lines based upon an economic relationship to land, the latter upheld by the religious and philosophical ideologies of the period, the next question relates to the condition of the arts during this period. The following section examines the role of the painter during the medieval period and the forms that painting took. The

discussion is curtailed by the fact that only a certain amount of the art produced during this period has survived.

Medieval Art

The condition of the arts during this period was far from as dismal a picture as the title "Dark Ages" has suggested. What was different about the art of the period, apart from stylistic differences, was the form that the production of art took. Artistic production was mainly confined to monasteries.

After the reign of Charlemagne the court is no longer the cultural and intellectual centre of the Empire. Scholarship, art, and literature are now centered in the monasteries; the most important intellectual work is done in their libraries, writing rooms, and workshops. The art of the Christian West owes its first golden age to their wealth and industry.²⁸

The monasteries, like the great estates, were largely self-sufficient. Art production was conducted in organized workshops and according to Hauser, much of the work was produced by aristocrats in the various orders.

... in the early period most of the manual crafts were carried on by the monks themselves; and precisely through its organization of handicraft work, monasticism had the deepest influence on the development of art and culture in the Middle Ages. That the production of art proceeded within the framework of well-ordered, more or less rationally organized workshops with a proper division of labour, and that members of the upper classes could be enlisted for this work, is the merit and achievement of the monastic movement. It is known that aristocrats were in a majority in the early medieval monasteries; certain monasteries were, in fact, almost exclusively reserved for them. Thus people who could otherwise probably never have handled a smeary paint-brush, a chisel, or a trowel came into direct touch with arts and crafts.²⁹

In other words, art during this period was not, as has been supposed, art common to all levels of society. Art was religious in conception and designed, insofar as any consumption of the product is concerned, with the upper classes in mind. The latter point is further reinforced

by the presence of many of the same social strata in the monasteries.

But that is not to say that the artistic language of the Romanesque was in any way more intelligible to the broad masses of people than that of the classical age or of the early Middle Ages. If the art of the Carolingian period was dependent on the tastes of a cultured court society, and was, as such, foreign to the common people, art is now the exclusive possession of a clerical elite which, even though it is broader-based than the court society of Charlemagne, does not include the whole of the clergy. If, therefore, medieval art was a vehicle for ecclesiastical propaganda, its task could only be to put the masses of the people into a solemn but on the whole somewhat vague and indefinite religious frame of mind. The often far-fetched symbolism and sophisticated expression of the works of art depicting religious subjects were certainly often not understood and appreciated by simple Christian believers.³⁰

The art of this period is basically symbolic, referring to the various aspects of the transcendental world. Art was an extension of worship rather than an object of aesthetic enjoyment.

The commonly accepted view of the artist of the Middle Ages is that of a craftsman or artisan. This view of the artist is largely the result of two factors; the contrast with the artists of the Renaissance period, and the romanticism of the Middle Ages on the part of the nineteenth century. In contrast to the knowledge possessed of the artists of the Renaissance, the medieval artist appears almost anonymous. However, it should not be assumed that because certain works are not signed that the medieval artist worked in complete anonymity. As Hauser points out, many of the works bear the artists' name, and artists are named by the monastic chroniclers. What appears to be the case however, is that when artistic activity becomes mainly a lay occupation, the naming of the artists ceases.

In contrast to classical antiquity or the Renaissance, the impersonality of the work of art and the unobtrusiveness of the artists are beyond doubt. For even when the name of an artist is mentioned and the artist expresses a personal ambition in his work, the idea of individual particularity remains foreign to him and his

contemporaries. But, all the same, it is a romantic exaggeration to speak of a fundamental anonymity in medieval art. In miniature-painting there are countless examples of signed works and at every stage of its development.³¹

The nineteenth century romantic movements' conception of medieval art was, to a large extent, coloured by their political views regarding the desirability of an ordered society and an "organic" view of the relationships between men in such a society.

The anonymity of the artist was also a part of the romantic legend of the Middle Ages. In its ambivalent relationship to modern individualism, the romantic movement represented anonymous creativity as a special mark of greatness and dwelt with particular affection on the picture of the unknown monk creating his work solely for the honour of God, hidden away in the darkness of his cell and in no way obtruding his own personality. But, unfortunately for this romantic theory, in the case where the names of artists have come down to us from medieval times, they are nearly always those of monks, and the naming of artists stops at the very moment that artistic activities pass out of the hands of the clergy into those of the laity.³²

Medieval art, in particular Romanesque art, was essentially an aristocratic art, despite its connection with the church. The abbots and bishops of the church were themselves, usually, from the nobility. They were great landowners holding the monastic lands in trust for the church. Consequently they were intimately connected with the feudal system as an economic order. The art produced in the monasteries is essentially an aristocratic art in the sense that the abbots themselves were the aristocrats of the church.

Romanesque art was a monastic art, but at the same time an art of the aristocracy. The combination of these qualities best shows how great was the solidarity between the clergy and the secular nobility. The most important posts in the medieval Church were reserved, like high-priestly offices in ancient Rome, for members of the aristocracy; the abbots and bishops were connected, however, with the feudal system not only by their noble birth but also by their economic and political interests. They owed their property and their power to the same social order in which the privileges of the secular nobility were rooted. There existed between the two aristocracies, if not always an explicit, at least a trustworthy

alliance. The monastic orders, whose abbots had enormous wealth and legions of subordinates at their disposal, and from whose ranks the most powerful Popes, the most influential advisors, and the most dangerous rivals of the Emperors emerged, kept themselves as sublimely aloof from the masses as did the secular lords.³³

Conclusions

The above picture of medieval society bears a certain relationship to the characteristics of the Ideational culture described by Sorokin.³⁴ As was indicated earlier, the Ideational culture revolves around some superempirical reality.

... the Ideational mentality differs from the Sensate... Since the Ideationalist is but little interested in the external world and its sensate potentialities, he is not mad about either wealth or arms or material comfort or power or fame or luxury or any other external means of obtaining and increasing sensate comfort, pleasure, and happiness. On the contrary, an Ideationalist is either quite indifferent to all these illusory and transient values, or is even inimical to them as the sources of the disturbance of the peace of mind and of the perdition of the human soul. A perfect Ideationalist then will either flee from all this into a desert and become a hermit, or display in its presence all the profound indifference of a grown-up toward children's toys, or will attack it as being of negative value. In a thoroughgoing Ideational society wealth, or any Sensate value, not only cannot become dominant but at best will be tolerated only as turpitudinous. The most successful dealers in wealth do not have much chance to become the bearers of prestige, the leaders, the evaluators, the assessors of men, objects, and values, in such a society. The main values here are imperishable, absolute, everlasting, and consequently immaterial and transcendental, or near to it. Anything transient, including man's life itself, can have but a secondary and derivative significance.³⁵

The importance of the monastic life, the church's edict regarding usury, and the emphasis placed upon the salvation of men's souls, during the medieval period is in accord with the ideal type illustrated above. However, this view of medieval society is essentially the ideological viewpoint of the Church during that period. In other words, the Ideational type fits into the Church's ideal description of life at that

time, but the economic position of the Church, their political power, and the characteristics of the Church leaders, tends to contradict the Ideational type. The discrepancy between the Ideational type and the social reality is discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

The art of the Ideational type is "symbolic, its physical exemplars being merely the visible signs of the invisible world and inner values."³⁶

The following table illustrates the predominant characteristics of Ideational art as compared to Sensate or Visual art and the Ideational characteristics can be well applied to medieval art.³⁷

<u>Ideational Art</u>	<u>Visual Art</u>
Prevalence of religious topics	Prevalence of secular topics
Spiritual character of the objects rendered	Sensual character of the objects rendered
Ideational style	Visual, especially impressionistic style
Lack of or little nudity	A considerable nudity (quantitatively)
Ascetic and nonsensual and nonerotic nudity qualitatively	Sensual and erotic and fleshy character of it, qualitatively
Lack of, or little place occupied by, portraiture, <u>genre</u> , <u>paysage</u> and fantastic subjects (in merely imaginative sense)	Ever-increasing proportion of <u>paysage</u> , portraiture, <u>genre</u> . Portraiture tends to become more and more "democratic," replacing the hero, the aristocracy, by the man of the lower classes, <u>bourgeoisie</u> and in part intellectuals.
Lack of the daily events, exotic, picturesque, and negative types, values, and events.	<u>Genre</u> becomes also more and more erotic, more and more of "everyday life," more and more devoted to the exotic, negative and pathological types and events.

Source: Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, 503.

Ideational, and by implication, medieval art, was functional art. That is, it was art that was designed with some further purpose in mind and not "art for art's sake." The major part of the art of the middle ages was concerned with symbolic references to God As Sorokin indicates,

The characteristics of the Ideational art which we expect logically do in fact occur in it. No prosaic or profane topics are rendered in it. It is an art which instructs in, propagates, testifies to the victorious religion--a visible symbol for the invisible values. No sensatism is in it; nothing appears for a merely sensate enjoyment. It is limited to the religious symbols and the images of Christ, the Madonna, and the saints, and to Biblical scenes. In these scenes all the figures appear abstract and entirely idealized. Christ is depicted as the conqueror of evil, ruler of the world, Pantocrator glorious and majestic on his throne.³⁸

Symbolization, as indicated earlier is an inherent feature of medieval life.

So the conviction of a transcendental meaning in all things seeks to formulate itself. About the figure of the Divinity a majestic system of correlated figures crystallizes, which all have reference to Him, because all things derive their meaning from Him. The world unfolds itself like a vast whole of symbols, like a cathedral of ideas. ...

In the Middle Ages the symbolist attitude was much more in evidence than the causal or the genetic attitude. ... All notions of one thing proceeding from another took the naive form of procreation or ramification. The image of a tree or a pedigree sufficed to represent any relations of origin and cause.³⁹

The artist, as much as anyone else, in medieval and Ideational societies, is affected by the predominant values, dogma, and ideas. Although the commonly accepted picture of the anonymous artist working for the glory of God is not entirely true, as was indicated earlier, nevertheless, the position of the artist and his scope in his work was restricted by the prevailing socio-cultural milieu. According to Read the medieval artist was essentially an illustrator of symbolic formulas.

The artist, ... was content to give a deliberate illustration of intellectual concepts and religious dogmas that had never entered his consciousness as sensation or feelings, but were present to him as already received ideas, as lifeless formulas.⁴⁰

With respect to the social role of the artist, a distinction should be made between the monastic artist and the lay artist. For the former, a certain amount of recognition of his talent and value to the religious community would be certain. Nevertheless, the subordination of the

individual to the superempirical reality means that "fame" comparable to that of certain of the later Renaissance artists, was not possible. Similarly for the lay artist, although his position was perhaps of less import in terms of acknowledgement than that of the monk. The monasteries were the source of written culture, and it has been pointed out that the names of the lay artists were rarely recorded by the monastic scribes. In terms of the system of Estates, the lay artist's position was akin to that of a skilled craftsman.

The above picture of medieval society seems to accord in part with the premises of the Ideational type. According to Sorokin, the thirteenth century marks the change from the Ideational to the Idealistic type with increasing Sensate characteristics. Historians also place the change in European society around this point, although "what" form that change takes, if at all, is a matter of debate as the introduction to this chapter illustrates. For the sake of clarity, it is proposed that the end of the twelfth century be regarded as indicating certain changes in European society that had important implications for the "Renaissance" period of the fifteenth century.

The following chapter discusses the changes in Western European society prior to the fifteenth century, with particular emphasis upon the conditions in France and Italy. The changes, as they affect painting and the painter's role, are also examined.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Wallace K. Ferguson, "The Reinterpretation of the Renaissance," in Facets of the Renaissance, ed. by William H. Werkmeister (New York and Evanston: Harper Torchbooks, Harper & Row, 1963), p. 16.

² Herschel Baker, The Image of Man (New York and Evanston: Harper Torchbooks, Harper & Row, 1961), p. 203.

³ Arnold Hauser, The Social History of Art (4 vols.; New York: Vintage Books, Alfred A. Knoff, Inc., and Random House, Inc., 1951), 2, 5.

⁴ Frederico Chabod, Machiavelli and the Renaissance (New York and Evanston: Harper Torchbooks, Harper & Row, 1965), p. 152.

⁵ Wallace K. Ferguson, The Renaissance in Historical Thought; Five Centuries of Interpretation (Cambridge, Mass., Houghton Mifflin Co., 1948), p. 2.

⁶ Wallace K. Ferguson, "The Reinterpretation of the Renaissance," p. 4.

⁷ See, for example, John Addington Symonds, Renaissance in Italy (New York: Capricorn Books, 1961); Alfred von Martin, Sociology of the Renaissance (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1963); Edward M. Hulme, The Renaissance, the Protestant Revolution, and the Catholic Reformation (New York: n.p., 1914); Hippolyte Taine, Philosophie de l'art en Italie (London: 1866).

⁸ Wallace K. Ferguson, The Renaissance in Historical Thought, p. 194.

⁹ See, for example, Clive Bell, Art (London: Chatto and Windus, 1914); Charles Homer Haskins, The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1927); Emile Male; The Religious Art of the Thirteenth Century (New York: n.p., 1913).

¹⁰ Johan Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1954).

¹¹ Ibid., p. 274.

¹² Herschel Baker, The Image of Man, p. 219.

¹³ Frederico Chabod, Machiavelli and the Renaissance, p. 151.

¹⁴ Wallace K. Ferguson, "The Reinterpretation of the Renaissance," in Renaissance Studies, University of Western Ontario Studies in the Humanities, no. 2. (Humanities Department of the University of Western Ontario, London: 1963), pp. 17-29.

¹⁵ See, for example, Henri Pirenne, Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1937); H. Baron, The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance (2 vols.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955); Ferdinand Schevill, Medieval and Renaissance Florence (2 vols.; New York: Harper & Row, 1963); Myron P. Gilmore, The World of Humanism 1453-1517 (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).

¹⁶ Henri Pirenne, Medieval Cities, trans. Frank D. Halsey, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948); also the authors Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1937).

¹⁷ M. Dogg, "A Reply," in The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism, A Symposium, Paul Sweezy, et al. (England: Kenion Press, Ltd., n.d.), p. 36.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁹ H.K. Takahashi, "A Contribution to the Discussion," in The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism, A Symposium, Paul Sweezy, et al., (England: Kenion Press, Ltd., n.d.), p. 32.

²⁰ Herschel Baker, The Image of Man, p. 176.

²¹ Henri Pirenne, Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe, p. 13.

²² Ibid., pp. 14-15.

²³ E.H. Gombrich, "The Early Medici as Patrons of Art: A Survey of Primary Sources," in Italian Renaissance Studies, ed. by E.F. Jacob (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1960), p. 284.

²⁴ W. Roscoe, Life of Lorenzo de' Medici, (n.p.), cited by E.H. Gombrich, "The Early Medici as Patrons of Art," p. 284.

²⁵ Arnold Hauser, The Social History of Art, 1, 180.

²⁶ Henri Pirenne, Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe, p. 12.

27 Paul Sweezy, "A Critique," in The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism, A Symposium, p. 3.

28 Arnold Hauser, The Social History of Art, 1, 168.

29 Ibid., 1, 169.

30 Ibid., 1, 186.

31 Ibid., 1, 174.

32 Ibid., 1, 174.

33 Ibid., 1, 176.

34 Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics (4 vols.; New York: American Book Company, 1937).

35 Ibid., 1, 96.

36 Ibid., 1, 95.

37 Ibid., 1, 503.

38 Ibid., 1, 316.

39 Johan Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages, p. 202.

40 Herbert Read, Icon and Idea (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), p. 93.

CHAPTER THREE

SOCIAL CHANGE FROM THE TWELFTH TO THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY IN WESTERN EUROPE

The important changes that, for the sake of clarity in the present discussion, are to be dated from the twelfth century, had effects upon the role of the painter and the style of painting particularly in Italy. The impetus for change is, like the terms Renaissance and feudalism, again a matter of debate. The crux of the debate appears to be the question of the major reason or situation that gradually transformed Western European society.

Both Pirenne and Sweezy, although from different viewpoints, reach the conclusion that the change from feudal forms of existence was related to the increased development of trade and commerce.¹ The latter are seen to have effects upon the position of the aristocracy, the Church, and the development of a "new" class, the merchant or bourgeoisie. Dobbs' position is that the change was the result, largely of internal strains in feudal organization that led eventually to its disintegration.

... the disintegration of Feudalism ... came not as a result of the assault upon it of an incipient "Capitalism" in the guise of "merchant capital" wedded to "money economy", as has commonly been supposed, but as a result of the revolt of the petty producers against feudal exploitation. This partial independence of the petty producers resulted in an acceleration of their own disintegration ... by accelerating the process of social differentiation among them; and out of this process (but only after its maturing during a transitional period of feudalism-in-decline) the capitalist mode of production was born.²

Again, to debate the point raised in the above is not part of

the present study, although in itself it constitutes an important question. The present chapter takes, as a starting point, the position that the changes from the twelfth century were the result of the combined effect of external stimulus from a revitalized money economy and the internal strains inherent in the feudal situation.

It was only in the twelfth century that, gradually but definitely, Western Europe was transformed. The economic development freed her from the traditional immobility to which a social organization, depending solely on the relations of man to the soil, had condemned her. Commerce and industry did not merely find a place alongside of agriculture; they reacted upon it.³

It is generally agreed amongst historians and certain sociologists that a revival of trade and commerce and an accompanying money economy may be found in the twelfth century.⁴

The growth of the towns affected the social, political and religious aspects of Western European life. Socially, the development gradually introduced new social classes to the rigidity of the Estates.

The question as to what was the immediate cause of this growth of towns--which came first, increased manufacture and expanded activity of the merchants, or an increased supply of money bringing with it a movement to the towns--this question is not easily answered. It is just as likely that the market expanded because the purchasing power of the population had risen, the increased rents of the land now providing for increased numbers of craftsmen, as it is that the increased rents were a consequence of the new market towns and their needs. But, whatever the actual course of development may have been, the decisive change from the cultural point of view is the rise of two new occupational groups--the artisans and the merchants.⁵

The introduction of new classes not only confused and eventually made obsolete the old divisions based on land tenure, they also introduced a new measure of social position and success. The old evaluation of position and status cannot take into account the power that monetary wealth conveys. The distinctions of birth never disappear, but they are changed by the desirability and need for fluid wealth as opposed

to the static nature of land ownership.

Economic feudalism, like political feudalism, had never been designed for a money economy, and the nobles were poorly equipped to cope with the new economic forces introduced by the burghers. By the fourteenth century most of the personal services and rents in kind, which the peasants owed to the lord of the manor, had been commuted to cash payments or, at least, evaluated in terms of money. At the time when these bargains were made, they were probably more advantageous to the lord than the the tenant, but once made, they were fixed by custom. And during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries prices were rising steadily, due to the increasing circulation of money and to the depreciation of coinage by greedy and short-sighted monarchs. The effect of this was to change an apparently fixed income into one actually declining. At the same time, the merchants continued to tempt the nobles with ever more varied, luxurious and expensive goods.⁶

A further undermining of the position of the old noble class occurs as an indirect result of the expansion of a money economy. In the past the monarchs had been dependent upon their revenues from their own land and upon the support of the wealthy landowning nobles during times of war. The expansion of the economy allowed the monarchs to gradually dispense with their dependence upon the nobles, to the extent that this period sees the beginnings of the development of centralized monarchical authority, particularly in France. Under the feudal structure the monarch, although the head of the feudal structure, was in practice only able to exercise authority over those individuals holding land grants directly from the crown.

There was a limit, ... to the extent to which the central government of the state could augment either its revenue or its effective authority within the framework of the feudal system. And by the end of the thirteenth century that limit had been reached in both France and England and to a lesser extent in the other kingdoms and principalities of Western Europe. Any further development of royal power would necessitate a breach with the fundamental concepts of feudal government, and further development was inevitable. The change to a money economy from an economy founded on land and services strengthened the monarchy while it weakened the nobility, and that change was destined to continue with increasing rapidity. Loosely organized though it seemed to be, the feudal system possessed a certain tough vitality that

enabled it to absorb the alien economic force of money for more than two centuries without apparently fatal results, but by the end of the thirteenth century it had reached the saturation point. From that time on, the economic foundations on which feudalism rested were in the last stages of disintegration and the structure reared upon them could not long endure.⁷

The privileged status of the feudal nobility was further undermined by the changes in military organization. Part of the justification for the landownership derived from their military obligations to the monarch. The increased use of mercenaries and the changes in various artillery techniques changed the former military domination of the knights.

The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, indeed, witnessed a complete transformation in the art of war. The Hundred Years' War enlarged the scope of combat from feudal to national scale. ... In the new type of national army, masses of infantry, armed with pike and musket and supported by artillery, were as important as the noble cavalry. Moreover, permanent organization made possible a rational use of the full force of the army, substituting mass formations and tactical manoeuvres for the glorious lunacy of chivalrous battle.⁸

Economic developments then, during this period affected either directly or indirectly the development towards centralized states and to the reformulation of the position of the old aristocracy.⁹ Economic changes with their effects upon the feudal landowning structure also had an effect upon the mobility of the peasant. The anonymity of the expanding urban centers provided the serf with the possibility of escape from jurisdiction of his lord and a change in his way of life. As Pirenne points out, the towns themselves, through their charters and alterations of traditional law to aid their commercial enterprises, instituted the feature that residence in the town for a year and a day guaranteed a man his freedom as a natural right.¹⁰

The political and social developments during this period of

expansion also had an effect upon the Church. The growth of centralized national states presented a danger to the Church's claims for universal sovereignty. The prestige of the papacy was also undermined during the fourteenth century by the exile of the Pope at Avignon under the domination of the French king, the scandal of the Great Schism, and the anarchy in the papal states.¹¹

... a national monarch, determined to be master in his own state, would scarcely tolerate either the papal claims to supremacy or the immunity of the clergy from royal jurisdiction and royal taxation. In the rising national monarchies the papacy met for the first time a secular power too strong for it.¹²

The Church's position as a feudal landlord was also affected by the economic changes.

By the beginning of the fourteenth century, however, the popes, in common with the contemporary monarchs, could no longer maintain the costs of government and the growing expenses of a luxurious court by the income from their own domains. They suffered, as did all whose wealth consisted chiefly of land, from the decline in the buying power of money and the resulting rise in the cost of living.¹³

The Church was, however, able to meet the problem for a short time with a reorganization of its administration. A centralization of the wealth formally held by local church officers and drawn from the land, and the incorporation of new techniques in bookkeeping and banking, enabled the Church to institute an effective system of taxation that rivaled the secular systems. Nevertheless, the effective adaptation to the economic changes held certain dangers for the Church.

The possession of wealth had always carried with it the threat of a materialism that might sap the spiritual vigour of the Church. Since the days of Peter Damiani preachers had complained that men were inspired to seek office in the Church by avarice and ambition. So long as the wealth of the Church remained decentralized, however, its central government had remained relatively uncontaminated. Under the new conditions not only the wealth but the materialism that went with it seemed to be concentrated in an unprecedented degree in the papal curia. ...

Nor did the danger end there, for the blight of fiscality spread throughout the Church. The increasing demands of the papal curia forced preoccupation with finance upon all the officers of the Church down to the parish level. And the effort of the papal chancery to introduce a fiscal system into an institution that had never been designed for it led inevitably to the systematization of simony and to traffic in spiritual goods.¹⁴

The position of the church in the later part of the Renaissance was dominated by secular political concerns, to the extent that the church leaders became Italian princes concerned with the territorial policies that affected the other princes of the Italian peninsular.

The condition of the church, that is, its increasing secular preoccupations, gave rise to a certain amount of anti-clerical sentiment in general. More particularly, reform movements became more prevalent. The Franciscan movement was one of the earliest of the reform movements, starting in Umbria. The major themes of the movement stressed poverty and humility and it was a movement directed towards the lay population. The position of the Franciscans and also of the "begging friars" was, in the long run, a disadvantage to the established church. As Antal points out, the Church's gradual incorporation of the movement into a closed Order within the Church was an astute political move.

... the disciples and preachers, living an apostolic life of poverty in a community grouped loosely round St. Francis, were slowly incorporated, as the years passed, into a closed Order within the Church. In following this policy, the Curia was actuated by the realization that this newly-founded religious Order could be of greatest service in maintaining that constant contact with the new urban bourgeoisie, both rich and poor, which it now recognized to be necessary, and in winning back those sections of the townsfolk whom it was in danger of losing. The Church needed an Order whose preaching would help crush those "real" heretics and sectarians who were bent on applying the principle of poverty consistently to the whole Church, who demanded that the Church should be without possessions, should concern herself only with religious matters, and that the Pope should have no temporal power.¹⁵

Gradually the Church was able to control the original revolutionary

aspects of the Franciscan movement. Reform and revolutionary movements continued to arise within the Church and to break away. For some time, however, the Church was able to contain these movements, until the advent of the Reformation.

One of the important features of the changes in the economy was the development of the fairs as economic exchange centers on an international scale from the twelfth century. As Pirenne indicates, the origin of the fairs does not lie in the small local markets typical of medieval times.

The fairs, on the contrary, were periodical meeting-places for professional merchants. They were centers of exchange and especially of wholesale exchange, and set out to attract the greatest possible number of people and of goods, independent of all local consideration. ... the important thing is that in theory each fair was open to all trade, just as each seaport was open to all shipping. Between the fair and the local market the contrast was not simply a difference in size, but a difference in kind.¹⁶

It was at the fairs that the beginnings of credit organization became apparent, and the problems of diverse coinage arose.

By the end of the twelfth century the problems of coinage and its debasement on the part of many of the princes had resulted in great disorder.

The increased circulation of money could be used by the princes for their own profit. Possessing as they did the sole right of coinage, they considered themselves authorized to use it in the interest of their treasuries, heedless of the fact that this was to enrich themselves at the public cost. The more indispensable money became to economic life, the more it was debased by those who enjoyed the monopoly of the mint. It became increasingly customary, especially from the thirteenth century, to multiply new issues of money, the value of which became less each time; ...¹⁷

The lead taken by the Italians in the commercial and economic developments during this period is illustrated by the introduction of the gold florin in 1252, and the replication of the florin on the part of Venice

in 1248 in the ducat. In both cases the rest of Europe was not slow in following their example, and this helped to stabilize the international monetary situation.

The revival of commerce and the changes in the economic situation also had an important effect upon lay education. It is an exaggeration to assume that the medieval layman was necessarily uneducated, nevertheless, the most significant intellectual and artistic achievements of the medieval era are those of the clergy.

The common idea that, the clergy apart, a total illiteracy prevailed throughout the Middle Ages is one which dies hard but has little basis in fact. A great number of ordinary people, during the course of their everyday work, had to have some knowledge of book-learning. ... Education, however, was in general regarded with justifiable suspicion by all forms of authority; if it was impossible to suppress, it was advisable to control.¹⁸

In the feudal era there was little need for general lay literacy in relation to the economic or political situation. Administrators for the various princes and monarchs were either clergy or had been educated by the clergy.

Under feudal conditions the nobles had little use for learning and less for art, while the burghers had not yet acquired the wealth, social security, or independent cultural tradition that would enable them to compete with the clergy in this sphere.¹⁹

The changes from the twelfth century on in relation to education and general literacy take two forms, "functional" learning and the literacy of the knight characterized by the chivalric epic and poem.

By "functional" learning is meant the increased emphasis upon the learning required for trade. The monastic schools, formally the single source of education for the laity, were insufficient to cope with the needs of the developing commercial forms.

The activity of commerce was no doubt the reason for the foundation of the first schools for the children of the bourgeoisie. At first

these children must have had to rely entirely upon monastic schools, where they learned the rudiments of Latin necessary for commercial correspondence. But it is obvious that neither the spirit nor the organization of these schools would allow them to devote enough attention to the kind of practical knowledge which was required by the pupils, who were destined for a commercial career. Thus from the second half of the twelfth century the towns began to open little schools, which may be considered as the starting point of lay education in the Middle Ages.²⁰

The clergy, of course, was opposed to the change; however, the rapid developments and expansion in trade, particularly international trade, made it more necessary that provision be made for the training of specialists. The invention of printing was the decisive step in the consolidation of lay participation of education.

After 1450 the invention of printing vastly increased the lay reading public and tipped the scale decisively in favor of lay participation in all forms of literary culture; but that epoch-making invention was itself the answer to a demand already large enough to ensure its being a profitable invention.

The commercial developments resulting in a concentration of wealth and surplus capital was also the impetus for lay patronage of the arts and learning. The courts became centers of patronage and culture. The particular character of the culture of the court is shaped to some extent by the conservatism of the knights. Originally the knights were professional soldiers of diverse social origin, or retainers of some member of the old nobility. The grants of land for service in war had resulted, by the twelfth century, in the creation of a "second class" nobility, the knights. The rigid forms of chivalry are basically the product of the knights' desire to consolidate his social position.

By the beginning of the thirteenth century the knights show a tendency to become a closed group to which access is no longer possible. Only the sons of knights could henceforth become knights. ...Access to the nobility is once more bolted and barred, and it is a reasonable assumption that the newly dubbed knights were the keenest advocates of exclusiveness. However that may be, the transformation of the knights into a hereditary and exclusive

caste marks a most fateful moment in the history of medieval nobility and certainly the most fateful in that of chivalry. Not merely did the new knights henceforward form an integral part--indeed, by far the major part--of the nobility, it is now that the chivalric ideal and the class-conscious ideology of the nobles is worked out--by the knights. At any rate, the principles of a noble manner of life and the ethics of the nobility now take on the clear and uncompromising form known to us from the chivalric epic and lyric.²²

The forms of life and the chivalric code are aspects of a concern, essentially medieval, with order and symbolism and is most characteristic of the French nobility. The lay poetry that was a product of the knights and the troubadours marks a significant break with the dominance of the clergy in all art forms, but remains medieval in form with its emphasis upon symbolism.²³

It is apparent that during the twelfth century and following to the fifteenth century, many changes occurred in the socio-cultural life of Western Europe. Whether this period should be classified as a part of the Middle Ages, or as a Renaissance in its own right, will remain debatable. What is apparent is that the feudal characteristics of the medieval period, and the position of the Church are changed. However, these changes are not necessarily reflected in all aspects of the society. Many of the forms and conventions of the medieval period survive, particularly in the arts. It would seem to be more appropriate to regard the period in the manner suggested by Ferguson, as transitional.²⁴

The transitional nature of the period is particularly apparent in any comparison of the cultures of Italy and France at this time. It would appear that the developments in Italy fit the concept of a Sensate type better than the picture that French culture presents during this period. The following section will indicate the similarities and

differences in this regard with particular reference to the role of the painter and the style of painting during this period.

Italy and France Just Prior to the
Fifteenth Century

Developments, particularly commercial developments, occurred at an earlier date in Italy than was the case for France. Part of the explanation for this situation lies in the geographical position of Italy. Venice had retained her ties with the Byzantine Empire and trade was active between the Italian coast town and the East even during the ninth century.

Venice was then already a great maritime power. She had succeeded before 1100 in riding the Adriatic of the Dalmatian pirates who infested it and in establishing her hegemony firmly on the whole of the east coast of that sea, ...²⁵

By the beginning of the eleventh century, the Mediterranean was under the control of Western European powers, as opposed to the domination of Islam in the past.

Thus the one lasting and essential result of the crusades was to give the Italian towns, and in a less degree, those of Provence and Catalonia, the mastery of the Mediterranean. ... they enabled Western Europe not only to monopolize the whole trade from the Bosphorus and Syria to the Straits of Gibraltar, but to develop there an economic and strictly capitalistic activity which was gradually to communicate itself to all the lands north of the Alps.²⁶

The effect of the revival of trade was also felt to a large extent in the commercial center of the North, Flanders. Flanders had traded in the past with the Baltic and with England, and by the end of the twelfth century had become one of the most important cloth-making centers of Europe. Flanders and the maritime powers of Italy represent the first areas to take advantage of the economic revival.

France did not take an active role in the revival at an early

stage. France was affected by the changes, but as the major center of all those facets of medieval culture discussed earlier, the changes, when they came, came at a relatively later date than was the case, particularly, for Italy. France had been the center of the Carolingian Renaissance which had set standards for artists throughout the medieval period. In contrast, Italy at that time had little to compare with the artistic achievements.

The artistic production of the North during the Renaissance was confined, for the most part, to the cities of the Netherlands, South Germany, and central France where royal courts or wealthy burghers provided the necessary patronage. Though differing from one another in many ways, the northern schools shared a common background in the religious Gothic of medieval France, and this remained the dominant style until well in the fifteenth century.²⁷

The explanation for the differences in development in the two areas, Italy and France, again seems to lie with the particular economic, political and social developments in the two areas.

... the early Renaissance is an essentially Italian movement, as opposed to the High Renaissance and mannerism, which are universal European movements. The new artistic culture first appears on the scene in Italy, because this country also has a lead over the West in economic and social matters, because the revival of economic life starts here, the financial and transport facilities of the crusades are organized from here, free competition first develops here, in opposition to the guild ideal of the Middle Ages, and the first European banking system arises here, because the emancipation of the urban middle class takes place earlier here than in the rest of Europe, because from the very outset feudalism and chivalry are less developed here than in the North and the rural aristocracy not only have two residences very early but adapt themselves absolutely to the urban financial aristocracy, and no doubt also because the tradition of classical antiquity was never entirely lost in this country where classical remains are to be seen everywhere.²⁸

Huizinga's analysis of life in France and the Netherlands at the beginning of the Renaissance complements Hauser's statement above. Works of art were still formed by religious, chivalric or the formalized love lyrics of the Middle Ages.

Art in those times was still wrapped up in life. Its function was to fill with beauty the forms assumed by life. ... Life was encompassed and measured by the rich efflorescence of the liturgy: the sacraments, the canonical hours of the day and the festivals of the ecclesiastical year.²⁹

Huizinga goes on to point out that art was designed with some purpose in mind and beauty was required usually because the subject-matter was sacred. The artist himself exhibited none of the developing specialization of the Italian artist.

The great masters in the service of the courts of Flanders, or Berry, or of Burgundy, each of them an artist of a very marked personality, did not confine themselves to painting pictures and illuminating manuscripts; they were not above colouring statues, painting shields and staining banners, or designing costumes for tournaments and ceremonies.³⁰

The art of the brothers Van Eyck, according to Huizinga, rather than being examples of the influence of the Italian Renaissance in the North, are seen to be typical examples of the late Middle Ages by Huizinga.³¹

France did not abandon the traditions of the Middle Ages with the same ease and rapidity as Italy. The predominance of France in Western Europe in relation to the culture of the medieval period is some explanation of the situation.

The history of French civilization of the fifteenth century, ... does not permit us to forget the Middle Ages. France had been the mother-land of all that was strongest and most beautiful in the products of the medieval spirit. All medieval forms--feudalism, the ideas of chivalry and courtesy, scholasticism, Gothic architecture--were rooted here much more firmly than ever they had been in Italy. In the fifteenth century they were dominating still.³²

Italy underwent certain fundamental changes during the period between the twelfth and fifteenth century that did not have a parallel in the rest of Europe. However, this is not to say that certain medieval aspects of life did not manifest themselves for some time, the changes were gradual and not, as the Burckhardian thesis would have

it, of a "sudden awaking." France retained the Ideational aspect discussed in the previous section with reference to medieval culture.

Italy, appears, at first to fit the Idealistic type.

The Idealistic type, according to Sorokin, represents the mid-point between the two extreme types of Ideational and Sensate.

Idealistic Culture Mentality. This is the only form of the Mixed class which is--or at least appears to be--logically integrated. Quantitatively it represents a more or less balanced unification of Ideational and Sensate, with, however, a predominance of the Ideational elements. Qualitatively it synthesizes the premises of both types into one inwardly consistent and harmonious unity.³³

Sorokin stresses that the Idealistic mentality is not frequently met with.

...though there have been periods in the history of several cultures when the Idealistic mentality became dominant, such periods were comparatively few and short in their duration. The reason for this is probably the exceedingly great difficulty of reaching a real synthesis of elements opposite in nature, the Ideational and the Sensate. ...a special combination of circumstances is necessary, namely, the beginning of the decline of an Ideational mentality, so that the Idealistic mentality may come to the front as a transition to a newly ascending Sensate mentality.³⁴

The art of the thirteenth century in Western Europe is seen to be a typical example of an Idealistic phase by Sorokin. However, it is difficult to separate the precise differences between Ideational and Idealistic art in Sorokin's discussion. Idealistic art remains the means for the expression of some ideal value which is the "value of a genuine collectivity." As is the case for Ideational art, the "individual portrait, the empirical genre, the landscape, the historical scene, and anything concrete, not related to the ideal, are rare in such an art."³⁵

The more detailed discussion of the contrasts or similarities between the three ideal types is reserved for a later chapter. The

present section will concentrate on the illustration of the medieval elements in Italy that survive in the changes from the twelfth century on. These medieval features are reflected in the art of the period, and in particular in the role of the artist.

The role of the artist, in particular, that of the painter, underwent great changes; however, the change was not, at first, in the direction of greater "individualism" or freedom as Burckhardt suggests. The main indication of this factor lies in the organization of the guild system. The guild system had arisen in the Middle Ages as a form of protection for those workers threatened by competition. Up until the end of the fifteenth century art production was dominated by the guild system.

The artist's studio of the early Renaissance is still dominated by the communal spirit of the mason's lodge and the guild workshop the work of art is not yet the expression of an independent personality, emphasizing his individuality and excluding himself from all extraneous influences. The claim independently to shape the whole work from the first stroke to the last and the inability to cooperate with pupils and assistants are first noticeable in Michaelangelo, who, in this respect too, is the first modern artist. Until the end of the fifteenth century, the artistic labour process still takes place entirely in collective forms.³⁶

The Guild organization was an effective means to ensure certain standards of quality; however, the minute regulations to ensure this quality resulted, generally, in a stability that was ultimately detrimental to such a craft as painting. The monopoly of the guilds was effective in relation to the fact that the right to practice as a professional artist was conditional upon an apprenticeship under a recognized guild master.

The growth of the cities as centers of manufacturing had accompanied their growth as centers of trade, so that a large body of handicraftsmen showed itself underneath the merchants and landlord.

It was a body organized in craft guilds, designed to control for the benefit of their members the conditions of each mystery. More and more the handicraftsmen and their craft guilds, by means violent or peaceful, challenged the power of the oligarchies. More and more, as they secured a voice in legislation, they put into force ordinances of which the effect, if not the intent, was to check the introduction of new methods of production and distribution in the crafts.³⁷

A further illustration of the medieval form in relation to the artist's role is the fact that the studios still undertook work of a craft nature, such as shop signs, banners, and wedding chests.

With respect to the style of painting, there are various discrepancies in that the medieval and chivalric Gothic style continues, at the same time that new developments in art are being investigated.

The retention of the Gothic form may be partly explained by the conservatism of the new urban middle classes. Their acquisition of wealth enables them to compete with the old aristocracy in terms of leisure and cultural pursuits. As such, they have a stake in the preservation of the old aristocratic forms to which they aspire. The art of the middle classes contrasts with the patronage of the princes. In the latter respect, Italy again presents an anomaly, the proliferation of city states under the control of a ruling dynasty, such as the Medici in Florence, or controlled by an alignment of rich merchants, as in Venice, is a political form unique to Italy during this period. The art of the princes, including the Popes, is less conservative, and more secular, than that which appealed to the Italian middle classes.

The variations in the life style and style of work of the painter in the fifteenth century in Italy and France will be pursued in greater detail in the following chapters. The present section is an indication

of the doubts regarding the application of the Idealistic type to the thirteenth century, in view of the essentially medieval and hence Ideational (at least in part), elements in the Italian cultural life that appear to carry over as late as the fifteenth century. These elements appear to coexist with what may be termed Sensate forms, without any undue conflict and without the necessary "fusion" to be characterized as Idealistic. Baker illustrates some of the confusion engendered by a too rigid classification of the period.

If a new regard for individualism and a new realism are the keys to the Renaissance, one should not overlook medieval mystics like Bonaventura or Francis of Assisi, who gloried in the common and the low; or painters like the brothers Van Eyck, who in their canvasses show a scrupulous zeal for realistic detail; or philosophers like Abelard and Aquinas who made cognitive knowledge the basis of a rational theology. And there remains, to defy chronological classification, the vague but tantalizing Franciscan of the thirteenth century, Roger Bacon. His approach to the problem of knowledge--sine experimentia nihil sufficientur sciri potest--would have horrified Augustine, but would have seemed axiomatic to Leonardo and Galileo. One might argue, of course, that Roger Bacon was so far ahead of his time that he spent a large part of his adult life in prison. But what happened to Bruno? to Galileo? to Campanella? to Vanini? ... If emancipation from the shackles of medieval orthodoxy is the central motif of the Renaissance, one should remember that the Church remained potent until the eighteenth century: ...³⁸

Huizinga also points out that,

The quattrocento with its serenity makes the impression of a renewed culture, which has shaken off the fetters of medieval thought, until Savonarola reminds us that below the surface the Middle Ages still subsist.³⁹

This brief section is an indication of some of the doubts regarding the picture of the Renaissance as presented by Sorokin, and to some extent, those authors who insist upon a more or less rigid classification of the Renaissance and the Middle Ages. As was indicated in the first section, the point of view regarded as most viable, particularly for the sociologist working in an area that may be seen to some extent

as the historians preserve, is that indicated by Ferguson, a transitional viewpoint. The "ideal" description of medieval society in the second section appears to contradict this latter statement, however, the indication of changes in the third section is seen to mitigate the "ideal" description of medieval society. The "ideal type" of medieval and feudal society would be difficult to find in fact in Western Europe, but the facets described as typical of such a society are more or less common to the majority of Western European countries.

The extent to which the fifteenth century in Italy and France and Flanders represents the Ideational or the Sensate type will be examined in Part 11. Sorokin's types, as applied to the arts, particularly painting, and his findings regarding the position of the various forms and styles for the fifteenth century in his schema will also be examined. The existence of both Ideational and Sensate characteristics during the fifteenth century will indicate that some reorganization of the Sorokin types is a possibility.

Chapter four will discuss some of the relevant studies in the sociology of art and will indicate some of Sorokin's findings for painting in the fifteenth century. Part 11 will continue the discussion with an analysis of sociocultural conditions in the various areas selected by the present author to test Sorokin's conclusions regarding painting in the fifteenth century and the role of the painter.

FOOTNOTES

¹ See, Henri Pirenne, Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1937); and, Paul Sweezy, "A Critique," in The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism, A Symposium, Paul Sweezy et al., (England: Kenion Press, Ltd., n.d.).

² M. Dodd, "A Reply," in Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism, A Symposium.

³ Henri Pirenne, Medieval Cities trans. Frank D. Halsey (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948).

⁴ See, for example, Wallace Ferguson, The Renaissance (New York: Henry Hold & Co., 1954); Henri Pirenne, Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe; Alfred von Martin, Sociology of the Renaissance (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1963); Arnold Hauser, The Social History of Art (4 vols.; New York: Vintage Books, Alfred A. Knoff, Inc., and Random House, Inc., 1951); H. Baron, The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance (2 vols.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955).

⁵ Arnold Hauser, The Social History of Art, 1, 194.

⁶ Wallace K. Ferguson, The Renaissance, p. 31.

⁷ Wallace K. Ferguson, "The Reinterpretation of the Renaissance," in Renaissance Studies, University of Western Ontario Studies in the Humanities, no. 2. (Humanities Department of the University of Western Ontario, London: 1963), p. 141.

⁸ Wallace K. Ferguson, The Renaissance, p. 34.

⁹ Karl Kautsky, Thomas More and His Utopia (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1959).

¹⁰ Henri Pirenne, Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe, pp. 51-52.

¹¹ See Wallace K. Ferguson in "The Reinterpretation of the Renaissance," p. 160.

¹² Ibid., p. 160.

¹³ Wallace K. Ferguson, The Renaissance, p. 40.

- 14 Wallace K. Ferguson, "The Reinterpretation of the Renaissance," pp. 163-164.
- 15 Frederick Antal, Florentine Painting and its Social Background (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1947), p. 68.
- 16 Henri Pirenne, Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe, p. 98.
- 17 Ibid., p. 112.
- 18 E.R. Chamberlin, Everyday Life in Renaissance Times (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1965), p. 177.
- 19 Wallace K. Ferguson in Renaissance Studies, p. 167.
- 20 Henri Pirenne, Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe, pp. 123-124.
- 21 Wallace K. Ferguson in Renaissance Studies, p. 167.
- 22 Arnold Hauser, The Social History of Art, 1, 205.
- 23 Ibid., 1, 228-229.
- 24 Wallace K. Ferguson, The Renaissance.
- 25 Henri Pirenne, Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe, p. 19.
- 26 Ibid., p. 33.
- 27 Wallace K. Ferguson, The Renaissance, p. 129.
- 28 Arnold Hauser, The Social History of Art, 2, 12-13.
- 29 Johan Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1954), p. 244.
- 30 Ibid., p. 246.
- 31 Ibid., p. 263.
- 32 Ibid., p. 323.

³³ Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics (4 vols.; New York: American Book Company, 1937), 1, 75.

³⁴ Ibid., 1, 143.

³⁵ Ibid., 1, 259.

³⁶ Arnold Hauser, The Social History of Art, 2, 54.

³⁷ George C. Homans, English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1941), p. 34.

³⁸ Herschel Baker, The Image of Man (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1961), p. 221.

³⁹ Johan Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages, p. 323.

CHAPTER FOUR

REVIEW OF STUDIES IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF ART

Before proceeding to a discussion of social conditions in Florence and Venice during the fifteenth century, the present chapter will discuss the work that relates to Sorokin's conceptions of changes in art styles in Western Europe. Briefly restated, Sorokin's position with respect to the progress of art styles in Western Europe is that, the art of the twelfth, thirteenth and part of the fourteenth centuries was predominately Idealistic, and that after the fourteenth century, art became increasingly Sensate or Visual.¹

The basis for Sorokin's contentions regarding art styles is related to his ideal types. The latter are based upon a symbolic conception of the "component of meaning." According to Sorokin an understanding of the changes in art styles gives some indication of the particular cultural mentality at any given time.

... one of the most important forms of recurrence is the repetition (in space and time) and fluctuation of the Ideational, the Sensate (Visual), the Idealistic, and other Mixed styles in all their varieties and with all their secondary characteristics. It is important because, when it is understood, it makes comprehensible many essential traits of a given art in a given period, which otherwise would appear as meaningless membra disjecta. It is important also from the standpoint of the mentality incorporated in a given art: a proper understanding of the nature and dynamics of these styles permits us to grasp the nature of the mentality which lies behind the art, and behind the cultural constellation in which it appears, ...²

On the basis of the relationship of the various art styles to particular cultural mentalities, Sorokin's descriptions of style are ideological. The "pure" ideational style is therefore described as:

The subject matter is superempirical (supersensory) and immaterial (like God, the Virgin, the soul, the spirit, the Holy Ghost, and other religious and mystical topics) and its form (i.e., the design, the picture, the sculpture) is purely symbolic, having no resemblance to the visual or sensory appearance of the object depicted. Since the topic is "invisible," its visible symbol cannot have any visual resemblance to it. Examples of such art are to be found in the Christian pictures in the Catacombs--an anchor, a dove, an olive branch, etc.--which signify ideational phenomena quite different from these objects.³

The "impure" Ideational styles are characterized by either a superempirical subject matter rendered in some resemblance of what is thought to be its empirical aspect, or some empirical subject rendered in symbolic form.

The Sensate or visual style is characterized by its adherence to the visual reality of the object depicted.

The topic is purely empirical and material and the rendering is purely impressionistic, that is, illusionistic, in its visual similarity to a momentary appearance of the empirical and sensory reality depicted. A good camera snapshot and the most completely impressionistic pictures are the best samples of the purest Visual style. Such a style is dynamic because the visual empirical reality, through incessant play of light and shade, incessantly changes. It must be impressionistic in the sense of catching visual appearance at a given moment.⁴

The impressionistic emphasis, according to Sorokin, means that the objects are depicted in malerisch.⁵

I use the term malerisch in H. Wölfflin's sense. Visually almost no material objects are separated from the rest of the world by a clear and unbroken line. Similarly the parts of the object are not separated from one another clearly. The visual world is the world of patches of different colors, of light and shade, imperceptibly merging into one another. ... Hence the malerisch nature of the pure visual style.⁶

Of the "impure" visual styles, one concerns an empirical subject or topic but the rendering of that subject is not entirely visual. For this case Sorokin cites character portraits, "classical" paintings, and much of the academic painting particularly of the French in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁷

The second "impure" type of visual art occurs when the topic is partly empirical but the rendering is entirely visual. "Most of the visual representations of religious, transcendental, ethical, and other nonmaterial or nonsensory values belong to this type of the Impure Visual style."⁸ According to this definition, many of the religious pictures of the Italian Renaissance are seen to be visual rather than ideational paintings. The extent to which this categorization is applicable to the latter period is examined in this study. The question posed is whether the fifteenth century exhibits the sensate or ideational mentality and is this apparent in the painting of the period? The present chapter will return to a consideration of this question after discussing some of the other theories of art development.

The mixed or Idealistic style is possibly the most doubtful of the categories relating to Sorokin's types. This particular style is distinguished from the impure styles of the above two types by the fact that both visual and ideational elements are combined in such a manner that neither predominates.

... the Idealistic style is simultaneously Ideational and Visual. It is visual in the form in which it renders its subjects, but not entirely: ... it ignores on principle the profane, the incidental, the negative aspects of visual reality and adds the noblest, the sublimest, the most beautiful and typical values, which are not apparent in the objects perceived visually. It idealizes, modifies, typifies, and transforms visual reality in conformity with its ideals and ideas. To this extent it is not Visual, but Ideational. ... In all these respects the Idealistic art presents a marvellous balance and "organic" union of the elements of the Ideational and of the Visual style with some slight domination of the Ideational. Thus it is a specific form of the Mixed style.⁹

Greek art in the fifth century B.C. and the European art of the thirteenth century are seen to represent two examples of Idealistic art. Idealistic art like its counterpart the Idealistic mentality arises at the decline

of an Ideational period. "When the descending line of Ideationalism and the ascending line of Visualism (Empirical Sensatism) cross each other at some theoretically "optimum" point, the result is Idealism and Idealistic art, ..."10

The analysis of the various styles of art is regarded as central to an understanding of the particular Weltanschauung of both the artist and the particular society. The interrelationship of art styles to the particular facets of any cultural mentality and social type should therefore enable any investigator to deduce from an analysis of either the artist, the society, or the art produced, the character of the society in conformity with the three major types.

... an understanding of the Gestalt of a given culture at a given period helps us to understand the meaning, the origins, and the methods of the predominant style of art; and an adequate knowledge of the art style and its proper interpretation in terms of these categories throws a peculiar light upon the culture in which it is born and prospers.¹¹

Sorokin's analysis of developments and sequences in art styles is part of his theory of socio-cultural change and his ideal types that form the socio-cultural basis for such change. Many of the art historians have also postulated theories of development and change in relation to art styles. Wölfflin attempted to find the universal laws that would explain artistic change. His theory of "art history without names" is basically an extension of Hegel's theory of the development of the arts.

According to Hegel the development of art is related to the development of the Idea or Spirit and takes place in three stages, symbolic, classical and romantic.¹² It is only in the classical stage that the Idea and the expression of that Idea are adequately related. Like Sorokin's work, Hegel's theory of artistic development is closely related to a larger conception of change. Wölfflin's theory is an

adaptation of the Hegelian theory. The idea that art history should disregard the names of the particular artists is based upon the idea that the historical period or the epoch determines styles and the artist's aims.

Wölfflin's own formula is that "not everything is possible at all times." By this he means not only that the artist is always implicated in a certain historical situation, but additionally that he cannot ever transgress the given limitations of his epoch. The artist, we are told, had available certain "topical" possibilities, which are a kind of vocabulary and grammar of artistic communication, and to which he is essentially restricted. He can enrich and revitalize this language of art-forms but he can never evade or overleap the actual state of the problem with which he is faced.¹³

Wölfflin, like Hegel, is concerned with the "inner logic" or artistic development and consequently disregards what he terms "external factors," which include not only the external environment, but also the individuality of the artist. What Wölfflin was concerned with was the universal explanation for artistic development which was autonomous in terms of the particular cultures in which it was found.

To the end, he found satisfaction in the reflection that the artist moves within a field of possibilities that are--fortunately for him--restricted, and in the thought that there is a spiritual creative principle that leads and guides the artist, who is never able to break it or distort it. The idea of an autonomous evolution of forms, through which the artist's modes of expression are enriched and diversified, of art as evidently obeying an inviolable inner law, retained its fascination for him.¹⁴

Wölfflin's emphasis upon the autonomous nature of art forms may be contrasted with Reigl's theory of "artistic intention" (Kunstwollen). According to Reigl the artist stands above the materials or techniques of a particular period. The artist, in other words, could produce what he wanted to produce without any confinement from the materials at hand. Nevertheless, Reigl's theory also maintains that the "formal principle" of the artistic intentions of any given age imposes itself on all the

artistic products of a period. In other words, the artist is free to produce but only in the confines of stylistic unity.

Both Reigl and Wölfflin represent the applications of historicism to the problem of changes in art forms and styles. Their work, however, is of secondary value for the sociologist. The problem for the sociologist revolves around the abstract and esoteric nature of their concepts. The character of the concepts illustrates a slight, if any, relationship to any social situation. The forms, the arrangement, or organization of motifs and the changes they undergo are ultimately related to some social situation, and it is this relationship that the sociologist is concerned with, and which both Reigl and Wölfflin tend to dismiss.

There is simply no other explanation of stylistic change but a sociological or psychological explanation; any art history that wants to go beyond simple analysis of the material is obliged to relate the unique work of art to psychic dispositions and collective aspirations. No doubt, such psychological motivation operates on quite a different level from that of purely aesthetic relations, and in discussing it one inevitably loses contact with the source of the original aesthetic experience; but the question is whether this was not already in a way abandoned when the merely formal analysis of the works started--whether any and every departure from the structural unity of the work is not inevitably a "leap," a straying into a new and foreign field.¹⁵

The work of Petrie and Chambers are attempts to postulate some uniform curve of development in the arts.¹⁶ Petrie is concerned with the development of the individual arts and the fact that not all the art forms originate at the same time in any particular culture. In general he finds that architecture and sculpture are the first of the art forms to develop, followed by painting, literature, music, mechanics, science and then wealth. In his studies of Egyptian culture and Graeco-Roman and European civilization he found that the above order had, in all cases, recurred. Petrie's theory is, in fact, a general classification of artistic development and is less concerned

with the arts per se than with the uniform sequence of development he attempts to establish. It is in regard to the latter that Sorokin feels the theory is inadequate; the theory when tested, "... is found to be doubtful. Petrie, like many others, ascribes to social and historical processes a uniformity they do not have."¹⁷

Chambers' theory revolves around two phases in the development of the arts. In the first stage art is produced for a purpose apart from its aesthetic value; in this stage art is closely connected with either religion, morals, civic duty, or patriotism. This stage he finds in Greece up to the fourth century B.C. and in Europe up to the Renaissance and the decline of classicism. The second stage is characterized by the attitude of "art for art's sake." The aesthetic values of the arts are of prime importance during this period when the collector, and the critic make their appearance. The second stage is, however, the stage at which the arts begin their decline. Chambers' theory not only emphasizes a rigid uniformity of development, but is also too general to be universally applicable. It can be shown that several cultures never pass the first stage, using his definition of the stages, and that in other cultures the two stages coexist. However, the major problem with theories such as those of Chambers and Petrie is that they ignore the diversity of developments in the arts within periods. The failure to take into account diverse developments within the general character of the arts is partly the result of their disregard for the relationship between the arts and the particular cultural milieu in which they are found.

Work in the sociology of art itself has been largely of an unsystematic nature, and much of the work has been concentrated in the

sociology of literature.¹⁸ The concentration in the latter area may be partially explained by the development of such techniques as content analysis and by the interest in propaganda forms and ideologies fostered by the sociology of knowledge. Both trends appear to be conducive to a revived interest in literature on the part of sociologists. However, the painter, or the sculptor, or the musician, have not had the benefit of any extensive sociological investigation. With respect to music, the ability to understand musical form and notation is a possible drawback.¹⁹ As regards painting, sculpture and architecture, the question of "aesthetic judgements," which may be related to the perennial "value" problem for sociology, may have been a drawback. In the latter case the problem is, to a large extent, spurious, by virtue of the fact that the "judgements" themselves represent an ideal research problem for the sociologist. For example, the revival of the Middle Ages during the late nineteenth century by the Pre-Raphaelite school provides an interesting example of aesthetic reaction to the classicism that preceded the era, at the same time being a part of a whole social movement concerned with social reform.²⁰

With respect to the painter, with whom this study is concerned, a certain amount of work has been done in terms of the position of the painter in certain socio-cultural situations and his role as a communicator of symbolic forms.²¹ Finkelstein emphasizes this point in his study of the interrelationship between the artist, the public, and the means of communication.

Art then, consists of a language of communication and of forms through which his communication attains a complexity of meaning, a permanence of existence and an extension in space so that it can be addressed to all members of a society. The creation of works of art has always been one of the functions of society,

sometimes allied to its institutions of government, law, and religion, binding people together; sometimes allying itself to new institutions that arose to replace outmoded ones. The study of art is a study of these languages and forms. Through a study of these elements we will be able to see how even when the artist considers himself an individual dissociated from society, his work is a part of its complex life. It is part of its culture which is a record of the customs, the ways of life, the morals, the human relationships, and the ideals and practices of each age.²²

The manner in which the artist communicates to the world in general is not only some indication of the prevailing social and cultural mores, but may also define the position of the artist in the society.

The artist as a craftsman is associated with some close relationship between the art form and some other social institution, for example, the church or the government. Where the art form is not directly related to any other social institution, the manner in which the artist communicates and the symbols used, may indicate the position he might hold in relationship to his audience and critics. The artist who is able to communicate successfully, whose symbols are meaningful to a large body of the public is more likely to hold a favoured position than is the case for the unsuccessful communicator. Whatever the relationship of the artist and his art to the general socio-cultural situation, the interchange between the artist, his public, and the work itself provides an interesting study for the sociologist.

It is submitted that the sociologist should view art as a process which consists of the following elements: the artist, the work of art, and the art public. Thus from the standpoint of the sociologist, art can be considered as a continuous process which involves interaction between the artist and his sociocultural environment and may result in the creation of a work of art--a novel, a musical composition, or a painting--that is in turn received and reacted to by an art public. The work of art makes some kind of impact on the public, and the response of this group will determine the reputation of the art object and its place in the total cultural tradition. Likewise, the reception of a work of art done in a particular manner--as in the case of abstract paintings, for example--will have some influence on the artist and will condition his creativity in some measure.²³

One of the possible weaknesses of Sorokin's analysis of art forms is the fact that the discussion revolves entirely around the relationship of particular forms to the ideal types, but does not take into account the variations within those types in terms of the publics the art was intended for and the reaction of the latter to the art produced. By implication, if the art form fits the Sensate or Ideational type, it follows that it is indicative of the socio-cultural situation. The present study, by a closer examination of one particular period, examines the possibility that the relationship between the art form and the ideal type is not necessarily such a one-to-one relationship. Part of the data to be examined in regard to the latter point concerns the recorded reactions of the art publics at that time and the reactions of the painters themselves to their art and their position in the society.

To a large extent the painter's patrons and public consisted of a small elite group in fifteenth century society, and the ideals and values of this group appear to be clearly evident in the type of work produced.

If one begins to track a given stylistic form to its real origin, one has first of all to consider its public. And the first thing to note is that not only "not everything is possible at all times," but also that even at the same time not everything is equally possible for the various social strata, economic classes, professional groups, or educational levels. Whenever there is social differentiation, several variants of what is currently possible come to be realized. There are always various criteria of tastes and standards of quality corresponding with the various groups of persons interested in art, and the first stimulus for a change of style always originates--even if not exclusively--in the emergence of new classes of interested persons. In the case of each radical change of style ... the new outlook is always connected with a social upheaval or a change in the social composition of the public interested in art. And moreover, without getting deeply involved in questions of the ultimate truth of historical materialism, we can take a further step: we can confidently assert that, whatever the true cause of these stylistic changes, they would scarcely have

won general acceptance without the appropriate social and economic changes.²⁴

According to Hauser, socio-economic conditions provide a stimulus for the artist, particularly under conditions of change. Art forms are, therefore, not necessarily directly related to the economic basis but some indirect relationship is inevitable.²⁵

The mistake often made by art historians of Marxist persuasion is to assume that not only are art forms conditioned by the socio-economic conditions of a particular period, but also that such forms are related to one class, usually the economically and politically dominant class, and that the taste of the latter group is inevitably the dominant one. In any complex society the art forms will relate to as many social groups that make up the society. For each social group art styles may be homogeneous but the homogeneity of style and hence taste is unlikely to persist between strata or the groups. This is not to imply that certain periods may not be characterized by a few dominant styles, but the predominance of a particular style does not preclude the existence of other styles, of less popularity and consequently with fewer examples to be found. A further factor that prevents any art form from being a direct reflection of particular socio-economic conditions is tradition. No historical period starts "afresh with its own art; it always starts with a burden, so to speak, of inherited forms, each of which has its own history and tradition, which fit it or unfit it, in various degrees, to take part in the social struggle."²⁶

Sorokin's analysis of the arts does not attempt to deal in any depth with the particular relationship between the art forms, the artists, and the society at large. Sorokin is concerned with placing

various paintings and sculptures into the ideal type categories discussed in the earlier part of this chapter. The question the categorization of the works poses relates to the adequacy of the types rather than the problem of his descriptions of the works. Insofar as the types are "ideal" a strict correlation between the supersystems and various socio-historical periods and their institutional products cannot be expected. What is important is the question of the extent to which the supersystems as ideal types, and the categories derived from them for such social products as painting and sculpture, explain various socio-cultural developments. It has been indicated that the fifteenth century, as the period selected for the study, should be regarded as a "transitional" period, particularly for Italy. As a transitional period it follows that social changes were accelerated at this point. The changes in question, if they are shown to have occurred, are necessarily from one situation to another. According to Sorokin, in the field of painting and sculpture the fifteenth century was already over its period of change and had entered the Sensate or Visual phase.

If the arts in general, and in this case painting, have any relationship at all to the socio-cultural environment, then there is a contradiction implied in the above discussion. It may be that as far as painting and sculpture are concerned it was a case of symbolic innovations in advance of the socio-cultural changes. This latter situation is not implied in Sorokin's work, and it may be assumed that according to Sorokin the fifteenth century in general exhibits all the Sensate characteristics. It is the question of the appropriateness of the Sensate type to the whole period then, that becomes the crucial point. If the Sensate type is adequate, a preponderance of Sensate

characteristics should be evident in not only the particular art works of the period, but also in the attitudes of the artists and their publics to that work. Following from this statement, the question is then posed, what are Sensate attitudes towards socio-cultural phenomena as opposed to Ideational or Idealistic attitudes?

As may be supposed the attitudes that characterize the personality types are directly related to the three ideal types. The descriptions of personality types and attitudes are also ideal, but Sorokin points out that, each individual whilst conforming to the major type in general, may differ in certain aspects and attitudes. As a consequence, the Ideational individual is concerned with the supersensory; the Sensate individual with the material reality and the satisfaction of his sensory needs; and the Idealistic type occupies a mid-point between the Sensate and Ideational types, attempting to combine features of the sensate personality with the "less extreme" characteristics of the ideational type into a balanced whole. It may be assumed that the public in the fifteenth century if they relate to the Sensate type, would be less appreciative of religious and symbolic art. The painter who was able to satisfy the Sensate perception of art and reality would therefore be more likely to be successful, and undergo a change in status.

It has been indicated that, according to Sorokin, the thirteenth century art in Western Europe was idealistic art, and appeared prior to the rise of Visualism in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Only the Ideational man and the Ideational culture which begin to pay more and more attention to the empirico-sensory world but which by one half, at least, are still in the supersensate world of Ideationalism, seem to be able to produce the great Idealistic

art, as a blend of both styles. Such exactly was the situation in the thirteenth century in Western culture generally, and especially in art. As in Greece of the fifth century B.C., here again we are in an age of faith, all-embracing, understanding, and justifying all, including this world. It still does not see the central value in this world and in the earthly life. It sees this in the supersensory world; but the divine plan of this supersensory world somehow now includes also this earthly world and gives to it its meaning, blessing, and justification.²⁷

Sorokin's discussions of the various art forms and their occurrence in Western European culture is not, however, confined to qualitative descriptions. Sorokin also conducted an exhaustive enquiry into the total art production of the periods discussed. It is from the quantitative descriptions that a more exact understanding may be obtained of the various ideational, visual and idealistic styles.

Sorokin conducted two studies, one in Prague and one in Cambridge (USA). The basis for the final figures is the Prague study mainly because this was the more complete and exhaustive of the two. "...I am presenting the figures and the diagrams based upon the Prague study as more complete and covering all countries, while the Cambridge study was made only for Italy and in a small way for Byzantium and France, with too few samples to be of any real significance or to serve as a check for the results of the Prague study."²⁸

The categories into which the various paintings and sculptures were placed were as follows: religious and secular subjects, ideational or visual styles, spiritual and sensual character, fluctuation of nudity, and the various contents of secular art such as paysage, portraiture, and genre. Some indication of Sorokin's findings for Italy and France is given below. It should be noted that the figures for France begin at 1500, and the characteristic of French art prior to this period are considered under the tables of "Ancient and Medieval

Christian" art.

So far as the art data by countries are concerned, for most of the European countries they begin only about the fifteenth century, when the differentiation into national art, as well as secular and religious, began to crystallize. Before that, especially before the thirteenth century, the art of Europe is taken as a whole, as a Christian art.²⁹

The following tables indicate the findings for religious and secular subjects for France and Italy during the fifteenth century.

Table 1

FLUCTUATION OF RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR IN ART

	Ancient and Medieval Christian	Italian	
	XIV - XV	1400-1450	1450-1500
	Percentage	Percentage	
Religious	83.6	80.4	68.8
Secular	<u>16.4</u>	<u>19.6</u>	<u>31.2</u>
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, pp. 378-382.

It is unfortunate that no precise estimation is given for France during the fifteenth century, but from the figures in Table 1 it is suggested that art in France continued to be ideational in form whereas Italian art indicates a tendency towards more secular and visual content. The conclusion that Sorokin draws from these figures, and the figures for other European countries is that, "... the main trend is identical, namely, with minor fluctuations, a steady decrease of the religious and a steady increase of the secular elements."³⁰ Other findings by Sorokin for Italy and France during the fifteenth century are presented below.

Table 2

FLUCTUATION OF THE MAIN STYLES IN ART

	Ancient and Medieval Christian		Italian	
	XIV - XV		1400-1450	1450-1500
	Percentage		Percentage	
Naturalistic	2.1		66.4	94.3
Formal (Ideational)	68.2		1.1	3.3
Impressionistic	--		--	--
Expressionistic	--		--	--
Mixed	29.7		32.5	2.4
Total	100.0		100.0	100.0

Source: Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, pp. 389-393.

In Table 2, the Impressionistic category is the purely Visual category, the Naturalistic category the partially Visual, the Expressionistic the Ideational, and the Mixed class represents those works without any preponderance of either the Ideational or the Visual, i.e., the Idealistic art form. In Table 2, Italy falls into the partially Sensate or Visual category, whereas France rates as Ideational.

Table 3

FLUCTUATION OF THE SPIRITUAL AND SENSUAL CHARACTER IN ART

	Ancient and Medieval Christian		Italian	
	XIV - XV		1400-1450	1450-1500
	Percentage		Percentage	
Spiritual - Moderately	18.3		40.0	33.5
- Extremely	7.5		4.2	5.9
Sensual - Moderately	--		4.5	4.3
- Extremely	--		0.9	1.2
Neutral	74.2		50.4	55.1
Total	100.0		100.0	100.0

Source: Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, pp. 411-415.

In Table 3, the categories are defined as follows: "By spirituality is meant the ascetic, other wordly, stoic, or idealistic atmosphere of the painting or sculpture; by sensuality, the "Epicurean," materialistic, sensualistic, hedonistic, carnal, or sensuous ... atmosphere prevailing in the work."³¹ According to the figures in Table 3, the large percentage of neutral topics for "Ancient and Medieval Christian" does not warrant the conclusion that the fifteenth century was a Sensate phase. The figures for Italy, in either category, do not indicate any significant percentage of "Sensual" topics. In fact the figures do not seem to warrant the conclusion that fifteenth century Italy indicates Sensate characteristics.

Table 4

FLUCTUATION OF NUDITY IN ART--QUALITATIVE

	Ancient and Medieval Christian	Italian	
	XIV - XV	1400-1450	1450-1500
	Percentage	Percentage	
Ascetic	0.6	8.8	--
Neutral	98.3	84.7	96.5
Erotic	<u>1.1</u>	<u>6.5</u>	<u>3.5</u>
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, pp. 423-427.

In Table 4, the Erotic category is the indication of the Sensate nature of the art. Again, the large percentage in the "Neutral" category for both Italy and Ancient and Medieval Christian makes the assumption of Sensate characteristics for the fifteenth century, debatable.

Table 5

FLUCTUATION OF NUDITY IN ART--QUANTITATIVE

	Ancient and Medieval Christian	Italian	
	XIV - XV	1400-1450	1450-1500
	Percentage	Percentage	
Body Covered	78.4	79.5	75.7
Partly Covered	15.2	6.2	4.7
Uncovered, Except Sex Organs	1.6	6.6	12.1
Nude, Sex Organs Depicted	0.6	6.0	7.1
Nude, Sex Organs Not Depicted	4.2	1.7	0.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, pp. 432-436.

In Table 5, the first two categories are associated with an Ideational culture. The similarity between the percentages in the first category for both areas, and the insignificant figures for the other categories, raises questions about Sorokin's conclusion that the fifteenth century represents a Sensate culture.

Table 6

FLUCTUATION OF THE CONTENT OF SECULAR ART

	Ancient and Medieval Christian	Italian	
	XIV - XV	1400-1450	1450-1500
	Percentage	Percentage	
Subjects of Antiquity	--	26.2	34.8
Portrait	16.7	45.8	48.5
Genre	67.4	20.0	12.0
Paysage	--	0.9	1.1
Fantastic Subjects	--	--	1.7
Animals	11.6	6.7	1.4
Nature Morte	4.3	0.4	0.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, pp. 440-444.

In Table 6, the major indications of the Sensate type are the "Paysage" and "Subjects of Antiquity" categories. In the above table, the percentages would appear to indicate a Sensate type for Italy, but not for Ancient and Medieval Christian.

Table 7

FLUCTUATION OF SOCIAL CLASSES AND SEXES IN PORTRAITURE

	Ancient and Medieval Christian		Italian	
	XIV - XV		1400-1450	1450-1500
	Percentage		Percentage	
Aristocracy	79.2		53.4	35.7
Clergy	20.8		26.2	16.4
Bourgeoisie	--		4.9	27.7
Intellectuals, Artists	--		6.8	13.6
Military	--		8.7	6.6
Lower Classes	--		--	--
Total	100.0		100.0	100.0
Male	73.3		61.8	80.8
Female	26.7		38.2	19.2
Total	100.0		100.0	100.0
Caricature	--		--	--

Source: Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, pp. 472-480.

In Table 7, Sorokin finds that "... portraiture and the Ideational art are negatively associated while portraiture and Visual art are associated positively."³² In the class composition of the portraits it was found that Idealistic art "... is bound to render mainly those classes and groups, like the aristocracy, clergy, ... which occupy the top of the social pyramid and, in the scale of the values of these periods, are considered as 'superior,' 'nobler,' 'better,' more valuable than the lower classes. Visual art, ... is bound to depict in much greater

proportion the lower classes and the common man, and even the negative types like the criminal, prostitute, ragamuffin, street urchin, and so on."³³

In the above tables, some of Sorokin's findings are reported. It can be seen that as far as Sorokin's research is concerned France, at least, remains largely Ideational in the fifteenth century, in contrast to Italy. Italy, however, does not appear to be entirely Visual or Sensate in its art during the fifteenth century. In Table 3 it can be seen that whilst there is a slight increase in sensual topics in art the increase is only 1.1% in the Sensual - Extremely category. At the same time Spiritual characteristics account for 40% of the art in the first part of the century, and only decrease to 39.4% in the second half. Only slight changes are shown for the qualitative and quantitative amounts of nudity in the art of fifteenth century Italy: (Tables 4 and 5). The only striking difference to be found amongst the tables is found in Table 7, the fluctuation of social classes and sexes in portraiture. Whereas for the total amount of Ancient and Medieval Christian art a concentration upon the aristocracy and the clergy is shown, and males over female portraiture, the figures for Italy indicate some changes. The bourgeoisie are well represented and the percentage increases during the course of the century, at the same time the percentages for the aristocracy and the clergy decline.

From Sorokin's figures in the above tables it is not possible to characterize the fifteenth century as Sensate in form in terms of the painting and sculpture produced with any certainty. The figures presented in the tables do not match the descriptions of Visual or Sensate art that Sorokin elaborates.³⁴ Visual characteristics were undoubtedly

present and, to some small extent, increasing during the fifteenth century in Italy, but it would appear that placing the change from Idealistic art forms to Visual art forms in the early fourteenth century is premature.

The extent to which the above conclusion is confirmed is examined in both the chapter on social conditions in Italy and France during the fifteenth century and also the chapter containing the findings from a quantitative study of painting. It was indicated earlier that the categories utilized by Sorokin for an examination of the art of Western Europe are as "ideal" as the mentalities they are related to. The "ideal" nature of the categories is, however, made more concrete by the quantitative descriptions contained in the tables illustrated above. This presents a dilemma. If the categories and the consequent descriptions of the art forms had remained on the "ideal" plane their relationship to the mentalities may have been more realistic.

It may be assumed that the concentration upon one area of investigation, in isolation from other, interrelated factors, tends to obscure the relationship that Sorokin attempts to establish. His work, Social and Cultural Dynamics, examines not only painting and sculpture in relationship to the existence of the various supersystems, but also other socio-cultural forms, such as legal forms, economic conditions, and familistic relationships. However, the interrelationship between the various phenomena examined is only discussed in the conclusions to the work, and the relationship between the forms and the supersystems is, at that point, taken as proven. It is contended that a more detailed examination of some part of these interrelationships indicates that Sorokin's assumptions are not only too general but also present a

problem in terms of the usefulness of the Sensate, Ideational and Idealistic types being applied to further research.

Conclusion

The supersystems, as was indicated in the first chapter, as ideal types cannot be expected to provide more than descriptive guidelines for research, and it cannot be assumed that their manifestation in their theoretical form is to be found "in reality." Nevertheless, some application of the types to reality may be expected, if they have any meaning or significance. It is suggested, however, that the seeming discrepancy between the manifestation of the Sensate or visual type in painting according to Sorokin's time limits and also the limits he establishes in the qualitative and quantitative descriptions of the data, does not establish the types on a firm empirical basis.

Part of the problem in the application of the Sorokin types lies in their theoretical basis. The types, as was indicated in the previous chapters, are based upon a particular view of truth or reality. This basis is essentially ideological. In itself the basis for the types is as "ideal" as the types themselves. This position is particularly apparent in the case of the Ideational type. The latter type is predicated on the superempirical view of reality to which all forms in the particular societies are subservient. In general terms this elaboration of the Ideational type fits some of the data for a society such as medieval Europe. However, the Ideational type is seen to apply to the total society, and in Chapter Two of this study some doubts were raised regarding the applicability of the type in the general sense.

From the comments of such authors as Hauser, Huzinga, and Baker,

it is apparent that the ideological framework of medieval society, although important in its general influence was in many ways confined to the aristocratic circles and the clergy themselves.³⁵ In other words, the Ideational type represents the ideology of a particular sector in society, and the extent to which its influence affected other members of the society is debatable. Of course, with the "ideal" nature of the type, no strict one-to-one correlation between the reality it is applied to and the content of the type may be expected. However, the above criticism is not related to the applicability of the type in general to a reality, but is related to the almost exclusive nature of its formulation. To the extent that the type may be expected to relate in some manner to the whole society, then the basis for that type should be abstracted from the whole society. It would appear that in the case of the Ideational type, Sorokin has accepted the ideological basis of a small, although influential, group in the society and assumed its applicability in general. In this way Sorokin has merely accepted the church's view of medieval society.

The discussion of the communicative function of art may be applied in a re-examination of Sorokin's types in relation to the above criticism. For example, if the Ideational type is generally applicable to medieval Western European society, the content of the paintings or the subjects of sculpture may be expected to represent certain universal concepts in the Roman Catholic religion. To a large extent, in the work that has survived, these concepts are illustrated. At the same time, however, the medieval period is also characterized by mythological and pagan traditions that also appear in, for example, the paintings of the period. Seznec and Panofsky have illustrated the prevalence of

these older mythical forms in medieval art.³⁶

... the textual tradition through which the knowledge of classical themes, particularly of classical mythology, was transmitted and persisted during the Middle Ages is of the utmost importance, not only for the mediaevalist but also for the student of Renaissance iconography. For even in the Italian Quattrocento, it was from this complex and often very corrupt tradition, rather than from genuine classical sources, that many people drew their notions of classical mythology and related subjects.³⁷

Not only are the mythical gods and deities of the classical era found in medieval art, but also astrological deities. The influence of astrologists was not confined to the arts:

Thanks to the Crusades, and to the penetration of Arab philosophy and science into Sicily and Spain, Europe came to know the Greek texts with their Arab commentaries, in Latin translations for the most part made by Jews. The result was an extraordinary increase in the prestige of astrology, which between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries enjoyed greater favor than ever before.

It was during this period that the greatest princes took astrologers into their services as intimate counselors--Frederick II of Hohenstaufen and Alfonso the Wise in the thirteenth century, and in the fourteenth Charles V of France. In Italy, astrologers directed the life of cities, condottieri, and prelates.³⁸

Astrological forecasts and pagan divinities may be related to an other-worldly view of reality, and hence the Ideational mentality, but they also illustrate that the assumption of the universality of the Church's ideology is misplaced. The Church may have attempted to incorporate the pagan traditions within the christian tradition of saints and martyrs, but the apparent separation of art forms between the two traditions seems to indicate that the Church was not entirely successful in adapting the mythical and pagan tradition to the Christian ideology.³⁹

Apart from the existence of classical themes during the medieval period, which in fact can still be related to an Ideational view of reality although not strictly in accordance with Sorokin's definition, various other aspects of medieval society appear to be at variance

with the Ideational type. Pirenne, Tilly, and Haskell show that the economic revival of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Italy was preceeded by the twelfth and thirteenth century revivals of commerce in France and the Netherlands.⁴⁰ It has also been shown that assumptions regarding the literacy of the laity during the medieval period are too general. The Church did not have the monopoly of educational training and educated personnel as is often assumed.⁴¹ These factors are at variance with the conception of a religiously dominated society concerned with superempirical needs and aims which form the ideology of the medieval church.

To reiterate, the discrepancies between the reality, or the reality as revealed by research to date, and the formulation of the ideal type, may be expected in terms of the theoretical basis of the ideal type concept and its general intention. However, the discrepancies and the applicability of the ideal type are related to the initial, generalized basis for the formation of the type. It is contended that Sorokin's types appear to be formulated upon too exclusive a basis in the first instance, particularly in the case of the Ideational mentality, and this factor tends to limit its utility.

The utility of the Ideational type may be the exception in the three general types proposed by Sorokin. The extent to which the Sensate and Idealistic types are also both useful and applicable is to be examined in the rest of this thesis. It is assumed that the types are generally related to the total socio-cultural reality, which Sorokin himself claims, and that their application to particular historical periods and geographical areas, will be explanatory irrespective of the particular variables selected for study.

In Part II the role of the painter is examined in terms of the general socio-cultural environment and the character of his communications with his publics. The character of the socio-cultural environments for fifteenth century France and Italy are examined in terms of the Sensate ideal type. The study is therefore a test of Sorokin's types, their representative and significant value for a particular period of time and particular areas.

FOONOTES

¹ Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics (New York: American Book Company, 1937), 1, 504.

² Ibid., 1, 243.

³ Ibid., 1, 249.

⁴ Ibid., 1, 250.

⁵ Heinrich Wölfflin, Principles of Art History (New York: n.p., 1950).

⁶ Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, 231.

⁷ Ibid., 1, 253.

⁸ Ibid., 1, 254.

⁹ Ibid., 1, 255.

¹⁰ Ibid., 1, 263.

¹¹ Ibid., 1, 267.

¹² G.W.F. Hegel, The Philosophy of Fine Arts trans. by F.P.B. Osmaston, (4 vols.; London: n.p., 1921).

¹³ Arnold Hauser, The Philosophy of Art History (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1963), p. 120.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 125.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 258.

¹⁶ See, Sir Flinders Petrie, The Revolutions of Civilization (London and New York: 1912); Frank Chambers, Cycles of Taste (Cambridge: 1928).

¹⁷ Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, 201.

¹⁸ See, for example, J. Duvignaud, "Problemes de Sociologie de la Sociologie des Arts," Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie, 26 (Jan - June, 1959), 137-148; J.O. Hertzler, A Sociology of Language (New York: Random House, 1965); H.D. Duncan, "Sociology of Art, Literature and Music: Social Contexts of Symbolic Experience," in Modern Sociological Theory, ed. by Howard Becker and Alvin Bostoff (New York: The Dryden Press, 1957), pp. 482-497; M.C. Albrecht, "The Relationship of Literature and Society," American Journal of Sociology, (March, 1954), pp. 425-436.

¹⁹ See, Max Weber, The Rational and Social Foundations of Music trans. and ed. by Don Martindale et al. (Southern, Ill.: University Press, 1958).

²⁰ See, for example, Raymond Williams, Culture and Society (Edinburgh: Chatto & Windus, 1963).

²¹ See Appendix A.

²² Sidney Finkelstein, Art and Society (New York: International Publishers, 1947), p. 13.

²³ J.H. Barnett, "Research Areas in the Sociology of Art," Sociology and Social Research, 42, 6, (July - August, 1958), p. 401.

²⁴ Arnold Hauser, The Philosophy of Art History, p. 267.

²⁵ For a discussion of the relationship of art to the economic base, see, for example, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Literature and Art (New York: International Publishers, 1947); M. Lifshitz, The Philosophy of Art of Karl Marx (New York: n.p., 1938); George V. Plekhanov, Art and Social Life (London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd., 1953).

²⁶ Arnold Hauser, The Philosophy of Art History, p. 268.

²⁷ Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, 321.

²⁸ Ibid., 1, 375.

²⁹ Ibid., 1, 377.

³⁰ Ibid., 1, 384.

³¹ Ibid., 1, 410.

³² Ibid., 1, 470.

³³ Ibid., 1, 488.

³⁴ Ibid., 1, 503.

³⁵ See the discussion of these authors in Chapters Two and Three of the present work.

³⁶ See, Jean Seznec, The Survival of the Pagan Gods (New York: Harper & Row, 1961); Erwin Panofsky, Studies in Iconology (New York: Harper & Row, 1962); Dora and Erwin Panofsky, Pandora's Box (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

³⁷ Erwin Panofsky, Studies in Iconology, p. 21.

³⁸ Jean Seznec, The Survival of the Pagan Gods, p. 52.

³⁹ The evidence of mythical and pagan traditions throughout the medieval period is a further refutation of the Burckhardian viewpoint that the Renaissance represents a "rebirth" of classical knowledge.

⁴⁰ See the discussion of these authors' point of view in Chapters Two and Three of the present work.

⁴¹ See J.W. Thompson, The Literacy of the Laity in the Middle Ages (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1939).

PART II

CHAPTER FIVE

SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN FLORENCE AND VENICE DURING THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

In the previous chapters the socio-cultural nature of the period just prior to the fifteenth century in Italy and France was generally indicated. The changes that occurred during the twelfth and following centuries had an effect upon the character of social life during the period covered by the present study. In the present chapter these effects and the general socio-cultural nature of the fifteenth century will be examined as background to the discussion of Sorokin's types and the role of the painter.

In the present chapter, Italy during the fifteenth century will be examined. However, only Florence and Venice will be discussed in detail. There are several good reasons for the delimitation of the discussion to the above two areas. First, the data available for the fifteenth century is more extensive for Florence and to some extent Venice than for any other area in Italy. The reason for the concentration of research into these two areas may be found first in the remarkable cultural and political achievements of Florence during the fifteenth century, and secondly in the differences to be found between the two republics in Italy. Both Florence and Venice were governed as republics. As republics they were an exception to the usual government of monarchy or a system of estates found in most of the European countries during this period. They were also exceptions, to

a large extent, in Italy. The usual pattern of government in Italy took the form of small lordships and principalities with the exception of the duchy of Savoy, the kingdom of Naples, and the Papal states.

The second reason for the concentration in the present study relates to the fact that the majority of artistic, and in particular painting, achievements during the fifteenth century appear to have been concentrated in Florence. As such, using Venice as a comparative case on the basis of its similarity of governing ideals, it is possible that some explanation for this concentration of artistic activity may emerge.

Thirdly, the delimitation of the discussion largely to Florence and Venice during the fifteenth century, is related to the question of source material. Most of the recent historical research concerned with the period under review has taken the form of small-scale, intensive studies of particular areas of concern.¹ The attention paid to the Weltanschauung of the Renaissance period, characteristic of the work of Burkhardt, von Martin and Pater, has more recently given way to studies of particular cities or city states and particular problems in each case. The latter studies provide a useful source of detailed historical data for the sociologist; nevertheless, the majority of these studies concentrate upon Florence or upon such topics as humanism, republicanism and the Medici rule, such that data for other areas, in Italy or the rest of Europe, is limited.

The delimitation of the discussion to the two republics is not to imply that the socio-cultural climate of Italy during the fifteenth century has been dealt with generally, or even adequately. As a consequence of the delimitation, discussion of the role of the painter

and of the applicability of Sorokin's types, is also confined to the two republics. An extension of the discussion to cover the whole of Italy and the interrelationships among the various states, and principalities would, of course, be more valuable; however, the problem of adequate source material prevents such a large-scale survey at the present time.

In order to present the research in a systematic manner and also as an aid in the presentation of a description of two rather complex areas, the data will be discussed under the following sub-titles: politics, economics, family and social life, and religion and philosophy. The sub-sections are not rigid demarcations, as will become apparent, each section is vitally connected with the others. The mode of presentation is adopted for ease in handling the large amount of data for the period.

Political Life in Florence and Venice during the Fifteenth Century

As was indicated above, Italy presented a contrast with the majority of European states during the fifteenth century in the various types of government to be found on the peninsular.

Savoy, the papacy and Naples were, then, the exemplars in Italy of the more general European pattern based on a balance between monarchy and estates. Outside this pattern the government of the Italian city states like Florence, Milan, and Venice, as well as the smaller lordships and principalities, were characterized by a much greater flexibility of political form.²

There are several reasons for the unusual complexity of Italian politics. First, feudalism as a political form never became an important factor in Italy. Secondly, unlike the other European states, from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries Italy was annexed to the German Holy

Roman Empire. At the same time the Italian peninsular was divided, roughly across the center, by the papal territorial state. The conflict between the papacy and the Emperor, both of whom claimed universal authority, meant that the development of an Italian national state was practically impossible. The quarrels of the papacy and the Emperor gave individual Italian states a greater opportunity to assert their independence. Various concessions could be obtained on behalf of the particular state or principality by careful alignment with one or another of the warring factions.

A further reason for the character of Italian political life during this period may be related to economic factors. The early development of urban centers as a consequence of the commercial opportunities in the eastern Mediterranean, were a decisive factor in the early decline of feudalism in Italy.

... as the cities grew in wealth and power the nobles were drawn into them as though by a golden magnet. And they were the real victors in the struggle between the Empire and the Papacy for, by playing off one against the other and exploiting the weaknesses of both, the cities were able to win for themselves a practically complete autonomy. When imperial power in Italy was permanently broken in the second half of the thirteenth century, and when the Papacy was transferred to Avignon at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the political void was filled by dozens of quarrelsome little city-states, each ruling the land around it and each pressing against its neighbors for more land to feed its people or for the control of the essential trade routes.³

The many small states, with the exception of those noted above, were originally self-governing communes with republic forms of government. This form soon gave way to the rule of signori, or what, for many writers, is known as the age of despots.⁴ Although political control in Venice and Florence did not accord, in practical life, with the republican ideal, nevertheless, these two states, particularly Venice,

retained more than other Italian states, some of the democratic procedures.

With the expansion of commercial activities and the increased size and importance of the urban centers, government was increasingly centered in the city. To the extent that, for example, although the Tuscan territories around the city of Florence were subject to that city, the rural inhabitants had no political rights. Participation in citizenship, and representation in the government was confined to a proportion of those living within the city walls. "In the case of Florence in the fifteenth century, out of a population of perhaps nearly 100,000, no more than 3,000 were active participants in political life."⁵ The same situation applied in Venice, although control over the government was confined to a particular class which was perhaps more rigidly marked off and preserved than its equivalent number in Florence.

Before discussing the composition and form of the two city's political structure, the republican ideal, to which they both professed allegiance, will be illustrated. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the essence of the medieval political ideal was related to the general conception of divinely inspired order. All things were seen to be related in terms of a cosmic superiority and inferiority. Consequently, the particular and independent entity, such as a state or commune, was a violation of the orderly universe, embodied in the secular form of the respublica christiana. Republicanism was a denial of this orderly form.

... the heart of republicanism ... was the claim to liberty; and liberty meant the rejection of subordination. A true republic was in the first place a particular power, not a participant in a universal system directed by some superior authority; and it claimed the right to determine its own policies simply on the

basis of its particular interests. Nor was its internal structure, in the medieval sense, systematic. It was directed not to a single end from above, by a prince, but by a body of citizens, who somehow represented the community and its interests, and who were related to one another by a principle very different from that of hierarchy.⁶

The implications of the republican ideal were directly related to the independence of the particular state. The Renaissance republic was a discrete entity related to other states not through some system such as the Empire or the papacy, but in terms of their own particular needs and conflicts.

The independence of each state, as a republic, had implications for international relations.

Medieval universalism had provided, at least in theory, a solution to the problem of political conflict. Without particular states or nations, international collisions were by definition impossible. The dispute that arose between the members of the universal family were seen as no more than domestic quarrels which could properly be settled by the paternal authority of a hierarchical superior, on the basis of universal principles accepted by all. But political particularism seemed to leave the world without any way to maintain order among peoples.⁷

Although not formulated as a political theory appropriate to republicanism, the idea of a balance of power as a means of controlling disputes among the various states becomes apparent during the fifteenth century. The concept of an equilibrium amongst the various political entities becomes the alternative to the ideal of order found in the Middle Ages. For example, the alliance of Venice and Florence in 1425 was made with the view of containing the expansionist ambitions of Milan. However, in 1447 when the Milanese succession was in question and the only alternatives appeared to be control of Milanese possessions by Venice or the condottiere Francesco Sforza, Florence changed sides and backed Sforza on the basis that Venice with Milan added to her territory would

be in a position to dominate the Italian peninsula.

Republican liberty understood for the state in external matters as a matter of equilibrium, was also applied internally. Internal liberty for the state was seen to be achieved through the accomodation and balance implied in the self-government of the state by the citizens. Self-government by the citizens, however, did not imply democratic government.

... Renaissance republics were not democratic, and their vaunted equality prevailed only, and often, irregularly, among certain groups; the status and rights of citizenship were always restricted. The people (populus, popolo) generally signified, in Renaissance discourse, the politically competent group in a state, Aristotle's middle party of practical order, indeterminate in size, between a minority of powerful men, ambitious to assume an absolute control and to rule from above, and the politically incompetent masses.⁸

Any democratic forms of government in most of the city states and communes had given way, by the fifteenth century, to some form of oligarchic control. For example, for most of the fifteenth century Florence was closely allied to the fortunes of one family, the Medici. The political power of the Medici was unusual only in the fact that it was retained, in almost unbroken succession, for so long by one family. Nevertheless, the political control of the Medici did not change fundamentally the type of control Florence had experienced in the recent past.

... at no time of its history had Florence made a conspicuous success of the democratic tendencies which it undoubtably nourished; and when in the fourteenth century the lesser guilds had set up the closest approximation to a democratic government Florence ever achieved, the experiment broke down in 1382 before the attack of the greater guilds. These thereupon resumed control; or rather, under cover of the authority belonging constitutionally to the body of twenty-one guilds, a group of associated merchant families created an alert and jealous oligarchy.⁹

The organization of the guilds in Florentine political life was

important during the fourteenth and early part of the fifteenth century. There were twenty-one trade guilds in Florence, seven of which were called the "greater" guilds and fourteen the "lesser" guilds. The greater guilds represented the wealth of the city and outnumbered the lesser guilds by four to one in the lists of candidates eligible for office in the city. The power of the guilds in political life, more particularly the power of the greater guilds, was substantially reduced by 1393.

... the circles which held political power necessarily became more exclusive; in 1393 the middle sections and in 1396 the moderate wing of the upper section were reduced to political impotence. Political power was thus confined to the supreme oligarchy centered around the Albizzi as a nucleus. The first decades of the fifteenth century, the Albizzi, ... together with the great merchant and banking family of the Uzzano and the wealthiest bankers of Florence, the Strozzi, held the chief political power in their hands or exercised it through their creatures.¹⁰

The rise to power of the Medici family was, to some extent, accomplished by their careful alliances with the lower classes and the lesser guilds. The oligarchic power described above increasingly curtailed the rights of the lower classes. The reaction to the restrictions led to the breaking of the power of the old banking oligarchy and the rise of the Medici political fortunes.

The Medici were not originally among the select families of the Lana who had been in political control of the city since the oligarchic reaction, but they manoeuvred cleverly among the factions without compromising themselves, making themselves popular among the lower classes and also with the lesser guilds ... They associated themselves openly with the democratic opposition only when it was in the ascendent ... They always managed, however, to turn a deaf ear when the opposition was in difficulties, as the lesser guilds discovered when they appealed to Vieri de' Medici to lead them at the time of the oligarchic reaction in 1393.¹¹

The complexity of Florentine political institutions, theoretically designed to meet the republican ideal of citizens participation, in

practice made them susceptible to manipulation.

Of the bodies elected to govern Florence on this territorial and social basis, the signory was the most important. This was composed of two priors from each quarter and the gonfalonier of justice, making nine in all. These officers were elected by lot from purses filled with the names of the eligible candidates in due proportion to represent the quarters and guilds. A new signory was installed every two months, with the result that Florence had six principle changes of government annually. The signory was advised by two subordinate colleges, the twelve boni homines and the sixteen gonfaloniers of companies. In addition there were the two greater councils: the council of the people and the council of the commune. The latter was the only body of which the membership was not confined to representatives of the guilds.¹²

Essentially, the government of Florence was easily controlled by a few wealthy and powerful families. The greater guilds, which outnumbered the lesser guilds in their representation, were composed of the wealthy middle classes and members of this guild were the ones that usually made up the composition of the signory. However, the power of the signory was itself curtailed by its short tenure of office. At the same time, by 1421, rights of citizenship were further curtailed in favor of the wealthy by the decree that no one could hold office who had not paid taxes regularly for thirty years.

Despite the opportunities for absolute control, Cosimo de' Medici, on his accession to power in 1434, was careful to remain in the background. Apart from the disadvantage of making the same mistakes as his predecessors the Albizzi, the open display of power was contrary to the republican sentiments expressed in Florence at this time.

... Cosimo de' Medici simply substituted for the oligarchic domination behind the facade of democratic institutions his own personal direction. He and his son and his grandson provided a remarkable example of the control of a government. Cosimo took no public office that did not come to him in the ordinary course of events. The only innovation he made was the appointment of a more or less permanent body of inspectors to comb the electoral lists and revise them in the interests of the Medicean party. During a period of thirty years Cosimo served three times as

gonfalconier of justice, that is, a term of six months altogether; but without holding any regular office at all he managed to secure control of foreign affairs and succeeded in so confounding the revenues of his family with those of the republic that it is impossible to tell where one left off and another began.¹³

The only office which Cosimo de' Medici openly controlled was that of public finance. He served on the board of directors of the Monte, and it has been indicated above, the close alliance between his personal fortune and the state finances. Florence had introduced interest bearing compulsory and voluntary public loans at an early date, and by 1342 all State loans were consolidated in the institution of the Monte Commune. These loans were used to finance economic expansion and wars. The interest on the loans was raised by indirect taxation which was born mainly by the lower classes as "direct taxation was considered detrimental to the accumulation of capital."¹⁴ Speculation on the loans was indulged in by the wealthy patrician class who influenced state affairs and were able to raise the interest on the loans. The Medici control of the Monte meant that, in effect, the family controlled not only the political fortunes but also the economic fortunes of the republic.

The success of the Medici in controlling the affairs of Florence may also be attributed to their conduct of foreign affairs. As was indicated above, the fifteenth century saw the development of power politics on the Italian peninsular. Florence was directly concerned with the expansionist ambitions of other states, particularly Milan, in relation to her own expansion. Florence was a commercial city but had no access to the sea. The addition of the seaport of Pisa to Florentine territory in 1406 corrected this situation to a large extent. At the same time Florence was concerned with containing the ambitions

of Milan and Venice, and the peace of Lodi in 1454 established an alignment of Italian interstate politics for most of the remaining fifteenth century. The Lodi peace ended the war of succession in Milan, and Cosimo's support of the Sforza, in opposition to Florences' traditional alliance with Venice, established a precarious balance of power among the Italian states that was not effectively broken until the French invasion of 1494. The alliance with Milan was Cosimo de' Medici's policy and was the expression of the view that as a commercial city Florence was not able to adopt an aggressive policy, consequently the best hope for her existence was a mutual guarantee of peace among the existing powers. The precarious position of Florence with respect to the other Italian powers, illustrates the shortcomings of the system of government. For the Florentine government attempting not only to retain its possessions as well as to expand its influence, the complex system of government with its two monthly change of leadership was inappropriate.

When we turn from domestic to foreign affairs we come upon the really decisive explanation of why it was that the system of election by lot would not work. Florence had become involved in a power struggle with four other Italian states, with Venice, Milan, Naples, and the papacy, that required a much more alert and uninterrupted attention than was possible to a haphazard executive with the life of a meagre two months. The demand of political logic was therefore to surrender the bimestrial turnover; but in case this could not be effected in the face of a perverted public opinion, the alternative was for an invisible power superior to the signory to take over the foreign department.¹⁵

The "under-cover" control over Florentine politics was continued by Cosimo de' Medici's successors, Piero and his son Lorenzo. However, after the Pazzi bid for power in Florence, Lorenzo de' Medici consolidated his position more openly.

... Lorenzo tightened his control after the Pazzi conspiracy had revealed the strength that might rally to an opposition party. At that time (1480), in place of the usual balia or five year commission, he instituted the council of seventy, a self-perpetuating body with wide powers for the conduct of government. As the members of the council were made up of Lorenzo's personal friends and supporters, the Medici position was secured, though at the cost of more obvious manipulation than had been indulged in by Cosimo.¹⁶

The council of Seventy controlled the older governing bodies in Florence, and Lorenzo himself sat on the council.

The history of Florentine politics from Lorenzo's death in 1492 illustrates two reversals. Lorenzo's son, Piero, did not continue the successful control of his predecessors.

After Lorenzo's death in 1492 the heritage of popularity and the whole carefully built structure of influence were thrown away by the carelessness of Lorenzo's eldest son, Piero. His pretensions, his aristocratic marriage, his withdrawal from the common people, all alienated many of his father's supporters. The crisis was finally precipitated in 1494 by Piero's surrender to the French invaders. After this event the Medici were expelled and a period of constitutional debate ensued about what changes of institutions might be made to improve the Florentine government.¹⁷

In the four years following the expulsion of the Medici, Florence was politically as well as spiritually under the control of a Dominican friar, Savonarola. Savonarola's influence had increased during the tenure of Piero, and he saw himself as the "tool of God" whereby the reformation of the Church and also the reformation of Florentine morals might be effected. To a large extent, Savonarola was a typical medieval prophet.

Fra Girolamo was a son of the Middle Ages, a logical product of the faith that the individual's leading concern on earth is the issue of life eternal, the issue of salvation. Not to leave bewildered man without guidance, God in his mercy has established the great institution of the church and committed to it the authority to save or to destroy. Never for a moment throughout his life did Savonarola doubt the divine power conferred upon the church. To his sorrow, however, and to the sorrow of all true believers, under a succession of worldly popes culminating

in the abominable Borgia, Alexander VI, the church had grown so profoundly corrupt that it was threatened with estrangement from its mission. For a dedicated spirit like the friar, it was not difficult to become persuaded that the degenerate church must imperatively be renewed and that he was the man appointed by God to that end.¹⁸

Savonarola's success as the reformer of the church was minimal, as will be seen later in the present chapter. Although his influence upon the local Florentine scene was considerable and invites speculation regarding the relationship between the "spirit of the Renaissance" and surviving medieval forms.

Although the friar held no political posts and his intentions were basically religious, he had a profound effect upon the political situation in Florence. His moral influence over the city and his belief that the existing corruption in the church and the republic stemmed from the Medici regime, placed him in a favorable position at the overthrow of Piero de' Medici. At the same time Savonarola supported the invasion of the French king, a point that should have stood in his disfavor. However, he saw the French king as the means by which God was to effect the reformation of the church. The invasion was a warning of God's displeasure with the situation in Florence and in Italy generally. Nevertheless, Savonarola's support of the Popolari with their program of a popular based democratic regime for Florence eventually brought him into conflict with the powerful oligarchic families in the city. The disaster of the alliance with the French and the alienation of the great Florentine families finally brought about Savonarola's downfall and death in 1498.

Savonarola never sat in the Grand Council or the signory, he participated in no elections or party caucuses. ... though not a direct political agent, indirectly he figured in all the acts of government through his moral influence over the supporters of the

democratic system, the Popolari. To this system he had committed himself at a critical moment with no idea of pleasing anyone other than God in whom he put his faith. Fiercely hating tyranny because of its secret crimes and moral laxity, he wanted in the interest of the religious society which was his aim to close the gates forever on the Medici and justly concluded that the most effective way of achieving that result was a broadly based popular regime. In the same way his unwavering support of Charles VIII, in spite of its purely religious motivation, had unavoidable political implications. With every honourable intention to limit himself to the part of friar and prophet he was pushed into the arena of politics to sustain the cause for which he believed he was sent by God. As a result, although not intentionally a politician, he succeeded in offending powerful political forces, which by finally combining against him proved his undoing.¹⁹

The alliance with Charles VIII was continued by Florence after the execution of Savonarola. The alliance ultimately led to the loss of the republic's independence. The constitutional government developed after 1494 eventually fell in 1512 when the Congress of Mantua agreed to the restoration of the Medici.

The Medici domination of Florence had begun with the return of Cosimo in 1434 to a stronger political position than he had occupied before his exile. This pattern was repeated in the restoration of 1512. The period of exile had been longer but it ended in the establishment of stricter control. The logical culmination of this process was to be reached in 1527, when the last attempt to create a Florentine republic was followed by the end of independence and the emergence of the Medici as grand dukes of Tuscany.²⁰

Politics and government in Florence during the fifteenth century represent an example of the manner in which economic power was aligned with political power. Despite the overwhelming influence of the Medici family, however, the older determinants of power, basically related to family and lineage, remained a powerful consideration. Cosimo's careful masking of the extent of his control illustrates this point, and the Pazzi conspiracy during Lorenzo's tenure shows that a combination of powerful families could still affect the Medici control. However, as Gilmore points out, the medieval background of Florence, and Italy

in general, provided, to a large extent, the means by which economic power could be converted under the right circumstances to political power.

The basis of the Medici position was the wealth derived from banking and control of the textile industry. But such wealth alone had no political opportunity except in the framework of institutions provided by the city state. In the feudal monarchy ... bankers like Jaques Coeur and even the Fuggers, who supplied the necessities of Charles V, had remarkably little influence on policy. Only in a political unit which was outside feudal and monarchic traditions was it possible for a family like the Medici to develop so comprehensive a political power.²¹

The experience of Florence was unique only insofar as one family maintained its dominant position for so long. In Venice control was vested in an oligarchy whose economic base resembled that of the Medici but who were able to govern as a class.

Venice was a republic and had been so for a considerably long period. The political situation in Venice may be explained partly by its geographical position. Venice was isolated from the mainland but easily accessible by sea. As such, the republic did not have to depend for protection upon the support of any major power that might have demanded in return the surrender of its independence. Venice's major concern was with relations with other states on a trade basis, and any alliances were economic alliances in the first place and only secondly, military. By the ninth century, after a brief period of incorporation into Charlemagne's empire, the latter never affecting the republic in any significant manner, Venice was essentially a free republic.

Thus Venice, from a remarkably early point in her history, was free in the first meaning of Renaissance liberty. Recognizing no political superior, she had been a discrete state of the Renaissance type long before the age of the Renaissance. She had also managed to remain remarkably aloof from the political struggles between medieval popes and emperors, and she took no interest

in the claims on either side to a universal authority seemingly irrelevant to her own existence.²²

The executive of the Venetian government was the doge and his immediate advisors, the latter acting as the real ruling body. The Great Council was composed of all the noble and patrician elements in Venice. This council held a position comparable to the greater councils of Florence; in theory it controlled public affairs, but in practice, owing to its cumbersome size, its main activity was the election of officials. The elected officials formed the Senate. The senate was elected in part for a term of a year, but in fact consisted of officials with more or less permanent tenure. These officials "managed the finances the public administration, decided peace and war, and debated treaties."²³

The senate worked under an executive committee composed of a select number of its members, which was called the college. ... parallel to the senate in power, were the famous ten who had originally been established as a kind of committee of public safety. These men were elected from among the greatest magistrates in the senate, and their principle function was the detection and punishment of any attempted treason in the state. In the end they became an all-powerful body whose precept gave them an excuse for interfering in many departments of Venetian government and life.²⁴

Venice was seen to be the model of a mixed state;

The Great Council was understood to represent the popular element in the constitution (though always in the limited sense in which Renaissance republicanism conceived of the populus), the Senate the aristocratic element, and the doge the monarchic.²⁵

The democratic foundations of the Venetian republic in actual fact were democratic only for the patrician class. After 1297 membership of the Great Council was effectively "closed."

In the following decades, ... the Great Council was indeed "closed." The original willingness to accept new members who were proposed by the electoral commission gradually disappeared, and laws were passed which made the requirements for approval of the proposed men increasingly difficult. Soon the only new nobles who were accepted were foreign princes and nephews of popes, who received what amounted to honorary grants of nobility. ... The dropping of

the practice of co-opting new members meant that the Great Council soon became a very exclusive body. At about the same time there was another, almost equally important development. The principle was established that all important government offices must be filled by members of the Great Council. From this time forward, the status of Venetian nobility, membership in the Great Council, and the right to take part in directing the government were synonymous.²⁶

The only exception to the policy of exclusiveness of the nobility and by implication, the government, were the ennoblements of 1381. Thirty men who had fought or had given large sums of money in the war of Chioggia were ennobled. From this point, "...for 265 years it was virtually impossible for even the wealthiest and most able noble Venetian citizen to enter the ruling class."²⁷

During the fifteenth century it becomes clear that the policy of exclusiveness for the nobility is deliberate. In 1403 two of the three presidents of the judicial body proposed in the Pien Collegio that the Great Council should accept individuals from the middle classes into the nobility, in proportion to every noble family that died out. In such a manner the noble class would be kept at full strength and the middle classes would have had the incentive of potential class mobility. However, the scheme was opposed and was never considered by the Great Council. The exclusiveness of the nobility was strengthened during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the nobility gradually perfected the rules designed to preserve the body from contamination. Regulations were established governing marriages with commoners, providing for careful examination of claims to nobility by men who came to Venice from Venetian possessions in the Mediterranean, and ensuring the exclusion of illegitimate sons from noble rights. In 1506 the government began to keep records of the births of noble male citizens and twenty years later it began to record the marriages of all noblemen. These records are in the well-known Golden Books.²⁸

The exclusiveness of the Venetian nobility is notable mainly because it began at a time when most other noble classes were, to some extent, flexible. At the same time, it managed to maintain its "closed" nature for a long period of time. In 1381, most other noble classes, particularly those in Italy, were undergoing transformations that continued for some time with the advent of the newly rich middle classes into the aristocracy. The case of the Medici family illustrates this point; it was not until 1378 that the Medici family made any impact upon Florentine society, and not until the early fifteenth century, after the acquisition of great wealth in the banking and trading business, did the Medici figure as one of the really prominent Florentine families.

As was indicated earlier, the major distinction between the republic of Florence and that of Venice, was the fact that the noble class in the latter was able to function as a group in the conduct of government.

... the Venetian nobles recognized no superior, nor was there any legal hierarchy of status among them. Every noble was equal, and the members of the Great Council sat where they pleased, in no special order, at its meetings. The collective status of the Venetian aristocracy was based on a political authority exercised in common, and distinctions among them were the product only of disparities in ability and wealth.

Nobility in Venice was thus the special mode employed by Venetian society to define active citizenship, a condition everywhere restricted in one fashion or another.²⁹

The solidarity of the governing class is further illustrated in the fact that there are very few individuals who achieved fame on their own merits in Venetian history.

Comparison with other communities sets off the peculiar coherence of Venetian society. This coherence is evident not only in the relative absence of internal dissension but also in the relative

scarcity of prominent individuals who achieved fame in Venetian history by their personal exploits. ... In spite of its title, Marcello's Lives of the Doges, first published at the beginning of the sixteenth century is less a collection of biographies than a chronicle of events conveniently organized according to the doges under whom they occurred; ...³⁰

The relative lack of internal dissension in the Venetian republic may be accounted for, partly, by her geographical isolation from the mainland. The importance of the sea to trade provided a common unifying element in the republic in that all members, including the aristocracy, had some sort of interest in trading. At the same time the absence of a landed nobility with old feudal rights meant that a disruptive element that other states had to cope with was not a problem for Venice.

The location of Venice also contributed to the homogeneity of her population and hence to internal peace. Cut off from the landed nobility of the mainland, a group elsewhere so destructive of domestic order, and able to dispense with a native military class, her easy access to the sea could be exploited jointly by all elements in Venetian society. Eventually the necessity to develop and maintain an elaborate system of canals, dikes, drainage projects, and other hydraulic works also required of the entire Venetian populace a high degree of cooperation and a sophisticated set of administrative agencies dedicated to purposes all Venetians could respect and support and from whose activities all profited. Thus, along with its other benefits, geography provided the social foundations for a unity based on common interests that goes far to account for the remarkable stability and continuity in Venetian political history.³¹

In contrast to the revolutionary movements and changes of control in Florence during the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, Venice was remarkably stable.

The progress of the Venetian governing class takes a decisive turn in the early fifteenth century. Prior to this period the Venetian aristocrat had been rather unique by virtue of the fact that his wealth was almost exclusively bound up in trade. In contrast to other noble

and aristocratic classes the Venetian did not have ties with the land.

Although the trend in most other Italian states was an influx of newly rich merchants into the ruling and patrician classes, the rich merchant with aristocratic pretensions soon consolidated his wealth and hopefully his position with the acquisition of land.

Not only the merchant politicians but also the lesser merchant capitalists had found their ultimate security by clothing their wealth in the sanction of older forms of social and economic power. In other words, they bought land. Almost everywhere in Europe there was a constant attempt by those who had amassed some capital in urban enterprise to buy themselves a property in the country, which in the space of a few generations would convey that title to respectability, if not to nobility, to which they aspired.³²

The alliance with Florence in 1425, as mentioned earlier, meant that for Venice the politics of the mainland increased in importance.

... before the end of the fourteenth century ambitious despots on the mainland were compelling the Venetians to abandon their traditional isolation from Italian politics, if only because trade routes by land were necessary to complement trade routes by sea. The conquest of Padua and Verona first established Venice on the terraferma, and the possession of these territories in turn exposed her to the aggression of Milan. The Venetian alliance with Florence in 1425 may be taken to mark the practical end of Venetian isolation, although it persisted as an ideal. From this data Venice, ... was clearly an Italian power, and Italian politics was henceforth of crucial importance to the Republic.³³

During the course of the fifteenth century Venice was as aggressive as the other Italian states in the acquisition of territory, and managed to acquire considerable assets on the mainland. The land acquired was absorbed by the Venetian aristocracy.

By 1446 Paduans claimed ... that a third of Padovano was held by the Venetian nobility. The transformation of many Venetian patricians into a landed aristocracy was chiefly the work of the sixteenth century, but a social change of revolutionary implications had been started.³⁴

The gradual change in the status of the Venetian aristocracy had implications for their impact upon the arts; however, more immediately

the change signified a more concrete grounding of the caste-like character of the class. The acquisition of land provides a readily seen estimation of the individual's social standing far better than the estimation of fluctuating fortunes in trade.

Whatever the defects of a closed class system it worked very well for Venice for a considerable period of time. Although the most important functions of the government were in the hands of the aristocracy, the traditions of service to the Republic ensured a ready supply of patrician talent to fulfill the various state requirements. The young Venetian nobleman was expected to be both successful in business and to maintain at all times the interests of the state. An indication of the devotion to public service is to be found in the Venetian ambassadorial service. By the fifteenth century Venice had envoys in most of the European courts. The envoys were selected from the members of the patrician oligarchy and they were required to send detailed weekly dispatches to the Venetian council. The amount of information accumulated by the Venetian government gave them an unprecedented position in terms of their foreign policy; they always had up-to-date and detailed surveys of the international scene.

At the height of the system an ambassador was accredited to a foreign government for not more than three years, lest he became too attached to his new environment and lose sight of the honor and advantage of his own government. In addition to the regular dispatches he was required upon his return to deliver a relation to the doge and senate giving a summary account of his mission and describing his journey in some detail.³⁵

Considerable attention has been paid in this section to the political climate of the two republics. The reason for the detailed discussion lies in the importance placed upon public service by both Florence and Venice during this period and the different directions

that this concern took. The differences, on evaluation, tend to illustrate what Ferguson has called the "transitional" nature of the fifteenth century.³⁶ Neither Venice nor Florence entirely abandon certain of the medieval political forms. Although participation on the part of the citizens is a republican and Renaissance ideal, this participation in both cases is severely curtailed. In Florence the fiction of democratic government is maintained in the face of control by the Medici, although the aristocratic conduct of Piero de' Medici and his aloofness from the lower classes, in contrast to his predecessors, contributed as much to his downfall in 1494 as his surrender to the French. At the same time his successor, Savonarola, is more "medieval" in his attitude than the oligarchic control that went before. With respect to Venice, oligarchic control is maintained and consolidated throughout the fifteenth century. The subordination of the individual in Venetian politics and other areas of life is in contradiction to the republican and humanist ideal of self-determination.

The following sections will deal with the character of economic, family and religious institutions in the two republics. Consideration of the meaning of the analyses in these sections for the ideal types formulated by Sorokin will be reserved for Chapter Six.

Economic Trends in Florence and Venice during the Fifteenth Century

The magnificence of Renaissance investment in "culture" in Italy does not coincide with a period of economic expansion. On the contrary, as Lopez points out, the Renaissance period was one of great depression followed by only a moderate recovery.³⁷ Economic expansion in Italy occurred prior to the fifteenth century, and during the latter period

fluid wealth became increasingly scarce.

... the aggregate capital of the main house and seven of the eight branches of the Medici bank in 1458 was less than 30,000 florins, whereas the capital of the Peruzzi bank in the early fourteenth century had risen above the 100,000 florin mark. Yet the Medici company in the Renaissance towered above all other Florentine companies, whereas the medieval Peruzzi company was second to that of the Bardi. Similarly, the combined fortunes of the three richest members of the Medici family in 1460 were valued at only fifteen per cent more than the fortune of one Alberti merchant a hundred years earlier.³⁸

In other words, the Renaissance, and in particular the fifteenth century, was not the economically prosperous period that traditional accounts, such as Burckhardt and von Martin, may have implied. The various economic setbacks during the fifteenth century should be understood in terms of the trends that preceded it and resulted in its particular economic forms.

It has been indicated earlier that the expansion of commercial activity, starting in the twelfth century, had a profound effect upon Italy. In particular, Venice profited from the opening of various trade routes and became the intermediary between western and central Europe and the middle and far East. Venice had only one other major industry that supplemented her dependence upon trade, that is, ship-building. A certain amount of silk manufacture and luxury goods were also produced, and during the fifteenth century the government tried to stimulate the small woollen industry, but the major economic resource was trade and the related industries that went with a maritime economy.

The exclusive nature of the Venetian economy had detrimental effects during the latter part of the fifteenth century. Two factors aided the decline of the economy; the expansion of Turkish power in the Levant and Eastern Mediterranean, and the Portuguese discovery

of a new trade route to India and the East Indies via the Cape of Good Hope. The first factor threatened the Venetian colonial empire, and the second factor threatened to destroy the position of the Mediterranean as the channel of intercontinental trade. Both factors, therefore, threatened the Venetian trading position.³⁹ The attempts to diversify the economy by government aid to the woollen industry provided, in the long run, no solution to the gradual decline of the Venetian economy. As Lane points out, during the second half of the fifteenth century there was a decline in Venetian shipbuilding. "As this time when the wealth of Venice was the envy of all Christendom there was a weakening of the maritime activity by which the republic had risen to splendour."⁴⁰

The concentration upon one economic resource had repercussions on the interests of the Venetian nobility. The wealth of the nobility was founded upon commerce, and "By law and by custom, most of this international trade was in the hands of Venetian noblemen."⁴¹ There were essentially two careers open to the Venetian noblemen: trade or public service. Participation in one career did not mean exclusion from the other, and in fact, the financial resources required for public service made some connection with trade more or less obligatory.

Whatever its origins, the Venetian ruling group was soon committed to trade; the ancient lineage steadily gave way to wealth as a major source of political influence. Some degree of wealth, though not necessarily enormous riches, was essential in Venice for a significant political career. Wealth was needed first for the extensive education prerequisite to holding the most important offices in the government, and it was even more necessary to hold the coveted ambassadorships and governorships in which expenses exceeded income and which were often essential to influence at home.⁴²

Setbacks in trade and commerce were a further inducement to the nobility's investment in land.

Given the nature of the Venetian ruling class, and the fact that the majority of noblemen had some interest in trade, the control of the maritime economy by the government is not surprising. The Senate acted as a control over the interpretation of supply and demand. "Not bargaining between shippers expressing the demand for cargo space and shipowners representing the available supply determined where these ships should sail and on what terms, but the votes of the Senators."⁴³ The position of the Senate with regard to maritime regulations indicates the coherence of Venetian society, mentioned in the previous section.

At Venice the authority of the Senate prevented the formation of any permanent special organizations corresponding to the regulated or joint-stock companies. All the merchant nobles of Venice operated as one large regulated company of which the board of directors was the Senate. At Genoa and Portugal there existed ... private or semi-private associations through which merchants could provide by collective action on a large scale for the defense of the voyages in which they were particularly interested, but not in Venice. To the Venetians their Senate seemed fitted to act as a sort of board of directors for each of the several aggregations of merchants who were engaged on the same voyage in substantial numbers and needed to take joint measures for protection.⁴⁴

Not all of the noble class were wealthy but the government provided special opportunities for impoverished noblemen. Each of the merchant galleys, the largest ships and the ones that carried the most expensive cargoes, had to carry a certain number of "bowmen of the quarterdeck."

The post was a sort of socialized apprenticeship to trade and to the sea. The young nobles were distinguished from the common bowmen by being given places at the captain's mess in company with the officers and merchants. Thus they were thrown into company with older men of their own class accustomed to the sea and to foreign market places. In spite of the doubtful value of their services, the youths received a wage, their keep for the voyage, and the right to load some cargo without paying freight.⁴⁵

The protective measures instituted by the government to further

trade had an effect upon the amount of wealth the individual could accumulate.

... the commercial policies of the Republic prevented the accumulation of huge fortunes by individuals; the most profitable ventures were broadly collective, and the government retained ownership of the largest galleys.⁴⁶

The galleys referred to above, were the largest ships and were designed primarily for war, although they were also trading vessels. The large galleys had a monopoly of the transport of light cargo, such as spices, as opposed to the smaller round ships that carried the heavy cargoes on short trips. It was the galleys that carried the more precious cargo, and although they were of secondary importance to the Venetian shipbuilding industry in general, they were important in maintaining Venice's position as the leading "world market" of the fifteenth century. The great galleys were built by the State, whereas the round ships were built by private enterprise in private shipyards.

One important area in which Venice differed from Florence was the question of interest or usury. As will be seen, the question of money acquired through interest bearing ventures was regarded in an ambiguous light by the Florentines. However, the Venetians had no medieval scruples regarding usury.

... the freedom Venetians generally enjoyed from such restrictions on the taking of interest as frequently hampered business elsewhere; money lenders were not prosecuted in Venice before the fourteenth century, and then only for charging excessive rates.⁴⁷

The lack of concern regarding the traditional problem for the merchant and banker in the late Middle Ages, and the early commercial advance of Venice, with the governmental supervision of commerce, seem to indicate the secular nature of Venetian society and its distance from medieval forms. During the fifteenth century, despite the reversals in

trade and the economy generally, Venice appears "more modern" in character than, for example, Florence. Nevertheless, the economy was based exclusively upon the maritime successes of the late middle ages, and the political changes in Europe during the fifteenth century with their effects upon European economy found the Republic unable to adjust in the long run. The increased investment in land during the fifteenth century on the part of the noble class was a stop-gap measure that only tied up capital that in the past had been used to the benefit of the individual and the Republic.

The close relationship between the economy and the governing class that characterized the Venetian state, is also found in Florence.

The greater fluidity of the city-state organization thus permitted the representatives of economic power to attain direct political influence. The Medici provide perhaps the most outstanding example of the transition from banking to political control. The amassing of a fortune was the prelude to political office and finally to the papacy and a hereditary duchy. The Venetian oligarchy for many years illustrated a similar process.⁴⁸

The economic strength of Florence was centered in three areas: the textile industry, the trade in textiles and other products, and in banking. By the early fourteenth century, the upper-middle class merchants had displaced the old feudal nobility in control of the Florentine state, and with the exception of the ciompi revolt in 1383, it was this class that retained both political and economic power in Florence.

During the fifteenth century, however, the Florentine economy, like that of Venice, was undergoing reversals.

At first sight, however, the position in the first decades of the fifteenth century seemed a favourable one. Florence had now secured an outlet to the sea, which greatly stimulated trade with the East; the Florentine bourgeoisie were enjoying another brief spell of prosperity, and also felt themselves supreme in political life. But this well-being was only apparent. On closer examination, unmistakable signs of decay are revealed in the structure of Florentine capitalism.⁴⁹

During this period the woollen industry suffered from Flemish competition and in certain countries importing Florentine cloth was prohibited.

After 1420 especially, the cloth manufacture steadily declined; the average yearly production sank to 20,000 pieces, and the number of workshops fell from 279 in 1380 to only 180 in 1427. Protective tariffs were introduced (1393, 1426) in order to retain at least the home market.⁵⁰

The increased demand and manufacture of luxury goods, such as silk and brocade, became more important to the economy but the production of luxury textiles did not compensate for the reversals in the woollen industry.

By the fourteenth century the Florentine bankers had been amongst the most important financiers in Europe.

The same Florentine citizens who were the world's greatest industrialists and merchants were also its chief bankers. The trading offices of the Florentine firms throughout the world were at the same time banks of exchange. Production, trade, and money-lending were all in the same hands. The unparalleled world-embracing power of the Florentine upper middle class was based on this combination.⁵¹

However, by the middle of the fourteenth century the banking business had also begun to decline. In 1343 and 1346 two of the largest Florentine banking houses went bankrupt, the Bardi and the Peruzzi. These failures had repercussions on the middle classes' investments and the Republic took a long time to recover from the effects. As was indicated earlier, there is evidence that in terms of the fortunes to be made in banking, the fifteenth century banker such as the Medici did not have the assets of the late thirteenth century Bardi or Peruzzi houses.

The financial reversal was accompanied by a consolidation of wealth in Florence in the hands of fewer families. The economic power of a few families reinforced the control they were able to exert over Florentine politics during the fifteenth century. The rise of the

Medici to power may be accounted for, in large part, by their financial importance to Florence during the fifteenth century. The Florentine branch of the Medici was mainly concerned with banking, other branches concentrated on other aspects of trade, production, and exports; for example, the English branch was mainly concerned with the export of wool and cloth. The recall of Cosimo de' Medici from exile in 1434 was partly related to the fact that the removal of his banking business to Venice in the previous year had severely affected the Florentine economy.⁵²

The financial importance of the Medici family to Florence is further indicated by the confusion of the personal fortunes of the family and the state finances. "The beginning of this confusion went back to the days of Cosimo, to the possible advantage at that time of the public treasury, as Cosimo frequently came to its relief with advances from his private purse."⁵³ The confusion between the family finances and those of the state continued under the rule of Lorenzo, and the reversals of the Medici London branch in 1470, the Bruges branch in 1477, and that of Lyons in 1483, gave rise to rumours that Lorenzo had diverted public funds to his private use in the protection of his banking interests. Historians have not uncovered any definite evidence of malpractice in this regard, but the reversals illustrate the precarious nature of the Florentine economy during the late fifteenth century.⁵⁴ The Medici bank was the most powerful bank in Florence, if not in Italy, at this period. However, with the expulsion of Piero in 1494, the bank collapsed which, in contrast to the position in which Florence found itself during the exile of Cosimo, made it obvious that the importance of Florence as a financial center was in decline.⁵⁵

... it is clear that his (Lorenzo) enterprises owed their continued existence in his day less to his business acumen than to

his political standing and prestige. As soon therefore as his son Piero lost his authority by being driven out of Florence (1494), the great bank with its network of connections throughout the known world collapsed over night. The history of the Medici as bankers had come to an end.⁵⁶

As was indicated earlier in the present section, the Florentine merchant and banker had greater difficulty reconciling the taking of interest than his Venetian equivalent. Many of the early humanist works and the diaries and accounts of the merchants themselves are justifications for the practice of lending at interest.⁵⁷ These justifications indicate not only the political importance of wealth but also its moral status. A distinction was made between "honourable" and "dishonourable" wealth.

Florence as a commercial city held a critical view of dishonest business activity.

Florentine feeling against usury and swift gain was rooted in a strong medieval tradition, but one may also suppose that if formed part of the natural reaction of a society where trade and finance dominate economic life. Seen in this light, Florentine indignation against immoral business procedure seems to have been a form⁵⁸ of coercion such as any society may require for its own survival.

But the acquisition of wealth was distinguished according to its scale and its relationship to factors other than "mere" wealth. International trade was exempt from the moral censure implied in the condemnation of usury. "One of the common themes of the time was that trade on a large scale gave strength to the Republic--indeed, was the foundation of its greatness."⁵⁹ Civic virtue in Florence was not only a factor of political competence, it was also related to economic position and the means by which the position was secured.

By the fifteenth century, the Florentine upper class had started to invest in land like their Venetian counterparts, and by 1427 there

is evidence that certain members of the upper class had reached the position akin to landed nobility.

The reports for the catasto of 1427 make it perfectly clear that some of the city's inhabitants lived entirely or largely on the rents from their lands. A man who had neither trade nor profession and whose landed rents accounted for the bulk of his income was known as a scioperato. Four to six medium-sized farms (poderi) ranked him among the upper 8 per cent of all taxpayers. The scioperato's place in Florentine society, his station in life, equaled that of the well-to-do merchant. There was constant inter-marriage between the two groups; moreover, scioperati could be the sons of merchants, so that the difference between the two (apart from the occupational one) was best distinguishable in political terms.⁶⁰

The landowning upper-classes did not have the same influence as the merchants over the government mainly because the Florentine constitution assigned a dominant role to the guilds. However, by the fifteenth century the power of the guilds had been effectively broken. Depending on the influence the family name carried in Florentine political affairs, combined with the greater number of landowning merchants, the members of this class reinforced with their influence the oligarchic tendencies in Florentine politics.

Italy during the fifteenth century presents a contradictory economic picture. There appears to have been a gradual decline in the economic resources, not only in Italy but elsewhere in Europe, at the same time an increase in "conspicuous consumption." The title given to Lorenzo, the Magnificent, is an indication of the style of life during this period. In both Venice and Florence there are indications that expenditures on daily living surpassed those of previous eras. The expenditures are not entirely due to the increased cost of money.

... the first known Venetian statute aimed at controlling luxurious living was passed as early as 1299, and sumptuary laws were passed on several occasions in the fourteenth century. But it was in the fifteenth century that there came rapid changes

in clothing styles and the development of new tastes which began seriously to tax the abilities of Venetian legislators to control what they considered excessively luxurious living.⁶¹

The medieval restrictions on excessive expenditures were prompted primarily by a religious motive that luxurious living was an offense to God and consumed wealth. The laws of the fifteenth century were more concerned, however, with the dissipation of the Venetian nobleman's private fortune.

The consumption of family wealth was dangerous partly because it might lead to oligarchical power for those who kept their fortunes, and partly because less wealth meant smaller tax revenues, but principally because it so impoverished men that they and their descendants could not afford to serve in the most important public offices.⁶²

The Florentine government did not place any restrictions upon excessive expenditures, but during the fifteenth century the same concern was expressed regarding the life style of the upper classes.

... the new emphasis on heavy spending is best seen in the evolving style of the fifteenth-century Florentine house. It was larger and more "showy" than its fourteenth-century counterpart, the construction of which was simple, functional, and severe (part of it was often used as a warehouse). The Quattrocento house, on the other hand, was more ornate both within and without. It called for elaborate ironwork and carefully-hewn stone. It often had a decorative cornice. Doors, ceilings, and fireplaces were highly finished. And the more prominent families set of their furnishings with panel paintings and later with sculptures.⁶³

The heavy expenditures were confined, largely, to the upper classes, and the increased cost of money placed a burden upon the lower classes. The latter, in both Venice and Florence, were politically disenfranchised, and the economic reversals of the fifteenth century combined with the increasingly heavy taxation required by the Republics for war and diplomacy, meant the development of a gradually impoverished urban proletariat.

Throughout the discussion on the economic character of Venice and

Florence during the fifteenth century reference has been made to the gradual economic decline apparent in both cases. This decline was not confined to Italy. Various events during the preceeding period indicate that the European economy in general suffered a reversal. To begin with, the plague in the mid-fourteenth century depleted the European population which never regained its former position because of the various epidemics that followed. The decline in population was particularly noticeable in the urban areas.

... Florence in the time of Dante had more than 100,000 inhabitants, but no more than 70,000 in the time of Boccaccio, and approximately the same number in the time of Michelangelo. Zurich, a typical middle-size town, fell from 12,375 inhabitants in 1350 to 4,713 in 1468. Similar declines can be measured for the larger part of towns and countries.⁶⁴

The improved means of transportation and the organization of international trade which marked the later part of the Middle Ages was increasingly frustrated during the fifteenth century by the consolidation of political and economic frontiers.

Shortly before the Renaissance began, a Florentine merchant had described the road from the Crimea to Peking as perfectly safe to westerners ... But during the Renaissance, East and West were split deeply, first by the collapse of the Mongolian Empire in the Far and Middle East, then by the Turkish conquest in the Near East. ... Within Europe each state manifested its incipient centralization by raising economic barriers against all of the others.⁶⁵

The barriers to trade were reinforced by the continued inflation during the fifteenth century. During the Middle Ages the expansion of credit facilities and increased coinage aided the commercial revolution, but the inflation already apparent during the late Middle Ages increased during the Renaissance. The increased cost of money was made worse by the increased costs of war, which, apart from a brief interval during the second half of the fifteenth century, were almost continuous in Europe.

Taxation also increased as a consequence of inflation, and rose to a high level during the fifteenth century. The attempt to reorganize the national debt, the Monte, during Lorenzo de' Medici's era, was occasioned by the disastrous state of the Florentine economy at this time. The high taxation required by the Republic to meet its commitments affected the possibilities of economic expansion.

On economic life the result must have been a continual draining of capital from the lower orders of citizens and a rapid accumulation in the higher ranks. What this meant in terms of arrested industrial expansion still needs further investigation and it could possibly be shown that the financial structure of the state in the fifteenth century effectively prevented capital accumulation among those classes who were most directly interested in increasing production.⁶⁶

The decline in population, which affected the market as much as the controls over imports and the high taxation, were also accompanied by decreased mobility for the lower classes. In the past the urban areas had absorbed some of the surplus population from the surrounding countryside and there were opportunities for advancement from the ranks of the lower classes. Increasingly, during the fifteenth century, these avenues of mobility were blocked, mainly by the increasing conservatism of the guild organizations. The guilds had become rigid hierarchies and in most cases only the son of the master could hope to rise from the journeyman position.

Below the classes that had acquired some commercial or industrial wealth were the largest groups in the population, which were of course lowest in the social hierarchy. By the beginning of the sixteenth century there was in many towns the nucleus of an urban proletariat. No longer was it possible to go from apprentice through the state of journeyman to master, as it had been in the earlier medieval period. In many cases the guilds were now in the hands of the masters alone, and large groups of journeymen organized themselves like modern workers for an improvement in wages and conditions. This was particularly the case in such industries as printing and textiles. In addition to those who were connected with organized industry there was in the major urban centers an

increasing group of casual wage-earners and simple poor, whose existence was obviously closely related to the character assumed by social, political, and even religious agitation in the sixteenth century.⁶⁷

The picture of a "golden age" found in many of the early works on the Renaissance, is misguided in relation to the economic foundations of the style of life. The extravagance mentioned earlier was confined to a small number of individuals, and the opportunity to indulge in the humanist pursuit of learning and the cultivation of the "arts of the gentleman," were equally circumscribed.⁶⁸

The situation in Florence is summed up in the ricordo of Guicciardini:

19. The people of Florence are generally poor. But our style of living is such that everyone wants very much to be rich. And so it is hard to preserve freedom in our city, for this appetite makes men pursue their personal advantage without respect or consideration for the public honor and glory.⁶⁹

Family and Social Life in Florence and Venice during the Fifteenth Century

In both Venice and Florence the family held an important position in terms of its control over the particular individual.

The family in fifteenth century Florence stands between the individual and society. It mediates and determines his relations with the world at large, for he confronts the social system conditioned by his family's position in society, and his place in public life is governed by the political place of his family.⁷⁰

A similar situation applies in Venice. "In Venice, it was the class of the family, not the individual that predominated."⁷¹ The Venetian family had certain clan features. A Venetian nobleman was likely to have numerous close and distant family connections in the city, and it was common for all members of the immediate family to occupy the same place.

In the palace where he lived there might be three or four generations of his own branch of the family. Unmarried brothers and

sisters would have their own apartments in the palace on upper floors, while a brother who was married lived with his family in rooms on the second or third floor, which was known as the piano nobile.⁷²

The coordination of the Venetian family is an expression of the coordination of a class in the government.

The solidarity of the family was further emphasized in Venice by the various business practices. The most common form of business organization was a family partnership, a fraterna. Venetian law took this form of organization into account, family members doing business together and living under the same roof were entitled to full partnership in the business.

Usually all property inherited from the father was entered on the account books of the fraterna. Expenditures for food and household furnishings, as well as business expenses, were recorded in the ledger along with the sales and purchases of merchandise. Quite evidently this was an organization which demanded a high degree of co-ordination of effort within the family and agreement as to family aims. Young noblemen participated in the family's business affairs at the ages of fifteen or sixteen and could qualify for trading voyages even at that early age.⁷³

The importance of the family for the Venetian nobleman reinforced the political traditions of the Republic based on group participation and the subordination of the individual to the State. "The government recognized and exploited the solidarity of the Venetian family by holding all its members responsible for the misdeeds of an individual."⁷⁴

The closeness of the Venetian family expressed in economic, and political terms, as well as social terms, is further emphasized in the practice of agreements regarding marriage. Agreements were often made as to who should marry and who should remain single and serve the common interest of the family in other ways. This practice appears to have been started after 1450. It is suggested by Davis that the origin of the practice lies partly with the economic factor, that is, the shrinking

of the family income during the fifteenth century.⁷⁵ It would appear that the motivation of preserving the wealth within the family and the desire to continue the family line may have prompted such decisions.

... it was not always the oldest who took a wife. Frequently this member of the family devoted his career to government service and chose to remain single, the better to devote all his efforts to the state. In a considerable number of cases it was the youngest son who married. This may have resulted from a habit of delaying any marriage until all were of age, by which time it may have appeared wisest to let the most vigorous marry in the interests of preserving the family line.⁷⁶

The emphasis upon family tradition was as strong in Florence as it was in Venice, but the emphasis did not include the strong economic bonds found in the Venetian family. Wealth was important and the manner in which it was acquired defined the social place of the family in general. However, the reversals for many of the older aristocratic families in the later fourteenth century and the example of the Medici families mitigated any extreme social sanctions against the nouveau rich, and equally against the impoverished nobleman.

The honor or disgrace suffered by the individual was reflected upon his family; and equally, the illustrious family conferred its distinction upon all its members. Crimes committed by a member of the family were also imposed upon the other members, thus, when an individual was exiled from Florence for some, usually political, crime, his family would join him. The political affiliation of the head of the family was also presumed to be that of the rest of the members. Family association in the above manner also had its advantages, at least for the upper classes.

Finding himself legally embroiled in Rome or Venice, the simple Florentine artisan could make no effective appeal to Florence, owing to his political and social obscurity. But men with names like Soderni, Castellani, Peruzzi, Strozzi, or Guicciardini enjoyed the benefits of a family tradition, and travelled from one

side of Italy to the other with the knowledge that their families would, if necessary, come to their aid through the diplomatic channels of the Florentine Republic.⁷⁷

The individual who was prominent in public affairs bound the family closely to the state.

Often, indeed, family affairs and affairs of state were so closely bound that they tended to merge. Before Pisa surrendered to Florence in 1406, the Florentines had to guarantee that they would live up to their promises by turning a group of hostages over to Messer Giovanni Gambacorta. The hostages, twenty youths, were the scions of leading Florentine families, the sons in fact of the architects of Florentine foreign policy.⁷⁸

In the aristocratic Florentine family, responsibility, particularly in political matters, was collective. This collective responsibility tends to contradict one of Burckhardt's themes, as Martines points out.

Since the nature of the upper-class family was such that each of its members gave moral qualities to the whole, and the whole to the individual, no man in this order of society could easily free himself from what was commonly supposed about his family. Consequently, contrary to one of Jacob Burckhardt's themes, the prominent Florentine did not enter society, nor circulate in it, as a "free individual," hurt or elevated purely by how own vices or talents.⁷⁹

The above is not meant to imply that the individual from a family of no importance in the city had a greater measure of freedom. Such an individual was free only in the politically and socially unimportant world of the non-aristocratic classes. Such an individual had no effective means by which to take advantage of his "freedom."

The importance of the family, and family tradition was reflected in the fifteenth century by the intense concern with family genealogies. "As we move into the fifteenth century, the self-conscious study of family trees grows at a rapid pace, until it seems to become the major 'historical' interest of upper-class Florence."⁸⁰ This interest indicates the increased class-consciousness of the upper classes, leading to the aristocratic society of the sixteenth century. Distinguished

social rank for the Florentine family rested upon the combination of wealth and a record of participation in the political affairs of the city. However, wealth and public office were not sufficient alone, they had to be combined over a long period of time.

Martines observes that elevated social position in Florence was based on four factors, some of which have been discussed above.

Broadly speaking, four factors were commonly taken to be important: honourably acquired wealth, a substantial record of service in public office, descent from an old Florentine family, and bonds of marriage with another family of some political and economic consequence. Possessed in full, these were the attributes which best conferred superior social rank, and the more a man lacked them the more humble or lowly was his social position.⁸¹

Marriage amongst the Florentine upper class was thus an important economic and political event. Marriage agreements were sealed by the usual financial arrangement agreed by the parties in the form of a dowry. The greater the dowry, the more likely the girl was able to marry according to the ambitions of her family. The importance of the financial arrangement in a marriage is illustrated by the fact that in many cases they were listed with the family accounts. The economic aspects of marriage alliances occasionally had political implications.

A family of the "better sort" faced economic and social ruin if, being burdened with debts, it also had to provide for several unmarried daughters. Their distress exposed the head of the family to temptations: he might be persuaded to sell his vote or influence in the governing councils in return for a loan which covered the dowry of one of his daughters. Similarly, a man in search of a wealthy bride might offer his political influence to an intermediary who helped negotiate a marriage involving a substantial dowry.⁸²

Because of the importance of family tradition and political standing, marriage amongst the upper class Florentines was as much a political and social alliance as a conjugal union. "This alliance was assumed to bind the fortunes of the two families in such a way that if one suffered

a political or economic reversal, the other also might be affected, or in any case called in to lend assistance."⁸³

Marriage ties, then, could work to the political advantage or disadvantage of a family, and the ruling oligarchy took a great interest in the alliances between important Florentine families. For example, after the conquest of Pisa the government enacted a law which taxed any marriage between citizens of Pisa and Florence. The 1,000 florins tax, in practice, prevented such marriages.

The intent of this tax was to help preserve a uniform Florentine treatment of all Pisans, who after all were a subject people. But to maintain a true uniformity of rule would have been impossible if the ruling families of Florence had been allowed to form marriages with the Pisans at will.⁸⁴

In both the Florentine and Venetian republics, family life was closely related to the economic and political factors. Marriages among the upper classes could be an avenue of mobility, a political expedient, or an economic means to protect a family tradition. The importance of the family tradition, particularly in Florence, is illustrated by the fact that those members of old families that managed to recoup their fortunes even by the practice of usury, did not forfeit their social rank. Even "dishonourably" acquired wealth was excusable for the family with a distinguished lineage.

Religious and Philosophical Attitudes in Florence and Venice during the Fifteenth Century

Some mention has been made earlier to the republican ideal to which both Florence and Venice ascribed. The republican ideal is closely linked with the development of humanist studies. Humanism reflected the values and ideals expressed in republicanism. According to Baron, the Visconti crisis at the turn of the century marks the

decisive victory for the Florentine humanists' republican ideals. The aim of Giagaleazzo Visconti, the Duke of Milan, was control of the northern Italian peninsular. By 1402 Visconti had managed to subdue all but Florence. Florence was surrounded and would have been subdued if the Duke had not died. However, the resistance on the part of the city is a crucial turning point, according to Baron.

From whatever side we approach Florentine conduct in 1402 we are thus led to the conclusion that, in the hour of crisis, moral and ideological forces were at work to help the Florentines pursue a course different from that of the rest of Italy. In all the other Italian city-republics, readiness to obey a unifying "new Caesar" made citizens and publicists forget their pride in a past of independence and civic freedom. In Florence, in the summer of 1402, this pride became more vigorous than ever at a unique moment unparalleled in her history: ... When the crisis had passed, the real issue of the Florentine-Milanese contest stood revealed: out of the struggle had come the decision that the road was to remain open to civic freedom, and to a system of independent states, which became a part of the culture of the Italian Renaissance.⁸⁵

The encouragement given to the Florentines, as Baron implies, by the humanists, is not surprising when their position in Florentine political life is considered. Most of the early humanist writers held important political posts in Florence. For example, Coluccio Salutati was chancellor from 1375, Leonardo Bruni held a position in the Curia for many years, as did Poggio Bracciolini. The humanists were closely allied with the ruling class in Florence; "... the world of the humanist was circumscribed by the city's dominant social and political groups. He was best known to the members of this class; it was here his civic and social standing were determined."⁸⁶

What the humanist movement stood for is a matter of debate, basically because there is no single theme common to all of its members. Kristeller gives some indication of this point.

... I should like to understand Renaissance humanism, at least in its origin and in its typical representatives, as a broad cultural

and literary movement, which in its substance was not philosophical but had important philosophical implications and consequences. I have been unable to discover in the humanist literature any common philosophical doctrine, except a belief in the value of man and the humanisites and in the revival of ancient learning. Any particular statement gleaned from the work of a humanist may be countered by contrary assertions in the writings of contemporary authors or even of the same author.⁸⁷

Part of the problem in any evaluation of the humanist movement is the question of interpretation. As Cassirer indicates, Burckhardt's interpretation of the Renaissance period ignores the philosophical developments of the period, and the characteristics of the period elaborated (for example, individualism, paganism, scepticism) do not apply to the humanists themselves when their lives are examined.⁸⁸

There are essentially two views of Italian humanism; one stresses the movement as a revival of classical studies, occasioned, in part, by the re-discovery of ancient Greek and Latin sources after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 when Byzantine scholars fled to Europe, and Italy in particular. The second interpretation sees humanism as the new philosophy of the Renaissance. This interpretation sees the movement as arising in opposition to medieval scholasticism. This idea is misplaced as both Cassirer and Kristeller illustrate. Scholasticism and humanism originated, in Italy, at about the same time and both were important during the Renaissance period.

It was precisely the Scholastic character of Renaissance philosophy that made it impossible to distinguish between philosophical and religious issues. The most significant and far-reaching works of philosophy in the Quattrocento are and remain essentially theology. Their entire content is concentrated in the three great problems: God, freedom, and immortality. The disputes between Alexandrists and Averroists at the University of Padua revolve around these problems. And they also form the core of the speculations of the Florentine Platonists.⁸⁹

The views of the humanist movement may be generally summarized as: first, a concern with man's place in the universe which, contrary to

some interpretations, does not necessarily imply an aetheist or pagan viewpoint. Secondly, they were concerned with man's relationship to the state, and in general expressed republican ideals based on their research and admiration for ancient Roman civic values, particularly those found in the works of Cicero. In this second concern the humanists were influential precisely because, as was indicated above, they were often participants in the government of the state.

The humanists also acquired considerable prestige and power through the places they held in the various professions. For the humanists were not only merely free-lance writers, as it is often asserted, and the case of Petrarch is by no means typical. Most of the humanists belonged to one of the three professional groups, and sometimes to more than one at the same time: they were teachers at the universities or secondary schools; or they were secretaries of princes or cities; or they were noble or wealthy amateurs who combined their business or political activities with the fashionable intellectual interests of their time.⁹⁰

Third, humanism was a literary movement emphasizing, at first, Latin, and by the mid-fifteenth century reviving the Florentine vernacular in the styles of Petrarch, Dante, and Boccaccio.

The influence of the humanists was more marked in Florence than in Venice, and possibly more than anywhere else in Italy during the fifteenth century.

Venice, ... was exposed to humanism early, but she failed to respond to it with an enthusiasm comparable to what it aroused in Florence. Under the influence of the Paduan humanist Mussato, humanistic attainments found a useful place in the Venetian government early in the fourteenth century. But in spite of Petrarch's close ties with Venice (where he was chiefly admired not as a classicist but as a lyric poet in the vernacular) humanism remained, in fourteenth-century Venice, primarily the possession of a narrow class of secretaries associated with the chancery. As a movement it failed to develop notable leaders comparable to the humanists of Florence after Petrarch, it continued to depend largely on foreign stimulation, and above all it failed to be taken up in any general way as the new culture of the patriciate.¹¹

Intellectually, Venice remained conservative, and the University of

Padua was not greatly concerned with humanist learning. As the University dominated the education of the Venetian patriciate, the government, for political reasons, did not encourage humanist tendencies to develop. It was in the later part of the fifteenth century that Venice became a center of humanist activity, but mainly because of the developing printing industry rather than any real attraction to its ideals.

There are several reasons for the superficial influence of humanism in Venice, as compared to Florence. First, humanism was vitally concerned with civic ideals and practical politics in Florence. The stability and homogeneity of the Venetian ruling group, with its long republic tradition and concern with public affairs meant that it was not attracted to the new values expressed in humanism. At the same time, the Venetian attitude to intellectual pursuits was one of tolerance. Philosophy or learning in general were only useful insofar as they served the interests of the Republic. Secondly, the humanist stressed the virtues of Roman society and the ancients.

But their peculiar vision of the past excluded the Venetians from any general participation in this positive estimate of antiquity, especially of ancient Rome. Venice, according to Venetian tradition, had not been founded by the virtuous Romans in the course of their vigorous expansion throughout Italy. On the contrary, she owed her existence to successful detachment from a Roman world whose disintegration proved that it had been, in some ultimate sense, a political failure.⁹²

The Venetians were unable to see themselves, as the Florentines did, as descendents of the ancient Romans about to resurrect their heritage.

The third reason for the relatively minor impact of humanism is related to Venice's attitude towards the Church. As Kristeller remarks, the assumption that humanism was anti-religious is biased.⁹³ Petrarch disliked scholastic theology but emphasized his religious convictions, and more particularly his admiration for the writings of Augustine.

It is also wrong, as Cassirer points out, to regard the church and religion in general as of little importance to the Renaissance.

During the Renaissance, the concern with practical politics and the problem of man's nature, corresponded closely with Augustine's views of the political world.

On a certain level, therefore, the essential difference between medieval and Renaissance politics may be seen as a conflict over the implications of the Augustinian dichotomy, which, ... was still an important influence on political discussion, ... Both positions appreciated the difference between the two cities, but they drew opposite conclusions. In accordance with its vision of reality as static, systematic, and orderly, the medieval mind could only regard the earthly city as essentially unreal; and it is proposed to restore its reality by subordinating politics to spiritual direction. ... But the Renaissance mind, with its very different perception of the problem rejected the possibility of such accommodation. Reason of state, in this view, could not be derived from eternal reason because eternal reason, given the variety and changeability of things and the limitations of man, was inaccessible.⁹⁴

The consequence of the Renaissance view of the world and religion resulted in a paradox. On the one hand the external structure of the church was expected to conform with the changeable nature of political reality, which was seen to be a reflection of the universe in general. At the same time, the church was expected to be aloof from the world, more spiritual, and thus able to claim unity and invulnerability to change.

The paradoxical view of the place of the church during the Renaissance provides some explanation for the reform movements such as Savonarola's, during the period, and also for the attempts to lessen the ties of the local clergy with Rome. The latter position implied a repudiation of the orderly, medieval hierarchy of authority, and in many states the clergy were denied any special privileges or status by virtue of their profession.

... the kingdom of the clergy was literally not of this world: and insofar as they needed to inhabit the earthly city, they were obligated to obey its ordinances.⁹⁵

In Florence, particularly during the fourteenth century, the city instituted many statutes that restricted clerical privileges. The clergy had to pay taxes to the civil government, they were subject to the jurisdiction of the civil courts, and appeals to the civil courts from the decisions of the church courts were allowed.

In Florence, concern with religion was basically related to concern with reforms of the church in the visible aspect (especially on the part of the humanists) rather than improvements in the spiritual sense. This concern was made more pressing by the censures the church was able to apply, through excommunication and interdict. These practical censure measures were not mere threats and stimulated the radical ecclesiastical reform movements of the late fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, particularly when the censure was used in relation to the practical politics of the papacy rather than to the spiritual needs of the local Florentine. Guicciardini's reflection upon the papacy is an indication of the concern with the state of the church and the clergy on earth.

28. I know of no one who loathes the ambition, the avarice, and the sensuality of the clergy more than I--both because each of these vices is hateful in itself and because each and all are hardly suited to those who profess to live a life dependent upon God. Furthermore, they are such contradictory vices that they cannot coexist in a subject unless he be very unusual indeed.

In spite of all this, the positions I have held under several popes have forced me, for my own good, to further their interests. Were it not for that, I should have loved Martin Luther as much as myself--not so that I might be free of the laws based on Christian religion as is generally interpreted and understood; but to see this bunch of rascals get their just deserts, that is, to either without vices or without authority.⁹⁶

In Venice, concern with religious and church matters was less than for Florence mainly because, from an early date, Venice had a great deal

of autonomy from Rome. The interest in Augustine and the reconciliation of Christian ideals with practical life that characterized some of the work of the Florentine humanists, is not, therefore, found in Venice.

The church, both in Venice and throughout her empire, was generally administered almost as though Rome did not exist, and also with little concern to preserve a distinction between clerical and lay responsibility. In Venice the nobility supervised ecclesiastical as well as secular administration. Numerous actions of the government, ... dealt with such sensitive religious questions as the acquisition and custody of relics, the content of sermons ... parish administration, and conventional discipline.⁹⁷

The government also had control of the appointments to the ecclesiastical benefices, from the patriarch to the most insignificant see. The law of 1391 confirmed the traditional practice whereby the Senate nominated a Venetian whose name was then submitted by the doge to the pope for confirmation.

Meanwhile the Senate wielded some additional control over major ecclesiastical appointments by retaining the right of investiture to the temporal endowments of benefices. Under these conditions, although the papacy could at times block the appointment of a nominee favored by Venice, it was unable to obtain bishoprics for its own candidates against Venetian opposition.⁹⁸

Venice also controlled the clergy after they had been appointed. Like Florence, Venice regarded the clergy as physical residents of the state and subject to the authority of the government like all other residents. They were expected to show loyalty to the Republic and the clergy were subject, like other subjects, to the authority of the secular courts. The Venetian Republic acknowledged the general spiritual leadership of the papacy, but not its right of administration outside Rome or its authority in practical politics. The government was aided in its attitude towards the papacy, the attitude resulting in many disputes with various popes and a history of excommunication and interdict, by the nature of the Venetian clergy.

... the upper clergy, both in Venice and her possessions, were generally in the first place Venetian nobles. Their education, their social world, and their attitudes both to the Venetian state and to the church were generally identical with those of the rest of the patriciate.⁹⁹

Although Venice did not respond with any enthusiasm to the new intellectual movements during the fifteenth century in the same way as Florence, Venice did express a central ideal of the Renaissance, that is, political liberty. The latter was related to a large measure of freedom of thought and expression. Although none of these ideals are discussed with any frequency by Venetians, the fact that they were so much a part of the traditional Venetian life may have precluded the need to give them expression to the same extent as Florence.

Conclusion

The philosophical and religious movements during the fifteenth century in Florence and Venice had certain implications for the arts, and also the role of the painter. The humanists' view of man, to a large extent, aided the elevation of the painters' role in the late fifteenth century. The changed relationship of man to God, expressed in the various reform movements of the period, and the increasing emphasis upon the need for greater spirituality and hence removal from earthly concerns on the part of the Church, accounts for some of the secularization of paintings.

Chapter Six examines the impact of the various religious, philosophical, political and economic aspects discussed in this chapter for the Florentine and Venetian painter.

FOOTNOTES

¹ See, for example, H. Baron, The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance (2 vols.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955); J.C. Davis, The Decline of the Venetian Nobility as a Ruling Class (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1962); F.C. Lane, Andrea Barbarigo, Merchant of Venice 1418 - 1449 (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1944); J.W. Thompson, The Literacy of the Laity in the Middle Ages (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1939); L. Martines, The Social World of the Florentine Humanists, 1390 - 1460 (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1963).

² Myron P. Gilmore, The World of Humanism 1453 - 1517 (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 109.

³ Wallace K. Ferguson, "Toward the Modern State," in The Renaissance, Wallace K. Ferguson et al., (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 19.

⁴ The phrase, "the age of despots" is a Burckhardtian phrase that was adopted by those authors who followed his analysis such as John Addington Symonds, The Renaissance in Italy (New York: Capricorn Books, 1961).

⁵ Myron P. Gilmore, The World of Humanism 1453 - 1517, p. 110.

⁶ W.J. Bouwsma, Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), p. 11.

⁷ Ibid., p. 13.

⁸ Ibid., p. 15.

⁹ Ferdinand Schevill, Medieval and Renaissance Florence (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1963), 2, 355.

¹⁰ Frederick Antal, Florentine Painting and its Social Background (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1947), p. 27.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 30.

¹² Myron P. Gilmore, The World of Humanism 1453 - 1517, p. 111.

¹³ Ibid., p. 112.

¹⁴ Frederick Antal, Florentine Painting and its Social Background, p. 20.

- ¹⁵ Ferdinand Schevill, The Medici (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), p. 71.
- ¹⁶ Myron P. Gilmore, The World of Humanism 1453 - 1517, p. 113.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁸ Ferdinand Schevill, Medieval and Renaissance Florence, 2, 445.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., 2, 447.
- ²⁰ Myron P. Gilmore, The World of Humanism, 1453 - 1517, p. 114.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² W.J. Bouwsma, Venice and the Defense of Republican Liberty, p. 54.
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³⁶ Wallace K. Ferguson, The Renaissance (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1954).

³⁷ Robert S. Lopez, "Hard Times and Investment in Culture," in The Renaissance, Wallace K. Ferguson, et al., (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1962).

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³⁹ See, B. Pullan, ed. Crisis and Change in the Venetian Economy in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (London: Methuen & Co., 1968).

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⁴⁹ Frederick Antal, Florentine Painting and its Social Background, p. 25.

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⁵¹ Ibid., p. 14.

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- 55 Ibid., 2, 400.
- 56 Ibid.
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CHAPTER SIX
ROLE OF THE PAINTER IN FIFTEENTH CENTURY
FLORENCE AND VENICE

In the previous sections the general socio-cultural nature of the fifteenth century in Florence and Venice was illustrated. In the present section the position of the painter during the fifteenth century will be examined. The discussion will be in two parts: the position of the painter with respect to his patrons and the general public for Florence and Venice, and secondly, the views expressed by painters themselves regarding their position.

The position and attitude of the patron to the painter is significant in that it reflects upon the painters' role. The social rank of the patron, in the fifteenth century, appears to have had some reflection upon the corresponding rank of the painter. Examination of the views expressed by the painters themselves is a more difficult problem because of the scarcity of sources. To some extent, the very fact that there are few commentaries, letters or diaries of painters available for the fifteenth century, is some indication of the painter's status. Articulation of the importance of the painting profession is largely found in the later part of the fifteenth century.

Despite the fact that Florence, in particular, was the center of a great deal of fifteenth century painting and technical developments in that art, very little work has been devoted to the position held by the painters. Many of the studies of aspects of fifteenth century Italy, and more especially studies of Florence, have mentioned the

position of the painter, if at all, with little modification of the Bruckhardian thesis of increased assertion and recognition of their position.¹ Consequently, despite the criticisms and qualifications of Burckhardt's thesis of increased individuality by historians, his impressions of the painter, or rather the artist in general, have undergone little modification.

When this impulse to the highest individual development was combined with a powerful and varied nature that had mastered all the elements of the culture of the age, then there arose the "all-sided man"--l'uomo universale--who belonged exclusively to Italy. ... in Italy at the time of the Renaissance, we find artists who created new and perfect work in all branches of the arts, and who also made the greatest impression as men. Others, outside the arts they practiced, were masters of a vast range of spiritual interests.²

The assumptions about the painter's "individuality" lead to assumptions regarding his status. The impetus of humanism and the Neo-platonists and their writings during the fifteenth century suggest that the painter's status has risen beyond that of the medieval craftsman.

... the painter, sculptor, and architect obtained recognition as educated men, as members of Humanist society. Painting, sculpture, and architecture were accepted as liberal arts, and are now grouped together as activities closely allied to each other and all differing fundamentally from the manual crafts. The idea of the 'Fine Arts' comes into existence this way, though a single phrase is not attached to them till the middle of the sixteenth century, when they come to be known as the Arti di disegno. At the same time critics begin to have the idea of a work of art as something distinct from an object of practical utility, as something which is justified simply by its beauty and which is a luxury product.³

Despite the assumptions regarding the improved social status of the painter, several factors should be considered which may alter the picture. First, the writings and commentaries of the humanists regarding the painter's position and the arts in general were theoretical exercises. Secondly, whatever impact the humanists had was confined to a small number of upper-class readers. And third, there is little evidence

of radically changed status in the few writings of fifteenth century painters. A fourth consideration relates to a distinction which should be made between the style of life and the style of work of the painter. The humanist commentaries relate to the painter's style of work, and although their praise of the painter's profession ultimately has some reflection upon their style of life this is not apparent during the fifteenth century. Titian may have become a Count of the Lateran Palace and a member of the imperial court of the Emperor Charles V, but this occurs at a much later date and is in fact one of the isolated examples of the painter's social mobility.

Numerous works discuss the change in the painter's position that is seen to begin during the fifteenth century in Italy.⁴ It is apparent that certain changes occurred in the organization of the guilds, in the system of patronage, and in the climate of opinion that influenced the patron's attitude towards the arts in general. However, the individuality of the painter which is associated with considerable artistic freedom was only applicable to a few artists who were well-received during their own lifetime, and their artistic freedom was still curtailed by the necessary presence of a patron. To a large extent, the idea of the artist, particularly the painter, as a "genius," and the conception of 'fine art' is an eighteenth century view, later elaborated by the Romantic credo of the nineteenth century of 'art for art's sake.'

The Attitude of the Patron and the Public to the Painter in Fifteenth Century

(a) Florence

It was indicated in a previous chapter that the artist, including the painter, generally held an inferior social position during the

Middle Ages. Painters were craftsmen who worked under the authority of the guild system and were largely dependent upon the patronage of the church, and only occasionally that of a rich lord, for commissions of any significant size.

Some indication of the painter's status in Florence during the fourteenth century is found in the fact that the painter did not have a guild of his own, but belonged to a sub-section of the Guild of Apothecaries and Doctors, (Medici e Speciali). Although the latter guild was one of the greater Florentine guilds and as such was of some importance in the political structure of the city, this did not benefit the painters to any extent. The painters, including house painters and colour grinders, were not fully privileged, active members of the guild, but were part of a special organization, the sottoposti dell' Arte.

... art was still in the fourteenth century regarded simply as one of the manual crafts. The profession of artist had not yet obtained any special nimbus, and it was not regarded as in any way extraordinary among the poorer classes if, usually for some practical reason, a son should become a painter. In fact almost all of the fourteenth century Florentine artists came from craftsmen, petty bourgeois or peasant circles. Thus, from the start, the artists stood on an incomparably lower social level than their patrons. Neither well-to-do upper-middle-class citizens nor nobles would have become artists, since the profession would still have been rather degrading for them.⁵

The painter's political rights were severely curtailed despite his connection with one of the greater guilds. Political rights are, however, of minor importance in a situation such as Florence, where some form of oligarchic power was in control and the majority of the citizens were politically unimportant. What is more important is the economic position of the painter in the guild structure. The guild regulated the allocation of commissions and controlled the amount to be charged for the various tasks. As a result, only work given to the painter

independently of the guild could increase the painters' economic position to any extent. At the same time, a commission granted by a patron independently from the guild in all probability would only occur if the painter was well-known and in great demand. Very few painters attained such fame in the fourteenth century, with the possible exception of Giotto.

The fees paid to artists were in general low; often, especially in the case of monastic commissions, the payment was even made in kind. Moreover, the artists, with the exception of the most celebrated, remained unemployed for too long periods to make it possible for them to become in any degree affluent. Giotto-- ... because of his quite exceptional position--was one of the few able to do well for himself, as he worked with many assistants and was a unique celebrity.⁶

The control by the guild continued into the fifteenth century. The control specified certain rules for the training of painters, and a painter was entitled to work not necessarily because of any talent, but because he had completed the instruction course decreed by the guild. The painter's studio was actually a workshop in which commissions were usually executed upon a collective basis. The usual practice in the studio was the draughting of the work by the master and the painting of the important details, but the background and minor figures were often left to the apprentices. The amount of work on the painting by the master was dependent, to some extent, upon the social standing of the patron. The more eminent the patron, the more likely that the majority of the commission would be executed by the master alone. However, the painter's discretion in the production of the painting was curtailed by the patron's tastes and requirements, irrespective of the collective or more individual nature of the execution.

The painter was usually confined within the framework of a rigidly

defined commission reinforced by the regulations of the guild.

In all external matters the artists were very precisely bound by their contracts, the amount and terms of payment and the terms of delivery being, of course, most strictly defined. In settling the price, the measurements of the picture and the size and number of the figures portrayed were generally the deciding factors, while the expenses to be borne by the artist himself played a large part --a natural outcome of the whole artisan-like process of work. As a general rule the artist had to pay the wages of his journeymen, while arrangements varied with regard to the cost of materials, especially in the case of the expensive pigments (e.g., ultramarine and gold), which were considered essential for the picture.⁷

The craft nature of painting is well illustrated in the above in relation to the factors that contributed to the terms of payment. It was not so much the pleasing character of the finished product that decided the price but the actual workmanship intended for the painting, for example, the size and number of the figures. The painter was also deprived of any rights in the contract; the patron alone had means of redress in case of default or dissatisfaction with the finished product. In the latter regard the painter was powerless in any appeal to the guild because of their inferior position and their consequent political insignificance.

The craft nature of the profession continued in the fifteenth century, as Hauser indicates.

Their education is based on the same principles as that of the ordinary craftsman; they are trained not in schools, but in workshops, and the instruction is practical, not theoretical. After having acquired the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic, they are apprenticed to a master while still children, and they usually spend many years with him. We know that even Perugino, Andrea del Sarto, and Fra Bartolommeo were apprenticed for eight to ten years.⁸

The collective business-like nature of painting is further emphasized in the other forms of organization apart from the masters workshop that occasionally arose. Some of the workshops are family businesses:

Ghirlandajo's workshop, in which, above all, his brothers and brother-in-law are engaged as permanent collaborators, is, along with the studios of the Pollajuoli and della Robbia, one of the great family businesses of the century.⁹

In some cases young artists collaborate, that is, they set up a common workshop, usually because they cannot afford to set up an independent workshop: "... for example, Donatello and Michelozzo, Fra Bartolommeo and Albertinelli, Andrea del Sarto and Franciabigio work together."¹⁰

Initially the social status of the painter shows little differentiation from that of the previous century.

The artists of the early Quattrocento are still entirely small folk; they are regarded as higher-grade craftsmen, and their social origins and education do not make them any different from the petty-bourgeois elements of the guilds. Andrea del Castagno is a peasant's son, Paolo Uccello the son of a barber, Filippo Lippi the son of a butcher, the Pollajuoli the sons of a poulterer. They are named after the occupation of their father, their birthplace, or their master, and they are treated as familiarly as domestics.¹¹

The economic status of the painter does not change substantially. Artists salaries, in general, may have risen during the early part of the fifteenth century. The increase, however, is not so much an indication of the painter's increased commercial value as part of the general rise in living costs experienced in Italy in the fifteenth century and discussed in a previous section, on economic conditions. Salaries may also have been paid in kind, particularly on the part of the church, as Uccello found out according to Vasari. Paolo Uccello was commissioned to paint the cloister of S. Miniato outside Florence. According to Vasari Uccello abandoned the work before its completion because the abbot insisted upon feeding him almost exclusively on cheese.

... while Paolo was engaged upon this work, the abbot of the place gave him hardly anything but cheese to eat. Tired of this treatment, Paolo, being a shy man, determined that he would no longer go there to work. ... One day two of the more curious (friars) among them, ... caught him up, and asked why he did not return to

finish the work which he had begun, and why he ran away when he saw the friars. Paolo replied, "You have reduced me to such a condition that not only do I run away from you, but I am unable to work or pass by places where carpenters are. This is entirely due to the thoughtlessness of your abbot, who, by means of his dishes and soups, which are always made with cheese, has put so much cheese into my body that as I consist entirely of that commodity, I am in terror lest they should take me to turn into glue. If I went on any longer at this rate, I should soon be not Paolo, but cheese." The friars left him, laughing loudly, and related all to the abbot, who induced him to return to work, and provided other food for him besides cheese.¹²

Uccello did not make a great deal of money with his art and Vasari reports that he died "in poverty and obscurity" in 1432.¹³

Towards the end of the fifteenth century, however, it is possible to separate painters into "classes" according to the type of commissions they obtained and the type of patronage involved. The painter of mainly small commissions; wedding chests, amorial bearings, painted wood-carvings, with perhaps, as the fifteenth century progresses, a small portrait; are still craftsmen in terms of their social and economic standing. The painters of this type are more likely to work for the middle-classes and demands upon their abilities reflect middle-class tastes and means. However, painters such as Botticelli, Leonardo, Baldovinetti, and Michelangelo, cannot be ranked as craftsmen. Two factors may account for the changes that ultimately reflected upon the latter's position in the late fifteenth century; first, the influence of the humanists upon the aristocracy, and secondly, the mobility such painters exhibit as a consequence of their fame.

The influence of the humanists upon the position of the painter has been exaggerated. The humanists' approach to the arts, particularly painting, is a further justification of their own theoretical ideas. As a consequence, their support of the painter's claims that his art

was equivalent if not superior in some regards to the work of poets and scholars, is an expression of their views of man's place in the universe, in particular man's relationship to the state. The artist was able to glorify the state by his art. As such, the artist serves the community as much as the politician. The idea that Florence was the heir to the glories of Roman civilization was a further factor in advancing the painter's position. The study of antique remains by painters and sculptors was reinforced by the humanists' idealization of Greek and Roman culture. The production of works modelled on the study of the antique was seen to add to the glory of the Republic.

The emphasis placed by the humanists upon education, knowledge, and classical learning, was a greater influence upon the attitude of the aristocracy towards the painter, than any specific discussions about the arts of individual painters. The writings of the humanists in the fifteenth century, although they may discuss the status of painting in relation to the art of poetry, rarely mention individual painters. "One may search the correspondence of many a humanist without finding a single allusion to any of the artists whom he must have constantly met on the piazza and who loom so large in our picture of the period."¹⁴ Even Vespasiano rarely alludes to a painter, sculptor or architect by name.¹⁵

The general emphasis placed upon learning by the humanist meant that patronage of the arts reflected upon the intellectual status of the patron. If that patronage also glorified the state it was a further indication of the civic virtue of the individual, an important factor in both Florence and Venice where social standing was measured, to a large extent, by the individual's public service. However, patronage by

the aristocracy was granted to a favoured few and it is the latter who are socially mobile during the fifteenth century, rather than the vast majority of painters who remain tied to the guilds and largely dependent upon the public's demands for the inexpensive or utilitarian. The social position of the patron reflected, therefore, upon the position of the painter. The more eminent the patron, the more highly the painter could value his achievement and, by association, his abilities.

The well-known painters were the ones that benefited from the patronage of the wealthy or powerful. Commissions from a prince, pope, or powerful family such as the Medici, could generate a reputation and market demand for the painter. Praise for a particular painter's work by the aristocracy would imply superior talent and could create a demand for this talent to the exclusion of others. At the same time, the individual patron is more or less obliged to support the painter in terms of humanist requirements. Appreciation of the arts in general is one of the indications of learning and, indirectly, civic pride. In other words, not only does the status of the patron reflect upon the status of the painter, but the patron's appreciation and support of the painter is a reflection of the patron's intellectual status.

The above discussion is, nevertheless, premature for the early part of the fifteenth century. In Florence, it was the era of Lorenzo de' Medici that saw the rise in status for a few of the painters. The patronage of his father, Cosimo de' Medici, was motivated from religious motives rather than humanist ideas. As Vespasiano indicates, the problem of "dishonourable" wealth appears to have motivated his building commissions.

Now Cosimo, having applied himself to the temporal affairs of the state, the conduct of which was bound to leave him with certain

matters on his conscience--as is the case with all those who are fain to govern states and take the leading place--awoke to a sense of his condition, and was anxious that God might pardon him, and secure to him the possession of his earthly goods. Wherefore he felt he must needs turn to pious ways, otherwise his riches would be lost to him. He had prickings of conscience that certain portions of his wealth--where it came from I cannot say--had not been righteously gained, and to remove this weight from his shoulders he held conference with Pope Eugenius, who was then in Florence, as to the load which lay on his conscience. Pope Eugenius had settled the Observantist Order of S. Marco; but, as their lodging there was inadequate, he remarked to Cosimo that, if he was bent on unburdening his soul, he might build a monastery.¹⁶

In the accounts of Cosimo's building patronage Vespasiano does not mention the architects. The "maker" of the buildings was Cosimo rather than the various artists.

To the fifteenth century this would have been obvious. The work of art is the donor's. On Filippo Lippi's 'Coronation of the Virgin' in the Uffizi, we see an angel pointing to a kneeling monk with the words iste perfecit opus. It used to be thought that we must here have the self-portrait of the painter, but it is now accepted that the donor must be meant.¹⁷

In the early part of the fifteenth century, the artist, whether painter, sculptor or architect, was a subordinate entity to the patron. It was during the era of Lorenzo de' Medici that the painter begins to obtain some distinction in his work apart from that of the particular patron. To some extent, the recognition of the painter begins during a period which sees a decline in the amount of patronage extended by the Medici. Compared to Cosimo's activities, Lorenzo, despite his title The Magnificent, commissioned few works of art.

The very name of Lorenzo the Magnificent has come to stand for posterity as the embodiment of princely magnificence; indeed it has all but eclipsed the fame of his ancestors. It comes as a shock of surprise to realize how few works of art there are in existence which can be proved to have been commissioned by Lorenzo.¹⁸

Part of the explanation for the scarcity of Lorenzo's commissions may lie in the financial difficulties, illustrated earlier in this study,

that the Medici banks were undergoing at that time.

Lorenzo's patronage may also be accounted for in terms of his relationship to the humanist movement. Whereas Cosimo had been interested in humanist ideas and had many supporters amongst their ranks in the day-to-day Florentine politics, his position was far from being a patron to such scholars.

... it seems correct to say that the humanists of the period 1390 to 1460 comprise a relatively homogeneous group, as different from the men of letters who preceeded them as from humanists like Ficino and Poliziano who came after. And although Niccolo Niccoli, Carlo Marsuppini, and Ambrogio Traversari were often in the company of Cosimo de' Medici, we must remember that whatever the nature of their companionship they were never his retainers or dependents. Niccoli, though sometimes pressed, always enjoyed private means; the nobleman, Marsuppini, was independently wealthy; and Traversari, a Camaldolese monk and later general of his order, was actually in a position to help Cosimo--in 1433 he was influential in getting the banker's almost certain execution commuted to a sentence of banishment. Apart from all this, however, Cosimo's relation to these men could not be other than that of first among equals.¹⁹

The humanists of Cosimo's era were frequently politically and socially prominent individuals in Florence in their own right, but the humanists of Lorenzo's era resemble more courtiers and dependent professors.

The reasons for the changes in the humanist circle are related to political and economic conditions in Florence during the later part of the fifteenth century. By the time that Lorenzo succeeded to the Medici position in Florence, the oligarchy had been considerably narrowed and power was consolidated around the Medici. The Medici began to take the appearance of a princely family and adopt the manners of a princely court. In reality participation in civic government was increasingly circumscribed by the Medici position and humanist writings become more abstract and theoretical.

In the political and social world of the first half of the fifteenth century, the Florentine humanists were able to see a close relation-

ship between the civic life that actually existed and the sort of life they wanted, between what was and what they could hope to attain. Their view of things turned on a harmony between the active and contemplative lives. The result was that men like Salutati and Bruni, Poggio and Manetti were as much at home with philological and literary questions as with political and historical ones. But in the second half of the century, when interest in political and historical reflection could no longer draw on the resources of a vigorous civic life, a convenient change ensued: subject matter of this sort was gradually purged from the program of humanism, and the studia humanitatis became more thoroughly literary, or much more purely concerned with idealistic and abstract questions.²⁰

The humanists of Lorenzo's circle were, to a large extent, dependent upon his patronage. The consolidation of power within a small group is marked by a withdrawal from reality on the part of the intellectual-courtiers surrounding the Medici.

... the retrogressive movement, the attempt at restoring Scholastic forms of thought, gradually gains more and more breadth and strength. This movement reaches its apex in the last decades of the fifteenth century, the epoch characterized by the ascendancy of the Platonic Academy in Florence. Philosophy becomes the defense bulwark against worldly forces pressing from all sides.²¹

Some indication of the humanists status may be obtained from the personal complaints they leveled at each other in an effort to monopolize Lorenzo's favours.

Scala and Poliziano could not stand each other. Luigi Pulci directed satiric sallies against Ficino, Scala, and Matteo Franco. Scala and Franco responded in kind. The latter, a priest, was particularly resented because Lorenzo arranged for him to be heaped with ecclesiastical dignities.²²

The humanists had become courtiers in accordance with the increasingly aristocratic style of life of the oligarchy, and certain of the painters also achieved this status. However, in the case of the latter, it was only to a few that patronage was extended, and even to these few Lorenzo's patronage was not as extensive as that of Cosimo.

To a large extent that position of the humanists during the later part of the fifteenth century is a presentiment of the painters' future

position. Lorenzo's attitude to art in general is dilettanti compared to that of Cosimo who appears to have been motivated in his patronage by religious and political interests. The cultivation of various painters by Lorenzo was from more idealistic motives than the more practical ones that apparently guided Cosimo. The establishment of the Neoplatonic academy is an exercise in intellectual discourse with little relationship to the practical day-to-day civic affairs of Florence. In the same way, the influence of the humanists with respect to painting appears to have had more theoretical than practical effects upon Lorenzo's patronage.

... it seems to indicate that it was not shortage of money alone which accounts for the paucity of documented commissions by Lorenzo. Fastidious men make difficult patrons and Lorenzo had come to think of himself as an arbiter of taste and was so regarded by others.²³

Lorenzo was a collector rather than patron, and this position also reflects the changed market conditions of the late fifteenth century.

His fondness for the minor arts is unmistakable. Very few of the great creations of Florentine sculpture were in his possession; gems and cameos, of which he possessed some five to six thousand, formed the nucleus of his collection. ... The whole of Lorenzo's activity as patron and collector was nothing but the hobby of a grand seigneur; and just as his collection bore in many respects the marks of a prince's cabinet of curios, so his taste in general, his fondness for the dainty and the expensive, the trifling and the artistic, had many points of contact with the petty regent's penchant for the rococo.²⁴

The influence of the humanists upon the position of the painter during the fifteenth century is indirect. The more direct factors that changed the position of certain painters relates to their mobility and relationship to a fluctuating market. As the patrician classes consolidated their position in Italy and the princes begin to establish courts, there is a greater demand for artists in general, and particularly for those who, although foreign to the city or state, have favorable reputations.

When the painter worked outside his native city he could not be forced to adhere to the local guild regulations. The freedom enjoyed by particular painters in this regard rebounded upon their position in their native cities. If the city wished to compete with the courts for the painter's work they would also have to concede the same sort of freedom. The emancipation from guild restrictions was to a large extent, a function of a change in the supply and demand for the painters work.

In the early part of the fifteenth century the market for the painter was dependent upon the demand rather than supply. Production is not a factor of the painter's inspiration or creative urge, but determined by the task set by the customer.

Every product still has its exactly definable utilitarian purpose and concrete connection with practical life. An order is placed for an altarpiece in a chapel well known to the artist, for a devotional picture in a definite room, for the portrait of a member of the family on a certain wall; every piece of sculpture is planned from the outset for one special place, and every piece of furniture of any importance designed for some definite interior.²⁵

The change in the market was a consequence of the excess of demand over supply. The guild organization was essentially a protective organization, designed to prevent an excess of supply over demand; "... the guild authorities connived at the infringement of their statutes only when shortage of work no longer seemed a menace."²⁶ With the increased demands for luxury goods in the later part of the fifteenth century the painter found that demand exceeded supply. This situation, with the advent of the "collector" who bought not on demand but what was offered on the market and according to his tastes, altered the economic position of the painter.

The emancipation of the artists from the guilds is, therefore, not the result of their own heightened self-respect and the acknowledgment of their claim to be considered on an equal footing with the

poets and scholars, but results from the fact that their services are needed and have to be competed for. Their self-respect is merely the expression of their market value.²⁷

By the late fifteenth century some painters appear to be economically secure.

Towards the end of the century several artists are already doing well financially; Filippino Lippi even amasses a considerable fortune. Perugino owns houses, Benedetto da Majano an estate. Leonardo draws an annual salary of 2,000 ducats in Milan, and in France he receives 35,000 francs per annum.²⁸

It should be noted, however, that only a few painters manage to command large salaries for their work. The painters who manage to emancipate themselves from the guild restrictions and become economically secure are those who, first, are in great demand by the princes and various courts, and secondly those who are interested in scientific and technical questions. It has been indicated above that, with respect to the first point, the painter's fame was in certain ways a self-perpetuating entity. Demand by an influential patron could raise the painter's value and create further demand. The second factor, the theoretical and scientific foundation of painting skills, also contributed to the increased status of some of the painters. The application of mathematics to painting is most explicitly discussed by Leonardo. However, prior to Leonardo's work, the association of painting with the natural sciences and the various theoretical treatise that were written regarding the art of painting, creates a division in the ranks of the painters.

It is therefore possible ... to speak of certain "bourgeois" artists in the upper-middle-class sense of the word, as scholars or technicians, as opposed to the artist-craftsmen, who, however, still formed the mass of practising artists.²⁹

A comparison of two commentaries written during the fifteenth century is illustrative of the gradual changes in attitudes towards painting,

and consequently the painter's position, that occurred in this period. Cennini's Libro del' arte written in the early part of the fifteenth century is a mixture of medieval and Renaissance precepts and guides to the art of painting. For example, nature is considered to be the best "master" but at the same time study under a recognized authority is necessary for perfection of the art.

Fundamental Provisions for Anyone Who Enters this Profession. You, therefore, who with lofty spirit are fired with this ambition, and are about to enter the profession, begin by decking yourselves with this attire: Enthusiasm, Reverence, Obedience, and Constancy. And begin to submit yourself to the direction of a master of instruction as early as you can; and do not leave the master until you have to.³⁰

The Handbook is basically a series of recommended techniques for dealing with the various problems with which the painter may have to contend.

The Comentarii by Ghiberti were written during the middle part of the fifteenth century (circa 1452). The work is in three parts; the first part is an account of ancient art based on the works of Pliny and Vitruvius. The second part concerns painters and sculptors of the fourteenth century and it is the first account of "lives" of painters. It is significant by virtue of the fact that Ghiberti thought it worthwhile to give some personal account of these artists. The accounts of the fourteenth century painters are related to their position with respect to ancient art. Giotto is praised for his originality and his sympathy with ancient art.

He introduced the new art (of painting). He abandoned the crudeness of the Greeks and rose to be the most excellent (painter) in Etruria. Wonderful works were executed (by him) especially in the city of Florence and in many other places. Many of his disciples were as gifted as the ancient Greeks. Giotto saw in art what others had not attained. He brought the natural art and refinement with it, not departing from the proportions. He was extremely skillful in all the arts and was the inventor and discoverer of many methods which had been buried for about six hundred years.³¹

According to Ghiberti, Giotto restored painting to its former place amongst the poets and scholars. Ghiberti's comments on Giotto and other fourteenth century painters marks the advent of the view elaborated in the nineteenth century, that prior to this period the arts in general were in decline.³² This view was expressed later by Vasari.

The debt owed by painters to Nature, which serves them continually as an example, ... is due also, in my opinion, to the Florentine painter Giotto; because, when the methods and outlines of good painting had been buried for so many years under the ruins caused by war, he alone, although born in the midst of unskilled artists, through God's gift in him, revived what had fallen into such evil plight and raised it to a condition which one might call good.³³

Both Ghiberti and Vasari stress the importance of Giotto because of his technical innovations, which in contrast to the work of, for example Cimabue his master, are particularly striking. It is the technical and scientific advances which impress Ghiberti, as the third part of the *Commentarii* implies. The third part is devoted to a discussion of the theoretical and scientific basis of art, and was considered by the author to be the most important part of the commentaries. It is in the latter part that the contrast with Cennini is most apparent. The Libro dell' arte is a professional account of "how to..." practice and apply the principles of painting. Ghiberti's third commentary is an exercise in the application of scientific techniques to the art of painting. Cennini's work is that of a craftsman and intended for craftsmen; that of Ghiberti is the work of an academic artist establishing a theoretical basis for painting.

The Alberti treatise De pictura which also relates painting to scientific study, contains, as a side issue, a comment on the conduct of the painter best suited to the attracting of patrons.

But it would please me that the painter, ... should be a good man and versed in literature. Everyone knows how a man's goodness helps

more than his industry or skill in acquiring good will from the citizens, and no one doubts that the good will of many people greatly helps the artist to praise as well as earnings. It often happens that the rich, moved more by good will to a person than by wonder at someone's art, sooner give work to a modest and good person, casting aside that other painter who may be better in art but not so good in his ways. Therefore it is good for the artist to show himself well behaved, and especially polite and good-natured.³⁴

Alberti's comments on the methods to be adopted to attract a patron are interesting in relation to the increasingly aristocratic pretensions of the wealthy in fifteenth century Florence. Alberti's recommendations are more appropriate to the painter as a courtier than the painter as a craftsman. There is a subtle change of emphasis from the good workmanship that Cennini is concerned with and the pleasing manner that Alberti recommends as attractive to the prospective patron.

The painters associated with technical and scientific advances appear to have greater prestige during the fifteenth century than the painter-craftsman. Nevertheless, the latter class did not cease to exist, rather, they formed the nucleus of talent utilized by less affluent citizens. There appears to have been, by the mid-fifteenth century, two classes of painters; the more or less economically secure painter whose work was related to mathematical principles and as a result secured the approval and support of the humanist group, and secondly the lower-class craftsman usually associated with a workshop who are dependent upon the tastes of the middle-classes whose association with humanist ideas was minimal. The distinction between the classes of painters is, according to Hauser, the beginning of the "exclusive" nature of fine art.

The Renaissance was not a civilization of small shopkeepers and artisans, nor of a well-to-do, half-educated middle-class, but rather the jealously guarded possession of a highbrow and Latinized elite. This consisted mainly of those classes of society which

were associated with the humanistic and Neoplatonic movement--a uniform and, on the whole, like-minded intelligentsia such as, for example, the clergy, taken as a totality, had never been. The important works of art were intended for this circle. The broader masses either had no knowledge at all of them or appreciated them inadequately and from a non-artistic point of view, finding their own aesthetic pleasure in inferior products. This was the origin of that unbridgeable gulf between an educated minority and an uneducated majority which had never been known before to this extent and which was to be such a decisive factor in the whole future development of art.³⁵

Evaluation of the general public's view of the painter during the fifteenth century is conditioned by the general division in the ranks of the painters in terms of their relative economic and social position. The "important" painters who obtained commissions from wealthy patrons and who were most likely to be involved in the problem of the application of mathematical principles to painting, are the ones whose lives or works are discussed by the various humanist authors. They are also the painters whose works have survived. However, the painters who worked for the middle-classes, such as Neri di Bicci who headed a workshop of journeymen painters and who concentrated on "mass" production, are not discussed in contemporary literature and little of their work survives for evaluation. A record of the painters registered with the guild in Florence between 1409 and 1499 only contains 41 names, of which only a third are identifiable today.³⁶ Of course, the registration of painters with the guilds is likely to have decreased during the fifteenth century because of their mobility and increasing independence from guild restrictions. However, it may be supposed that the remaining two thirds of the painters registered with the guild during the above period were most likely to be little more than craftsmen. Despite the appearance of a great renaissance in taste and demand for art products that is implied in many of the descriptive studies of the fifteenth

century, the source of such assumptions makes the generalization inappropriate. The few writings concerning painting and painters of the fifteenth century concern those painters who are admired by an exclusive and wealthy class. The tastes of the latter cannot be assumed to be general to the population of, for example, Florence.

The biased source materials concerning painters during the fifteenth century are not only inadequate for any general evaluation of the painters position, but also represent a problem in an evaluation of the tastes of various social classes. Undoubtably certain painters improved their economic and social position as a consequence of their association with wealthy patrons and their preoccupation with scientific questions and the study of the antique. However, the works of the latter painters, as the history of the commissions illustrates, were exclusive as the tastes they catered to. The type of painter and the type of work produced for others in the general population remains difficult to evaluate. At the same time, work of the latter type has not survived in sufficient quantity for precise evaluation to be made of the tastes and styles of the general population.

An examination of the paintings produced during the fifteenth century in Florence does illustrate the tastes of the wealthy classes. The paintings indicate the trend illustrated in the above section of an increasingly exclusive and aristocratic attitude towards art in general. The paintings indicate the transition from the rational and religious motivations of the early part of the fifteenth century exemplified in Cosimo's commissions, to the more courtly and secular attitude during Lorenzo's period. The transition is also marked by the changed emphasis of patronage; in the early part of the fifteenth century public patronage

was more extensive than under Lorenzo, when private patronage is more common. The following partial list of commissions gives some indication of this transition. The list is partial in that only those works which can be dated with any accuracy have been included, although the production of painting and sculptures during the fifteenth century far exceeds the list presented.

Table A

A PARTIAL LIST OF COMMISSIONS GIVEN BY PUBLIC, PRIVATE AND
RELIGIOUS PATRONS DURING THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY IN FLORENCE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Painter (or Sculptor)</u>	<u>Work and Patron</u>
1401	Ghilberti	Calimala, to do reliefs for second Baptistry door.
1401	Starnia	Commissioned by Pugliese to decorate chapel in S. Maria del Carmine.
1405	Lorenzo Monaco	<u>Journey of the Magi</u> for the Benedictine Badia.
1418	Donatello	Sculpture of patron saint of Parte Guelfa.
1418	Donatello	City commissions statue of sitting lion (The Marzocco) for Piazza di S. Maria Novella.
c.1418	Brunelleschi	Giovanni Bicci de' Medici, chapel and sacristy for church of San Lorenzo. (Communal scheme, 8 others involved in building other parts of the church.)
1420-24	Lorenzo Monaco	Bankers guild commission frescoes in S. Trinita of scenes in <u>Life of the Virgin</u> .
1420-22	Ghiberti	Bankers build commission statue of St. Matthew.
c.1420-22	Lorenzo Monaco	<u>Journey of the Magi</u> probably for S. Egidio

<u>Date</u>	<u>Painter (or Sculptor)</u>	<u>Work and Patron</u>
1423	Gentile da Fabriano	Palla Stozzi commissions altar-piece for family chapel in S. Stinita depicting <u>Adoration of the Magi</u> .
c.1423	Masaccio	Benedict convent of S. Ambrogio commission frescoes of <u>St. Anne, Maddona and Child</u> .
1425	Gentile da Fabriano	Bernardo Quaratesi commissions an altar-piece of the <u>Maddona with Saints</u> for church of S. Niccolo oltr' Arno.
1425-27	Masolino & Masaccio	Felice Bancacci commissioned decoration of family chapel in S. Maria del Carmine.
1425-27	Masaccio	Commission for frescoes in Carmelite church of S. Maria del Carmine.
1425	Ghiberti	Calimela commission reliefs for the third Baptistry door.
1427	Ghiberti	Commissioned by Cosimo and Lorenzo de' Medici to make shrine for martyrs Hyacinthus, Nemesis and Protus.
1428	Donatello	City commissions a statue of figure of Abundance for Mercato Vecchio.
c.1430	Uccello	Dominican monastery of S. Maria Novella commissions <u>Story of Creation</u> for the Chiostro Verde.
1432	Fra Filippo Lippi	Carmelite order commissions fresco of <u>Confirmation of Carmelite Rule</u> .
1433	Fra Angelico	Linen-drapers guild commissions altar-piece of <u>Maddona with Saints</u> for chapel in their guild hall.
1436	Andrea di Guisto	Altar-piece for Bernardo Serristori for S. Andrea a Pipalta.
1436	Paolo di Dono, called Uccello	Equestrian monument for Florence Cathedral.
c.1441	Matteo de' Pasti	Piero de' Medici commissions <u>Trionfi</u> by Petrarch.
c.1443		Cosimo co-commissions dormitory for Novices of Sante Croce.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Painter (or Sculptor)</u>	<u>Work and Patron</u>
1445	Paolo di Dono, called Uccello.	<u>Old Testament Cycle</u> in cloister of <u>Sta. Maria Novella</u> .
c.1448	Michelozzo(probably)	Piero de' Medici commissions tabernacle in S.S. Annunciata.
c.1460	Benozzo Gozzoli	Piero de' Medici commissions forescoes of <u>Journey of the Magi</u> for Medici chapel.
c.1460-82	Verrocchio (Andrea di Cione)	Bronze group of <u>Christ and St. Thomas</u> for Or San Michele.
1470	Strozzi (Zanobi di Benedetto)	Illustrated Chorals for Florence Ca- thedral.
1485-88	Filippino Lippi	Frescoes in the Brancacci chapel.
1485	Francesco d'Antonio	<u>Book of Hours</u> for Lorenzo de' Medici.
1490	Signorelli (Luca)	<u>Pan</u> for Lorenzo de' Medici.

One factor which becomes apparent in the partial list is the preponderance of religious themes. Secondly, only nine of the commissions listed out of the thirty-two are those of private patrons; (with respect to the distinction of private and public patronage, religious foundations are included in the public sphere). Up to 1430 the city of Florence, in the form of guild and religious commissions, appears to have been a major source of patronage. From what could be derived from various sources, after this period, public patronage appears to have decline in favour of private patronage, at least, few records of public patronage for the later period survive. After the period about 1430, art work destined for the public view was initially commissioned by private individuals, and the latter appear to have been mainly the Medici. One explanation for the decline in direct public patronage may lie with the economic recession Florence experienced in the later fif-

teenth century. Secondly, the patronage of the guilds may have declined in proportion to the decline of their political power in the city.

(b) Venice

Patronage in Venice has been largely ignored up to this point, and the reason for the neglect lies in the fact that Venice, during the fifteenth century, is not renowned for its painters and paintings. Berenson hardly pays any attention to Venetian painters prior to the sixteenth century; and Blunt indicates that it was not until the sixteenth century that the Gothic tradition was finally dislodged by the cult of antiquity.³⁷

The position of Venice during the fifteenth century in terms of artistic development may possibly be accounted for in terms of her initial policy of isolation from the Italian mainland. It was not until 1425 that Venice became an active participant in the politics of the Italian mainland. It has also been indicated in the previous chapter that the various intellectual developments, such as humanism, did not have any noticeable effect upon Venice during the fifteenth century.

A very large element of Gothic survives in the painting and architecture of Venice in the late fifteenth century; for the Gothic tradition was too deeply established to be completely dislodged by the cult of antiquity which spread to Venice from Florence and Rome. The classical style was taken up, but it was treated in a romantic and irrational spirit. Painters like Mantegna imitated ancient statues with enthusiasm, but they combined what they derived from them with a Gothic emotionalism. Architects such as the Lombardi used the classical orders, but in combination with Gothic structure and with an almost oriental use of rich marbles.³⁸

Some indication of the Venetian attitude towards "fine art," during the fifteenth century, is to be found in Fra Francesco Colonna's Hypnerotomachia Poliphili (c.1467). The Hypnerotomachia is written in the form of a Gothic romance and recounts the travels of Poliphilus in

search of Polia. The medieval form in which the book is written is used to express the authors interest in antiquity. The whole book is, however, imaginative and the descriptions of buildings are used as an excuse to reflect upon the passage of time and human life and love. The detailed descriptions of buildings, most of which are ruins, appear to be imaginative descriptions of ancient accounts of the buildings which are usually covered with Greek or Latin inscriptions all of which the authors explain.

The author evidently set himself to recreate an atmosphere which he believed to be ancient. But his method and, indeed, his whole attitude to antiquity are fundamentally different from that of a Florentine Humanist like Alberti. Whereas the latter is rational and severely archaeological, Colonna interprets his knowledge of antiquity imaginatively, with no great regard for accuracy of detail. He is not interested in the philosophical and moral ideas of the ancients; he wishes only to take from antiquity those elements which will help him to build up a dream; and this dream, one feels, became for him more important than the ordinary conduct of life.³⁹

Whereas Brunelleschi and Alberti studied the ruins of ancient Rome in order to apply the building principles to their own work, Colonna exhibits a romantic delight in the fact that they are ruins. The ruins become, for Colonna, symbols of impermanence rather than useful artifacts for the development of new techniques.

The importance of Colonna's work lies in its unique character; it is the only work dealing with the arts produced in Venice during the fifteenth century that has survived. The fact that there are no records of any other works dealing with the arts, or painting in particular, is some indication that the problems the artist began to experiment with in Florence are not vitally important to the Venetians. The fact that humanism had little impact upon Venice may account for the lack of theoretical speculation about the arts. In Florence, concern about the

painter's position and his relationship with the mathematician was discussed mainly by the humanists. It has been pointed out that these discussions were theoretical exercises which are more likely to have had an influence upon a small class of wealthy patrons, than upon the public in general and the painter of cassoni and other small commissions. Despite the fact that Venice possessed a correspondingly small wealthy elite who could be regarded as potential patrons, the impetus of the humanist intellectual was absent.

From accounts of Venetian painters during the fifteenth century it is likely that the workshop style and the position as craftsmen remained in effect for most of the painters. The best example of workshop collaboration is found in the Bellini family. Jacopo Bellini and his two sons, Gentile and Giovanni ran a workshop that was active throughout the fifteenth century. Gentile Bellini became the official portraitist of the Doge.

The lack of information regarding Venetian painters of the fifteenth century may be accounted for in terms of the general subordination of the individual to the interests of the state. It was illustrated in the previous chapter that few individuals achieved fame on their own merits. The nobility, or the political class in general, worked as a group and it may be assumed that the rest of the population were regarded in group terms, possibly related to their occupational status. Consequently, painters as a group would occupy identical social positions, with little possibility of achieving fame on their own account, as was the case for a few of the painters in late fifteenth century Florence.

From Vasari's account of the Bellini family workshop, it would appear that the majority of the commissions came from the State or from

various religious foundations. In particular, they were commissioned to decorate the hall of the Great Council with scenes depicting the greatness of Venice.

... it occurred to some noblemen that it would be well to employ such rare masters to decorate the hall of the great council with paintings descriptive of the magnificance and greatness of their marvellous city, ... matters worthy of such celebration, as a reminder to succeeding generations, who would derive both pleasure and instruction from scenes appealing alike to the eye and the mind. Accordingly the Government allotted this task to Giovanni and to Gentile, whose reputation increased daily, with instructions to begin as soon as possible.⁴⁰

Although Venetian painters do not appear to have been regarded as individuals on the basis of their talents, Gentile Bellini did achieve a certain amount of recognition similar to that of a few Florentines from the Grand Turk. Vasari recounts that the Grand Turk, having been impressed by the work of the Bellini brothers, requested that they should be sent to Constantinople. The government decided to send Gentile Bellini who painted the emperor's portrait.

After the emperor had seen many examples of his art he asked Gentile if he would like to paint his own portrait. Gentile replied in the affirmative, and in a few days he had made a wonderful likeness of himself...⁴¹

The self-portrait of a painter was a relatively rare phenomena during the fifteenth century, even for Florentine painters of great renown. Nevertheless, Gentile's portrait cannot be regarded as a significant break in relation to the painter's position in Venice. The portrait was commissioned outside the state and the return of Gentile to Venice indicates that his personal merit was subordinate to the interests of the state, as he himself appears to recognize. He requested the emperor to reward him with a letter of recommendation to the senate and the government of Venice, and on his return, "when he went to pay

his respects to the doge and the senate he was graciously received and commended for having accomplished their wish in giving so much gratification to the emperor."⁴² Gentile Bellini had, in effect, acted as a sort of ambassador for the Venetian republic, and the pension he was granted on his return is a recognition of this service.

Berenson gives some indication of the type of patronage given to Venetian painters.

It does not appear that the Hall of the Great Council in Venice was turned into a student's academy, and although the paintings there doubtless gave a decided incentive to artists, their effect upon the public, for whom they were designed, was even greater. The councillors were not allowed to be the only people to enjoy fascinating pictures of gorgeous pageants and ceremonials. The Mutual Aid Societies--the Schools, as they were called--were not long in getting the masters who were employed in the Doge's Palace to execute for their own meeting-places pictures equally splendid.⁴³

The paintings commissioned by the Schools glorified their patron saints and many of them recorded the annual processions or pageants performed in the saint's honour. Many of the Venetian paintings of the fifteenth century recorded the various saints' days and state ceremonials. The paintings are crowded with details of Venetian citizens and to a large extent reflect the collective civic consciousness characteristic of Venice. Berenson's comparison of painting in Florence and Venice, although exaggerated, illustrates the position of the painter in Venice.

In Florence, the painters seemed unable or unwilling to make their art really popular. Nor was it so necessary there, for Poliziano, Pulci, and Lorenzo de' Medici supplied the need of self-expression by addressing the Florentines in the language which their early enthusiasm for antiquity and their natural gifts had made them understand better than any other--the language of poetry. In Venice alone painting remained what he had been all over Italy in earlier times, the common tongue of the whole mass of the people.⁴⁴

What Berenson's comment implies is that, unlike Florence, the painter was still able to communicate with the public in general and apparently

did not have to cater to the tastes of a particular class. Patronage from the wealthy noble class was not as important to the painter as the patronage of the State or the religious orders.

Without any data from which to work, other than that indicated above, certain hypotheses may now be advanced regarding the Venetian painters' status. It is possible that the position of the painter in Venice was governed by the excess of supply over demand in the market. Whereas demand began to exceed supply for the Florentine painter by the mid-fifteenth century, this situation is not apparent until the later part of the fifteenth century for the Venetian painter. The factors that may contribute to this market situation are, first, the small amount of private patronage, secondly, the subordinate position of the individual in relation to the interests of the state, and third, the relatively late movement of the Venetian noble class back to the land.

The small amount of private patronage and the subordination of the individual may be closely interrelated. The state appears to have been the arbitrator of taste in the same way that the Church, to some extent, was during the middle ages. Apart from the minor tasks of painting wedding chests, banners, and signs it is likely that little else was undertaken for private patronage in the early part of the fifteenth century. The movement of the Venetian nobility to the land, however, does mark a change in the sphere of private patronage. This movement was comparatively late, the Florentine aristocracy having bought estates as investments as well as consolidation of status at an earlier date during the fifteenth century.

There is some indication that the acquisition of estates on the part of the Venetians was also accompanied by an increased standard

of living.⁴⁵ With the increased standard of living more attention appears to have been paid to the arts and, in particular, to have led to a demand for portrait painting. The latter trend was aided by the introduction of oil painting. Previously paintings had been executed in tempera, but this medium was unsatisfactory for such works as portraits and easel paintings. The method of oil painting was first discovered in Flanders by Giovanni da Bruggia. Antonello da Messina studied under Giovanni da Bruggia and brought the method to Italy, via Venice. The precise date on which Antonello came to Venice is unclear, although it must have been in the later part of the fifteenth century. Vasari gives Antonello's dates as ?1431-1499.⁴⁶ Antonello travelled widely prior to his stay in Flanders, and by the time he reached Venice he was most likely to have been near the end of his working life. The oil painting method made it much easier to execute portraits, and Vasari indicates that Giovanni Bellini's later life was occupied in painting portraits.

Giovanni, ... still continued to work, old as he was, and as he was employed to paint portraits, it became a practice in that city that every man of any note should have his portrait painted either by Giovanni or by some other. Hence all the houses of Venice contain numerous portraits, and several nobles have those of their ancestors to the fourth generation, while some of the noblest go even further back.⁴⁷

From Vasari's comments above, it would appear that the acquisition of estates and a more aristocratic standard of living was also accompanied by an aristocratic consciousness of family and lineage. The importance of the family in Venetian life has been discussed in a previous chapter, but the tendency in the late fifteenth century appears to have been a concentration on family history and lineage rather than the previous economic and political ties. The increased number of private commissions for family portraits is an indication of the consolidation

of a landed aristocracy as opposed to the former political basis of the oligarchic class.

The position of the painter in Venice during the fifteenth century is difficult to evaluate mainly because of the lack of sufficient source material. The position of the Florentine painter may be discussed with more confidence, but only because the flourishing humanist school was also interested in the arts. Without the comments of the latter, the absence of any documentation on the part of the painters themselves, evaluation of their position would be as difficult as it is for the Venetian painters. From the comments of the humanist writers it would appear that certain painters, usually those whose technical and mathematical interests were apparent in their work, achieved a more middle-class position from the former position as craftsmen. Nevertheless, the painters who raised their status seem to be the minority, and data on the remaining painters who practiced at the same time is as scarce as for the total number of Venetian painters. It has been assumed that painters, other than those who were patronized by the wealthy classes and who achieved a certain elevated social status, remained at the level of craftsmen. Nevertheless, it is significant that in Florence two classes of painters may be distinguished whereas the same could not be said for Venice in the fifteenth century.

The position of the painter in Florence has been related to the changed market conditions affecting the supply and demand for paintings. These changes are also related to the gradual change from public to private patronage. The increased demand for paintings on the part of wealthy patrons affects the position of a few painters favourably. Without adequate data, but on the basis of the conditions in Florence

as compared to Venice, it has also been assumed that the Venetian painter did not enjoy the same favourable market conditions. The increased demand by private patrons appears to have developed at a much later date in Venice. As a consequence, it may be assumed that the Venetian painter did not, in general, have the opportunity to advance his position to the same extent as his Florentine counterpart.

(c) A Note on the Church Patronage in Florence and Venice

The position of the church with respect to patronage of painters has not been dealt with in detail. Compared to the position held by the church during the middle ages in relationship to the arts there is a gradual decline in influence. However, the decline is related to the nature or content of paintings rather than to the church's position as a patron. There seems to be a gradual secularization of painting during the fifteenth century for both Florentine and Venetian painting. In Florence, in particular, the secularization takes the form of an increasingly aristocratic and exclusive style. Towards the end of the fifteenth century secular paintings, of which the portrait is the best example, increase in numbers. Nevertheless, the church remains an important source of patronage for the painter. The scope offered by a church or monastery frescoes is much greater than the possibilities in private patronage, and many of the Orders are very wealthy and able to afford "the best." Patronage by a prince or wealthy nobleman may be desirable and lucrative but church patronage remains an important and possibly more lucrative source.

It would appear that the fifteenth century represents a truly "transitional" phase for the painter. It is not possible to characterize the period as a "complete break" with the medieval period as some

authors indicate. Certain changes, in the painter's position and the attitude of the patron, are apparent, but these changes are neither as radical nor as general as it has been assumed. Medieval forms and attitudes coexist with more "modern" developments. For example, the effect of market changes upon the position of the painter is an early development of the later economic "freedom" of, for example, the nineteenth century.

The Renaissance, therefore, did not bring about a fundamental change in the nature of art; it merely altered the conditions under which the artist worked; freeing him from disciplines and inhibitions and allowing him a specious freedom of action. I say a specious freedom, because in the outcome the artist discovered that he had merely exchanged one kind of dependence for another; he might henceforth be free to express himself, but only on condition that the "self" expressed was a marketable commodity--a form of economic servitude which is still in force, ...⁴⁸

Previously the guild regulations had effectively controlled the market in terms of supply, and the dominance of the church as a patron had consolidated this control.

Despite the changes, the older forms do not disappear immediately, in fact they are retained well into the sixteenth century. The following contract given to Pietro Perugino by the Benedictine monks of S. Pietro in 1495 is indicative of the coexistence of change and the older forms. Perugino was a painter who acquired considerable fame and wealth and may be accounted as one of the few painters during the fifteenth century who were socially mobile. However, in the contract with the monks the specifications for the content of the painting and the colors to be used are as detailed as any earlier contract made with the craftsman-painter.

... master Pietro Cristoforo of Castel della Pieve, ... who is present and has accepted the commission, to paint and ornament the picture for the main altar of the church of St. Peter. The picture

must be painted in the following way:

In the rectangular panel, the Ascension of our Lord, Jesus Christ, with the figures of the glorious Virgin Mary, the Twelve Apostles and some angels and other ornaments, ...

The predella below is to be painted and adorned with stories according to the desire of the present Abbot. The columns, however, and the mouldings and all other ornamentation of the panel should be embellished with fine gold ...⁴⁹

The contract also specifies the terms of payment and the time limit involved.

... it will be executed within the space of the coming two and a half years, all at the cost and expense of the said master Pietro himself. The said master Pietro has promised the Reverend Abbot... to carry out this agreement in general and in particular under the penalties herein specified. The painter pledges all his goods, real and moveable property, present and future.

This the said master Pietro consented to because the Reverend Father, the Abbot, has promised and agreed with him on the pledge of the monastery and his possessions to the said master Pietro... namely, to give to him or to his heirs and actually pay him for his painting, for paints, gold and other things necessary and suitable for the execution of the said painting, as well as for the ornaments of the said panel, 500 gold ducats, payable within four years, counting from the day on which the painting shall be begun, at the rate of one quarter of the sum each year. ...⁵⁰

The above contract retains the medieval forms with its detailed specifications. The only significant departure from the older form lies in the provision for redress on Perugino's part if the Abbot fails to meet his obligations. The latter clause is significant in that it establishes the contract on a different basis from the craftsman-patron contracts of previous times. The painter is able to protect his rights within an individualistic economic framework, whereas formally the craftsman was entirely at the mercy of the patron and what little help, in the case of the patron who renegaded, he could obtain from his guild.⁵¹

It would appear that a different relationship between the painter and the patron was gradually introduced during the fifteenth century in terms of the contractual agreement, but that the changes remained bound

by the medieval contractual forms.

The extent to which the various changes were recognized and the attitude of the painter towards the changes discussed in this section, will be examined in the following section.

The Fifteenth Century Painter's Definition of His Role

It was indicated in the introduction to the present chapter that the source material for painter's comments and views during the fifteenth century is relatively scarce. However, this factor in itself is significant, in that the importance of the painter's position in society may be related, generally, to the articulation of his art or an account of his personal life. That is, the craftsman was not in any position to claim that his art in any way distinguished him from other individuals in the same or similar social positions.

Cennini's work, Libro dell' arte, is important because it is one of the first works on the art of painting. Yet it retains a craftsman outlook. The work, as described previously, is a manual of practical comments, and represents the collation of a body of craft techniques which were probably the basis of most workshop instruction, passed from master to apprentice by word of mouth and practice in previous periods. Cennini pays little attention to the position of the painter or to his relationship with other disciplines, such as poetry or scholarship.

Alberti's treatise, De Pictura (c.1435) expresses a very different conception of the painter's position in its division of painting into theory and practice. Ghiberti's work also indicates the view that painting is the representation of the natural world according to the principles of human reason, but in Alberti's work, the principles are

articulated and they become the basis for a theoretical framework for painting. Ghiberti's Commentarii, although written at a later date (c.1452), should be considered prior to that of Alberti because many of the subjects dealt with by Ghiberti are more fully articulated in a systematic manner in De pictura.

In the Commentarii the training appropriate for a painter is discussed.

The sculptor and the painter, both should be trained in all these liberal arts:

Grammar	Perspective
Geometry	History
Philosophy	Anatomy
Medicine	Theory or design
Astronomy	Arithmetic. ⁵²

From Ghiberti's first commentary it is apparent that the training a painter should receive is more extensive than the practical workshop training detailed by Cennini. The painter is not only required to "copy from nature" and to observe the methods of the ancients, but is also expected to have a sound liberal arts education. The fact that Ghiberti, and Alberti, considered some guidelines regarding the training and education of the painter worth discussing is some indication of a new attitude towards the painter's position in society. The painter's position is in the process of being elevated from the "mechanical" and hence craft status, to that of a scientific discipline, and consequently worthy of inclusion in the "liberal arts."⁵³

... the principle aim of the artists in their claim to be regarded as liberal was to dissociate themselves from the craftsmen, and in their discussions on the subject they make it their business to bring out all the intellectual elements in their art. In later fifteenth-century writings it becomes a commonplace that painting depends on a knowledge of mathematics and of different branches of learning.⁵⁴

In Alberti's treatise the "theory" of painting is discussed prior

to the "practice," and the discussion of mathematical perspective and optical phenomena establishes various principles without reference to the practice of painting. The treatise also contains a definition of painting and, by implication, the position of the painter.

I like a painter to be as learned as he can be in all the liberal arts, but primarily I desire him to know geometry. ...My rudiments which explain the perfected self-contained art of painting, will be easily understood by a geometrician, but one who is ignorant of geometry will understand neither those nor any other method in painting. So I maintain that a painter has to undertake geometry. And for their mutual delight he will make himself one with poets and orators, for they have many graces in common with the painter and are plenteous in knowledge of many things.⁵⁵

Poets and scholars were regarded as the exponents of the liberal arts and had been distinguished from the manual crafts even in the medieval period. Consequently the painter's scientific status and association with the poets and scholars was important in any attempt to establish their position apart from craftsmen.

Piero della Francesca's De Prospectiva Pingendi (Of the Perspective of Painting), was written between 1480 and 1490, and represents a significant change from the Alberti and Ghiberti treatises.⁵⁶ The work is entirely technical and based on the geometry of Euclid. Perspective and the problem of optics are discussed in a scientific manner accompanied by drawings illustrating the various problems discussed. The drawings that accompany the text differ from the typical examples that had been given in some medieval "pattern books," in that they are unique examples dependent upon some particular combination of optical and perspectival problems. The work is entirely theoretical and devoid of comment upon any subject other than the strictly scientific application of geometry and optical studies to painting.

Piero della Francesca's work is illustrative of the more academic

training that the painter was beginning to consider necessary. The logical conclusion of the emphasis upon scientific principles and the study of antiques is the academy, where painting becomes a technical and theoretical exercise divorced from the practicality of the craftsman. According to Hauser, there is some indication that the apprenticeship system was gradually replaced by the more intellectual pupil-teacher relationship during the fifteenth century.

The education of the rising generation in art had to be transferred from the workshop to the school, and practical had to yield partly to theoretical instruction, in order to remove the obstacles which the old system put in the way of young talent. Of course, the new system gradually created new ties and new obstacles. The process begins by the authority of the masters being replaced by the ideal of nature, and ends with the finished body of doctrine represented by academic instruction, in which the place of the old discredited models is taken by new, just as strictly limited, but from now on scientifically based ideal.⁵⁷

The culmination of the debates on the status of painting in relation to scholarship and poetry is to be found in Leonardo da Vinci's comments. In the Paragone the first part is devoted to a discussion of the relative merits of poetry as compared with painting.⁵⁸

Of the poet and the painter.

Painting serves a more worthy sense than poetry does, and represents the forms of nature's works with more truth than does the poet. The works of nature are of much more value than are words, which are works of man, because there is the same relation between the works of men and those of nature that there is between man and God. Hence it is more valuable to copy objects of nature and effect true likenesses, than to copy with words the deeds and words of men.⁵⁹

The discussion of the superiority of painting to poetry, on the basis that the eye rather than the ear is the superior sense organ, is also accompanied by a comment upon the position of sculpture in relation to painting. It is significant that sculpture retains its position amongst the mechanical arts whereas painting has been raised not on par with, but superior to, poetry and the other liberal arts.

Beginning discussion of sculpture and whether or not
it is a science.

Sculpture is not a science but a most mechanical art, for it brings sweat and bodily fatigue to him who works at it. For such an artist the mere measure of the limbs, and the nature of movements and poses is sufficient. In this way he brings his work to an end, displaying to the eye what it is, and it gives the observer no cause for admiration, as does painting, which by virtue of science, shows on a flat surface great stretches of landscape, with distant horizons.⁶⁰

Comparison of painting and sculpture.

Painting is a matter of greater mental analysis, of greater skill, and more marvellous than sculpture, since it compels the mind of the painter to transform itself into the very mind of nature, to become an interpreter between nature and art.⁶¹

From Leonardo's accounts of the superiority of painting to other disciplines it would appear that by the end of the fifteenth century the painter had substantially improved his position. From Leonardo's description of the painter as compared to the sculptor it would appear that the painter had been able to free himself from the stigma of manual labour and hence the position of craftsman: "...manual labour being considered in the society of the Renaissance as ignoble as it had been in the Middle Ages."⁶²

The sculptor's face is covered with paste and all powdered with marble dust, so that he looks like a baker, and he is covered with minute chips, so that he looks as though he had been out in the snow. His house is dirty and filled with chips and dust of stones. In speaking of excellent painters and sculptors we may say that just the opposite happens to the painter, since the well-dressed painter sits at great ease in front of his work, and moves a very light brush, which bears attractive colors, and he is adorned with such garments as he pleases. His dwelling is full of fine paintings and is clean and often filled with music, or the sound of different beautiful works being read, which are often heard with great pleasure, unmingled with the pounding of hammers or other noises.⁶³

It should be noted, however, that Leonardo is describing the "first-rate painter" in the above ("di pittori e scutori eccellenti"). As a consequence it cannot be assumed that the above description is appropriate for all painters during the late fifteenth century.

From the above discussions it would appear that the painter gradually improved his social standing during the fifteenth century. In the previous section, however, it was pointed out that economic wealth and improved social status were apparently only accorded to a few painters, and the basis for improved status appears to have been their adherence to the science of painting and the neoplatonic ideals of the study of nature and the antique. Of the discussions illustrated so far in this section it should be remembered that the authors were artists and humanists whose influence extended over a small circle of the elite and whose work does not necessarily represent the position of all painters during this period.

Not only does Leonardo emphasize the elevated status of painting on the basis of its scientific foundation and the study of nature, but in the second part of the Paragone, this position is amplified in a discussion of the ideal training for the young painter. In contrast to the advice given by Cenini, Leonardo places great emphasis upon the observation of nature and the derivation of scientific principles from such observation. He does not neglect the study of old masters and their techniques, but these are to be utilized as examples of knowledge first derived from scientific training.

What the student should learn first.

The young man should first learn perspective, then the proportions of all objects. Next, copy work after the hand of a good master, to gain the habit of drawing parts of the body well; and then work from nature, to confirm the lessons learned. View for a time works from the hands of various masters. Then form the habit of putting into practice and working what has been learned.⁶⁴

Of the error of those who practice without science.

Those who fall in love with practice without science are like pilots who board a ship without rudder or compass, who are never certain where they are going. Practice ought always to build on sound theory, and without it nothing is done well in painting.⁶⁵

In technical terms the difference between Leonardo and other, earlier authors, such as Alberti, is illustrated in the question of proportion.

The contrast between the views of Leonardo and Alberti on the subject of proportion corresponds to certain changes which had taken place in painting in the fifteenth century. In the time of Alberti, when artists were still working back to realism after the non-realistic style of the Middle Ages, it was necessary in the interests of realism to establish what were roughly the proportions of a man, this not having been in the Middle Ages a matter of importance to artists. Alberti's theories of proportion, therefore, were a weapon for establishing the first stage of realism.⁶⁶

By the late fifteenth century painters were aware of the exact proportions of the human body, and Leonardo's concern is to counter the uniformity and mechanically exact use of proportion by painters. Consequently he emphasizes the variety in the proportions of the human body. This emphasis upon correct or rather ideal proportions and the resulting stylized figures is commented upon by Vasari.

But although the artists of the second period made great additions to the arts ... yet they did not attain to the final stages of perfection, for they lacked a freedom, which, outside the rules, was guided by them, and which was not incompatible with order and correctness. This demanded a prolific invention and the beauty of the smallest details. In proportion they lacked good judgment which, without measuring the figures, invests them with a grace beyond measure in the dimensions chosen. ... Although many of them, like Andrea Verrocchio, Antonio del Pollajuolo and others of more recent date endeavoured to improve the design of their figures by more study while approaching nature more closely, yet they were not quite sure of their ground. ... That finish and assurance which they lacked they could not readily attain by study, which has a tendency to render the style dry when it becomes an end in itself.⁶⁷

From the above discussions, the question arises, "who" among the painters were affected by the changes in education, technical and scientific developments and the association with the humanists and scholars. From the previous section it would appear that despite the confidence with which Leonardo associates painting with the liberal

arts, and even elevates it above such arts as poetry, music and sculpture, the contractual form remained very similar to that of the medieval era, and the patron retained a large measure of control over the execution of any commission. At the same time, even the painter who is in demand and who appears, according to Vasari's accounts, to have achieved substantial economic means by painting, remained dependent upon and subservient to the patron. A letter from Benozzo Gozzoli to Piero de' Medici illustrates the patron's close supervision of any commission, and also the submissive attitude of the painter.

Benozzo Gozzoli to Piero de' Medici

Florence, 10 July, 1459

This morning I received a letter from Your Magnificence, by the hand of Roberto Martelli. From which it appears that you do not find that the cherubim I have painted are suitable. One of these I have set in a corner, among clouds, of which only the tips of the wings are visible; and he is so much concealed, and the clouds cover him in such a manner, that he causes no uncomeliness, but rather gives beauty. That is the one that is beside the column. I made another on the other side of the altar, but concealed after the same manner. Roberto Martelli saw them, and declared that the thing was of no consequence. Nevertheless, I will do as you shall command; two clouds will quickly dispose of them.

.... I have also heard that you have given order to Roberto Martelli to furnish me with whatever I may need. I have caused him to give me two florins, and that suffices me for the present. I pursue the work as zealously as I may; whatsoever I may leave undone, it will be for lack of skill, for God knows that no thought so much torments me; and I am continually searching for means to do some thing that shall please you, at least in a good degree; it is my only concern. I commend me to you Magnificence,

Your servant⁶⁹

The dependence of the painter upon the patron is further emphasized in another letter by Gozzoli. Under the usual contract between the painter and patron often the remission of fees was to take place over a period of time, rather than in a lump sum at the completion of the work. From the following letter it is apparent that this practice

could lead to hardship for the painter if the patron was late or forgetful about sending money regularly.

Benozzo Gozzoli to Piero de' Medici

Florence, 11 September, 1459

Mine especial friend,

In another letter I advised your Magnificence that I was in need of forty florins, begging you to remit the same to me; inasmuch as it is now the season to buy corn and many other things necessary to me. I have been most thrifty, yet I have been unable to maintain a fine thought that I had. My thought was, to ask you for nothing until such time as your Magnificence should see what I have done; but necessity has driven me to a pass, where I am obliged to make you this request; therefore have compassion on me, God knows I am minded to satisfy you. ... 69

A letter by Filippo Lippi to Piero also emphasizes the dependence of the painter upon his patron, even when, (according to Vasari) the painter supposedly was not a poor craftsman.

Fra Filippo Lippi to Piero de' Medici

Florence, 13 August, 1436

In answer to a letter I sent you, I have received one from you, the which I had awaited painfully thirteen days, to my great damage. You answer me at last, that you can take no other decision concerning the picture, and that I should keep it for you. I shall be ill-sped in my departure, by God, if you cannot give me a penny. This has caused me much distress, for sundry reasons, among which is that it is clear that I am one of the poorest friars that be in Florence. And God has left me six nieces of marriageable age, sickly and of no service, and what little good they have in the world is from myself.

If you were able to have delivered to me in your house some little store of corn and wine, selling it to me and setting it against my account, it would give me much joy. I beg this of you with tears in my eyes, that at my departure I may leave it to these poor maidens. I should further inform you that I have been with Ser Antonio del Marchese, wishing to learn of him what you would have me do. He said that if we would enter the service of the Marchese, he would give each of us five florins. Yet I am to leave home and perceive that I cannot bespeak myself so much as a pair of shoes.

I implore you, do not think it too burdensome to write two lines to the said Ser Antonio, commending me to him. I will set forth the day following your prompt reply; for it is clear that if I remain eight days here, I shall be dead; so great is my fear. For God's sake send to me at your house, where likewise I shall deliver this, that it may not meet with the same hap as my other letter.

Friar Filippo, painter, in Florence⁷⁰

The above letter is clearly a "begging" letter, but it illustrates some of the economic difficulties a painter could encounter. Obviously Piero has rejected one of Lippi's paintings and as a result left him in certain difficulties. It would appear that the offer from the Marchese is in relation to a commission, and Lippi asks Piero de' Medici's permission to take the offer. Although Lippi is not apparently bound to the Medici in any obvious contractual relationship, the patronage that Piero has accorded him in the past appears to have made it necessary for Lippi to ask permission to take any other commission.

The above three letters, addressed to Piero de' Medici, may reflect only upon the attitude of the latter towards payments to painters. However, another letter by Lippi to Giovanni de' Medici makes it more likely that the painter often suffered economically from his patron in the matter of payments. The letter to Giovanni de' Medici concerns the completion of a painting and the attempt by Lippi to obtain the remaining fees in his contract.

Fra Filippo Lippi to Giovanni de' Medici

Florence, 20 July, 1457

Mary Virgin

Most illustrious, ...I have done all that you commanded me concerning the picture, and I have made myself ready for everything. The St. Michael is so far advanced that, since his armour is silver and gold and his other garments likewise, I went to speak with Bartolomeo Martelli. He said that for the gold and what else was needful he would advise with Ser Francesco, and that all you wished should be done; ... Now Giovanni I am here entirely at your service, and shall do good work. I have received from you fourteen florins, and wrote to you that the cost would be thirty. And so it may remain, for the work is handsomely embellished.

... I have no gold left, nor money to put down. I beg you, leave me not idle; I have done nothing these three days, but wait here.

And further, if it pleases you that all be done and completed at my expense--which amounts to thirty florins, as above--then shall you give me sixty heavy florins for the woodwork (frame),

gold, priming and painting. And the said Bartolomeo shall see to it, and thus with small burden to you I will deliver it, completely finished, on the twentieth day of August, and Bartolomeo shall be my warrant. But if there be no disbursements, I will be content with what sum you decide. And that you may be well informed, I send you the drawing to show how the frame is made, ... and for love to you I will not ask more, albeit the work is worth a hundred florins--as anyone will tell you. I beg you to reply, that I may not die here; I am fain to leave this place. And if I have been presumptuous in writing to you, pardon me. And I shall always do whatsoever I may to please your Honour.⁷¹

The letters quoted above do not parallel the statements made by Leonardo da Vinci regarding the painters position. It would appear that the remarks regarding the superiority of painting and hence the superior position of the painter, as compared for instance to the sculptor who remains a craftsman, are ideals rather than the actual case. Leonardo himself represents a departure from the norm partly because of his diverse interests and talents. In the past painters had also been goldsmiths, sculptors, and writers, but Leonardo's talents extended over a wider area than the above, largely interrelated, interests. A letter to Lodovico Sforza, Il Moro, illustrates one of the many interests of the painter.

From Leonardo da Vinci to Lodovico Sforza, Il Moro.

1481 or 1482

Your Gracious Highness! I have sufficiently seen and tested the productions of all those who are considered masters of the art of inventing war-machines. And since the working and function of these instruments is no different from that of the machines in common use, I shall endeavour--approaching no one else--to make myself clear to Your Excellency and reveal my secrets. I shall put them at your disposal whenever you desire and hope for good results from the things which I shall now briefly describe...

(Here follows a catalogue of war-machines, siege methods, armoured vehicles and nautical apparatus:)⁷²

The difficulties which the Florentine painters appear to have experienced in terms of collecting their fees from the Medici is paralleled by the experience of Andrea Mantegna, from Mantua. Mantegna,

from Vasari's account of his life, was a painter in great demand, but the letter below indicates that he also had economic difficulties. Mantegna appears to have been given a salary by Gonzaga, the lord of Mantua, and to have been employed at some point by Pope Innocent VIII.

Andrea Mantegna to Francesco Gonzaga

Rome, 15 June, 1489

.... With such feeble powers as I have, I seek here, being your Excellency's servant, to do you honour with all my poor skill. And for love of Your Excellency I am well regarded by His Holiness the Pope and by all the Palace. True it is that I am given only the return of what I lay out, having never received even the slenderest reward; but I would fain ask nothing, being minded only to serve Your Lordship. Therefore I beg that you will not forget your Andrea Mantegna, that he may not lose his wages that he has received these many years from your most illustrious House, for matters cannot go well if I have nothing either here nor there.
... 73

It would appear from the above letter that there was either some confusion with the Pope regarding payments, or that Mantegna was "on loan" from Gonzaga and as such the latter was expected to provide the daily necessities. Whatever the case, Mantegna, was obviously in a difficult position economically.

The contention that the painter gradually freed himself from various forms of patronage and competed on an open market by the end of the fifteenth century is not borne out by another letter from Mantegna to Gonzaga. Again, this letter refers to the painter's residence in Rome, but his comments regarding his household in Mantua illustrate the position he occupied under Gonzaga's patronage.

Andrea Mantegna to the Marchese Francesco Gonzaga, at Mantua.

Rome 31, January, 1489

.... I beg that Your Excellency deign to write me some word, for my contentment; for I have been as it were a nursling of the illustrious House of Gonzaga and have striven at all times to win honour for it, and therefore am I here. I commend my 'Trionfi' to Your Excellency, that they may not suffer damage if perchance

the windows should be repaired; for in truth I am not ashamed of having made them, and hope to make other such, pleasing to God and to Your Excellency, to whom I commend myself a thousand times, begging you to have care of my household at Mantua. Also I pray Your Excellency that it may please you to permit Lodovico, Your Excellency's servant and my son, to have a benefice of two hundred ducats at Mantua or on the territory thereof, that I be not less regarded than the other servants of the House. Of our Lord the Pope I had liever not ask a groat, I would sooner pawn all I possess. If His Holiness should offer me some benefice I would accept it; but it meseems that it is very hard to come by, it is a great matter; therefore again I beg that Your Excellency condescend to render us this service, as your servants. Advising you that I have of Our Lord nothing beyond a servant's maintenance, so that I were better off in mine own house. ... 74

From Mantegna's account and his attempt to obtain a sinecure for his son it would appear that, in Mantua at least, the system of patronage and the painter's dependence upon it had been consolidated rather than declined. It may be assumed that a similar development occurred with the Medici in Florence. It has been pointed out that many of the humanists of Lorenzo de Medici's circle were courtiers rather than independent scholars, and it may be assumed that the dependence of the various Florentine painters employed by the Medici was of the same order.

Whatever the economic position of the majority of painters, it is nevertheless clear that for many of the authors discussed above they were very conscious of a change in the arts and in the attitude of a small proportion of the public to the arts. For example, apart from the praises of Giotto, which are to be found in Ghiberti, Vasari, and Manetti, the work of Brunellesco appears to have been regarded as a new development in architect with many interesting implications for art in general. Antonio Manetti's Life of Brunellesco, was written a few years after Brunellesco's death in 1446, and praises the architect for his investigation of the antique and discovery of many methods adopted in the past. He is also praised for his experiments with

perspective;

I really believe Pippo di Ser Brunellesco invented this perspective, which formerly was not in use. The ancients, though they were very subtle and acute, yet never used or understood this manner of perspective. Although they showed good discernment in their works, yet they did not set objects on the floor by these rules and methods.⁷⁵

Alberti also praises Brunellesco among others in his treatise, De pictura.

I used to both marvel and regret that so many excellent and divine arts and sciences, which, as we see from extant works and other histories, flourished in antiquity among our most talented forefathers, had declined and almost entirely perished. Painters, sculptors, architects, musicians, geometers, rhetoricians, augurs, and similar most noble and marvelous intellects are now very scarce and hardly praiseworthy. ...

But when I returned from the long exile in which we, the Albertis, have grown old, to our native Florence, this most splendid of cities, I recognized that many artists, and especially you, Filippo, (Brunellesco) and that dearest friend of ours, Donato the sculptor, and those others, Nencio, and Luca, and Masaccio, have such talents for all sorts of laudable work as not to be rated lower than any of the ancients who were famous in these arts. Accordingly I perceived that the power to gain fame in any of the arts lies in our own industry and diligence no less than in the benignity of nature and the times. I am persuaded that if for those ancients, who had such an abundance of teachers to learn from and of masterpieces to imitate, it was not so difficult as it is now to acquire knowledge of the noble arts which today require so much toil, our own fame should be all the greater because we, without teachers and without examples, are discovering arts and sciences never seen or heard of before.⁷⁶

Alberti's comments above regarding the acquisition of new knowledge in the arts and the condition of the arts prior to the fifteenth century, represent one of the earliest views of the period as a "breakthrough" or great advance upon the art of the Middle Ages. The idea that the fifteenth century witnessed the revival of art on a par with ancient Greek and Roman art, is reinforced by Vasari's and Ghiberti's comments. Burckhardt's conception is consequently derived in part from the judgements of contemporaries during the fifteenth century.

It is significant that the writers during this period regarded

developments in the arts in general as a "revival" or "breakthrough;" however their views should also be modified by the prevailing humanist ideas during the fifteenth century. As was illustrated in the previous chapter, the humanists regarded the civilization of ancient Rome as an ideal, and those developments in the arts that appeared to revive and even improve upon, the work of the ancients were praised accordingly. Again, it must be remembered that the appreciation of these developments is most likely to have been confined to a small circle, and the extent to which such "revivals" were recognized was possibly equally confined. It is significant that technical developments were recognized as revolutionary compared to the practices prior to the period, but it should not be assumed that this recognition was general to all those artists who employed the new developments, such as perspective. For the latter the observation of the work of innovators on the basis of their fame may have been sufficient for them to absorb the new techniques.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the writings of fifteenth century artists reveal some information regarding their position and the changes in that position over the course of the century. However, partly because of the scarcity of sources, a general evaluation is not possible. In terms of overall changes in the "climate of opinion" regarding the painter and his position in society, it would appear that for some individuals the period provided the means to escape the stigma of craftsmen. The various technical and scientific developments, and the association of the painter with the liberal arts, appears to have affected the position of certain painters. Nevertheless, the elevation of the painter's position

from that of a craftsman would seem to depend more upon market conditions and demand, than upon any general consciousness of the painter's unique talents.

It can be supposed, therefore, that for many painters the comments of the humanists and the benevolence of the patrons prompted by the humanists conception of learning, did not affect their economic status to any large extent. It is one thing to be regarded as "equal to" or even "superior to" other exponents of the liberal arts, but without the economic means to support such elevation the painter has not substantially improved his position. The contract discussed in the previous section, and the difficulties the painter appears to have experienced in matters of payment from various patrons as the letters in the present section indicate, imply that the intellectual status of the painter may have changed, but his economic position has altered rather little from that of his medieval counterpart.

The discussions in the above chapter by the various fifteenth century authors and painters comprises a small minority of the practicing painters in Florence and Venice. The extent to which their comments are generally applicable is doubtful in view of the number of painters and the corresponding number of potential patrons. It should be remembered that the painter catered to a small number in relation to any major work of art, and despite his increased mobility during the fifteenth century, the number of individuals able and willing to commission large works was limited. The painter may have enjoyed a "freedom" in his association with the liberal arts in the later part of the fifteenth century, but it is doubtful that this freedom was matched by any general socio-economic advance.

The following chapter will discuss the social conditions in France and Flanders during the fifteenth century. The discussion will compare these conditions to those of Italy and to the Sorokin ideal types.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Jacob Burckhardt, The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy trans. by S.G.C. Middlemore, rev. and ed. by Irene Gordon. (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1961).

² Ibid., p. 125.

³ Sir Anthony Blunt, Artistic Theory in Italy 1450 - 1600 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 55.

⁴ See, for example, Arnold Hauser, The Social History of Art (4 vols.; New York: Vintage Books, Alfred A. Knoff, Inc. and Random House, Inc., 1951; Alfred von Martin, Sociology of the Renaissance (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1963); Sir Anthony Blunt, Artistic Theory in Italy 1450 - 1600.

⁵ Frederick Antal, Florentine Painting and its Social Background (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1947), p. 278.

⁶ Ibid., p. 282.

⁷ Ibid., p. 281.

⁸ Arnold Hauser, The Social History of Art, 2, 53.

⁹ Ibid., 2, 55.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 2, 53.

¹² Giorgio Vasari, Lives of the Great Painters, Sculptors, and Architects (4 vols.; London: Everyman's Library, 1927), 1, 234.

¹³ Ibid., 1, 239.

¹⁴ E.H. Gombrich, "The Early Medici as Patrons of Art: A Survey of Primary Sources," in Italian Renaissance Studies, ed. by E.F. Jacob (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1960), p. 288.

¹⁵ Vespasiano da Bisticci, Renaissance Princes, Popes, and Prelates: The Vespasiano Memoirs (Hereinafter referred to as The Vespasiano Memoirs), trans. by William George and Emily Waters, intro. by Myron P. Gilmore (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1963).

- ¹⁶ Ibid., p. 218.
- ¹⁷ E.H. Gombrich, "The Early Medici as Patrons of Art," p. 287.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., p. 304.
- ¹⁹ L. Martines, The Social World of the Florentine Humanists, 1390-1460 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 8.
- ²⁰ Ibid., p. 302.
- ²¹ Ernst Cassirer, The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy, trans. and intro. by Mario Domandi (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 61.
- ²² L. Martines, The Social World of the Florentine Humanists, 1390-1460, p. 6.
- ²³ E.H. Gombrich, "The Early Medici as Patrons of Art," p. 306.
- ²⁴ Arnold Hauser, The Social History of Art, 2, 46.
- ²⁵ Ibid., 2, 41.
- ²⁶ Ibid., 2, 62.
- ²⁷ Ibid., 2, 60.
- ²⁸ Ibid., 2, 60.
- ²⁹ Frederick Antal, Florentine Painting and its Social Background, p. 377.
- ³⁰ Cennino Cennini, Il libro dell' arte, trans. by Daniel V. Thompson, in, A Documentary History of Art, selected and ed. by Elizabeth G. Holt (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1957), p. 139.
- ³¹ Ibid., p. 153. "Arrecòl' arte nuova, lasciò la rozzezza de Greci, sormontè eccellentissimante in Etruria. E fecionsi egregissime opere e specialmente nella città di Firenze ed in molyi altri luoghi, ed assai discepoli furono tutti dotti al pari degli antichi Greci. Vide Giotto nell'arte quello che gili altri non aggiunsono. Arrecò l'arte naturale e la gentilezza con essa, non uscendo delle misure. Fu peritissimo in tutta l'arte, fu inventore e trovatore di tanta dottrina, la quale era stata sepolta circa d'anni 600." Lorenzo Ghiberti, I Commentari (2 vols.; Berlin, 1912).

- ³² See Chapter Two of this study for a discussion of this point.
- ³³ Giorgio Vasari, Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects, 1, 65.
- ³⁴ Leon Battista Alberti, On Painting, in A Documentary History of Art, selected and ed. by Elizabeth G. Holt, p. 215.
- ³⁵ Arnold Hauser, The Social History of Art, 2, 51.
- ³⁶ Ibid., 2, 50.
- ³⁷ See, Bernard Berenson, The Italian Painters of the Renaissance (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1957); Sir Anthony Blunt, Artistic Theory in Italy 1450 - 1600.
- ³⁸ Sir Anthony Blunt, Artistic Theory in Italy 1450 - 1600, p. 39.
- ³⁹ Ibid., p. 40.
- ⁴⁰ Giorgio Vasari, Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects, 2, 46.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., 2, 50.
- ⁴² Ibid., 2, 51.
- ⁴³ Bernard Berenson, The Italian Painters of the Renaissance, p. 18.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 13.
- ⁴⁵ See, the discussion in Chapter Five of this study, and J.C. Davis, The Decline of the Venetian Nobility as a Ruling Class (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1962).
- ⁴⁶ Giorgio Vasari, Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects, 1, 354.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., 2, 51.
- ⁴⁸ Herbert Read, Art and Society (London: Faber and Faber, 1956), p. 65.
- ⁴⁹ Elizabeth G. Holt, ed. A Documentary History of Art, p. 269.

50 Ibid., pp. 269-270.

51 See, Frederick Antal, Florentine Painting and its Social Background, for a discussion of this point.

52 "Convieni che lo sculptore, eziandio il pittore, sia ammaestrato in tutte queste arti liberali:

Grammatica	Prospettiva
Geometria	Istorica
Filosofia	Notomia
Medicina	Teorica disegno
Astrologia	Aritmetica."

Lorenzo Ghiberti, I Comentari (2 vols.; Berlin, 1912).

53 The Ghiberti and Alberti treatise suggest that, with the emphasis upon generalized, theoretical training rather than the mechanical process, painting was gradually being recognized as a "profession" as distinct from a craft.

54 Sir Anthony Blunt, Artistic Theory in Italy 1450 - 1600, p. 49.

55 Elizabeth G. Holt, A Documentary History of Art, p. 216.

56 Piero della Francesca, De Prospectiva Pingendi, ed. by G.N. Fasola (Florence: 1942).

57 Arnold Hauser, The Social History of Art, 2, 63.

58 Leonardo da Vinci, Paragone; A Comparison of the Arts, intro. and trans. by Irma A. Richter (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1949).

59 "Del pittura serve a più degno senso, che la poesia, e fa con più verità le figure delle opere di natura ch'il poeta; e sono molto più degne l'opere di natura chelle parole, che sono l'opera dell' homo, perche tal proportion è da l'opere delli homini a' quelle della natura, qua è quella, ch'è dal homo a dio. Adonque è più degna cosa l'imitare le cose di natura, che sono le vere similitudini in fatto, che con parole imitare li fatti e parole degli homini." Leonardo da Vinci, Treatise on Painting (Codex urbinas latinus 1270) trans and annotated by A. Philip McMahon with intro. by Ludwig H. Heydenreich (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), p. 20.

60 "Comincia della scultura; et s'ella è scientia o no. La scultura non è scientia, ma è arte meccanicissima, perchè genera sudore e fatica corporale al suo operatore, et solo basta à tale artista le semplici misure de membri e la natura delli movimenti e posati, e cosia in se

finisce, dimostrando al occhio quel che quello è, et non dà di se alcuna admiratione al suo contemplante, come fa la pittura, che in una piana superfitie per forza di scientia dimostra le grandissime campagne con li lontani orizzonti." Leonardo da Vinci, Treatise on Painting, p. 35.

61 "Comparatione della pittura alla scultura. La pittura è di maggiore discorso mentale e di maggior artificio e meraviglia, che le scultura, conciosia che necessità costringe la menta del pittore a transmutarsi nella propria mente di natura et sia interprete infra essa natura e l'arte." Ibid., p. 41.

62 Sir Anthony Blunt, Artistic Theory in Italy 1450 - 1600, p. 54.

63 "Con la faccia impastata e tutto infarinato di polvere di marmo, che pare un fornaio, et coperto di minute scaglie, che pare gli sia fioccato addosso, e l'abitatione imbrattata e piena di scaglie e di polvere di pietre. il che tutt' al contrario avviene al pittore, parlando di pittori e scutori eccellenti, imperochè 'l pittori con grand' aggio siede dinanzi alla sua opera, ben vestito e move il leuissimo penello con li vaghi colori, et ornato di vestimenti come à lui piace a l' habitatione sua piena di vaghe pitture e pulita et accompagnata spesse volte di musiche o'lettori di varie e belle opere le quali senza strepito di martelli ed altri rumori misto sono con gran piacer' udite." Leonardo da Vinci, Treatise on Painting, p. 36.

64 "Quelle che debbe prima imparar 'il giovane. Il giovane debbe prima imparare Prospettiva puo le mi sure d'ogni cosa poi di mano di bon maestro per assmui farsi a bone membra poi da naturale per confermarsi, la ragione delle cose imparare poi veder un tempo di mane di diversi maestri poi fare habito à metter in pracicha e operare l'arte." Ibid., p. 45.

65 "De errore di quelli chi usano la praticha sanzo la scientia. Quelli che s'inamorano di praticha sanzo scientia sono com' elinochere ch'entran in naviglio senza timone o'bussola che mai anno certazza doue si nadano, Sempre la praricha debb'e serèdifficata sopra la bona theoricha della gualè la prespettiva e guida e porta esanza queltra nulla si for bene ne casi de pittura." Ibid., p. 48.

66 Sir Anthony Blunt, Artistic Theory in Italy 1450 - 1600, p. 32.

67 Giogio Vasari, Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects, 2, 152.

68 Richard Friendenthal, Letters of the Great Artists (2 vols.; London: Thames and Hudson, 1963), 1, 16.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid., 1, 21.

71 Ibid., 1, 21-22.

72 Ibid., 1, 35.

73 Ibid., 1, 28.

74 Ibid., 1, 25.

75 Robert Goldwater, and Marco Treves, ed., Artists on Art (New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1945), p. 39, quoting Antonio Averlino, (Il Filarete), Il trattato d'architettura.

76 Ibid., p. 33, quoting Leon Battista Alberti, De pitura, (1435).

CHAPTER SEVEN

SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN FRANCE DURING THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

In the previous two chapters the social conditions and the role of the painter in Florence and Venice were examined. The present chapter will examine the general social conditions in France during the fifteenth century. The emphasis for France will be placed upon the areas of Burgundy and the city of Paris.

The nature of the socio-cultural conditions in France as a whole during the fifteenth century was largely determined by the "Hundred Years' War."

After the time of St. Louis the growth and expansion of France were almost suspended for about a century and a half. This crisis is known as the "Hundred Years War," because its most critical period (from 1337 onwards) actually lasted one hundred years.¹

The progress of the war had a critical effect upon all social conditions in France, and one noticeable effect was the absence of any definitive advances in the arts during this period comparable to those in Italy during the same period. In terms of the arts it appears possible to characterise France as still medieval. The extent to which the medieval features of the society in general remained will be examined in this chapter.

To facilitate the discussion of socio-cultural conditions in France, the same division used in the discussion of the Italian conditions will be used; that is, the evidence will be examined within the general categories of economic, political, family and social life conditions,

and religion and philosophy.

Political Life in France During the Fifteenth Century

At the beginning of the fifteenth century in France political conditions were affected not only by the continuing conflict with the English but also by the periodic fits of insanity that afflicted the French king, Charles VI. The gains made by the French kings in the previous century towards a consolidation of monarchical power were in jeopardy from the rivalry and conflicts that characterised the attempts of the princes to influence the king during his periods of lucidity or insanity. To understand the problems that a weak monarch could occasion, it is necessary to examine briefly the growth of royal power within the feudal context in France in the period just prior to the fifteenth century.

To some extent, as Ferguson points out, the long war with the English contributed to the consolidation of the royal power in France.

From the preliminary skirmishes between Philip the Fair and Edward I to the final expulsion of the English more than a century and a half later, war was the primary concern of the French government. It was the financial strain imposed by the war that forced the monarchy to raise extra-feudal revenues and to evolve a regular fiscal system. And it was the desperate need for national defense that forced the French kings, somewhat belatedly, to transform the feudal levy into a royal army, thereby strengthening their effective power while at the same time robbing the nobles of the monopoly of military force that was the essential bulwark of feudalism.²

The war itself was largely a product of the feudal situation. The English king held territory in France, the Duchy of Guienne, and as such owed allegiance to the king of France as a feudal lord. Such a situation became intolerable for both sides. The English kings resented the over-

lordship of France in the Duchy and the French kings resented the presence of an alien lord in the middle of their territories. The situation was further complicated by a dispute over the succession to the French crown, with the English claiming the right to the succession through the female line.

Throughout the period of the war, the French kings added to their strength as the power of the feudal nobility declined. However, the progress made by the monarchs was slow largely because the rights of the feudal nobility, and the associated way of life, were strongly entrenched in France.

The centre of gravity of medieval France was in the country, not the city, and it was the seigneurie which furnished the matrix in which her most characteristic institutions were cast. France was, indeed, the most thoroughly feudalized country in Europe, as Italy was the least.³

The political implications of the feudal situation revolved around the decentralization of power. In effect the French monarch, as head of a feudal state, was the titular apex of a pyramid of feudal rights and obligations. Any assertion of power in this situation by the monarch almost inevitably led to conflicts with the feudal nobles. Such conflicts were made more difficult for the monarch given the dispersion of military force amongst the nobles and the decentralisation of financial returns. As Ferguson has indicated above, the war with the English gave the French monarchy the opportunity to circumvent these restrictions upon power and in this way contributed to the development of a centralised monarchy.

By the fifteenth century, various changes in the administration of France had resulted in the transfer of such important matters as the jurisdiction of certain cases to the royal courts, the transference of

hereditary obligations into monetary return, and the consolidation and, to some extent, professionalisation of the monarchs administrative apparatus. These changes worked to the advantage of the kings and the disadvantage of the feudal nobles. Prior to the thirteenth century the administration of the monarch was composed of a number of lay and ecclesiastical vassals who travelled with the king. After this period, the various administrative departments were separated from each other and by the end of the thirteenth century were permanently settled in Paris.

The judicial branch of the royal court thus evolved into the Parlement of Paris, definitively organized in 1320, with a numerous staff and definite forms of procedure. It functioned primarily as a supreme court of appeal, but it also acted as the custodian of royal law and could exercise considerable influence on royal legislation. ... In much the same way the members of the Curia who had experience in handling governmental income and expenditure formed an increasingly stable committee, which by 1304 had evolved into the Chambre des Comptes, permanently located in Paris.⁴

The importance of the monarchs controls over the judicial and financial aspects of the government was related to two factors. First, the great nobles or ecclesiastical dignitaries who had made up the bulk of the medieval king's advisors were gradually replaced by what were essentially career administrators. The latter were often men of humble birth trained in the law. At the same time, the kingdom had been divided into areas called baillaiges and sénéchaussées, which were governed by officials directly responsible to the monarch. These administrative units were the framework of the administrative hierarchy and cut across the traditional feudal fiefs. The latter units were therefore, administered independently of the various feudal nobles, and in the proliferation of

their duties and hence personnel to undertake such duties, gradually eroded the old feudal institutions to the advantage of the monarchy.

The increased control of the judicial apparatus on the part of the monarchy introduces the second factor, the right of the monarch to contravene the decisions of the feudal nobles. Such a right involved an assertion over the independence of the nobles.

The royal courts reserved to themselves an increasingly long list of "royal cases," asserted the right to interfere when feudal courts were dilatory, and struck a fatal blow to feudal sovereignty by introducing the novel principle that all justice belongs in the last resort to the king, from which it followed that anyone might appeal from the judgment of his lord to the king's court.⁵

Appeals to royal courts were investigated in a more systematic manner than the cases brought before the local courts which were often tried on the basis of ordeal or ancient custom, as a consequence the royal courts were felt to be more just.

When Charles VI came to the throne in 1380, France was feudal in many of its general social aspects, but politics had ceased to be conducted within the feudal framework. However, by the beginning of the fifteenth century the periodic fits of insanity of the king placed the newly consolidated position of the monarchy in danger.

Charles V who reigned from 1364 to 1380 ... An administrative efficiency characterizes his court; something was done to re-organize military service and in Bertrand du Guesclin the king was served by an able general who not only inflicted losses on the English, but carried war and some of the Companies into Castile ... Flanders was dealt with by marrying its heiress to the duke of Burgundy; Brittany was annexed to the royal domain in 1378 - a move frustrated by resistance in the duchy. But royal efforts at re-asserting central authority slackened at the end of the reign, as the war with England quietened down. Enough had, however, been done to provide Charles VI, who came to the throne as a minor in 1380, with a stable administration, staffed by professional experts of modest social rank, and the rudiments of a policy which distinguished to some extent between the kingdom and the interests of the king as a grand seigneur.⁶

The insanity of the king led to attempts on the part of the great nobles to dominate the government of France. In particular, it was the conflict between the Duke of Burgundy and the king's brother, the Duke of Orleans that divided the policies and government of Charles VI's reign.

The madness of the king precluded a continuation of Charles V's bonne policie: there followed the decades when the royal dukes monopolized government in their own interests. Broadly speaking it was Burgundian influence which prevailed at court when Charles was insane. In his periods of lucidity he was largely at the disposal of his brother Louis, who in 1392 became duke of Orleans. ... Such a situation naturally produced rivalry; Burgundy and Orleans pursued incompatible policies in Italy, in Germany, with the divided papacy, and inside France, where Burgundy assumed the role of an ally of the towns; the two dukes were particularly jealous of each other's ruthless handling of the royal finances.⁷

France was still divided into separate parts under the control of the great princes by 1400.

The constitution of great appanages in favour of royal cadets, which had been increased since the accession of the Valois, had had the unfortunate result of reducing considerably the crown domain where the exercise of royal authority was direct and undivided. It still comprised a compact group of provinces in the north of the kingdom, Ile-de-France, Champagne, Picardy, and Normandy; and another in the south, Languedoc, though the southern seneschalships enjoyed a quasi-autonomy, being governed by a lieutenant of the king who was usually a prince holding an appanage, and the taxes voted by the Estates of Languedoc were spent locally, with no control by the capital. In between, a few isolated outposts, such as Maconnais and Lyons, did not suffice to maintain contact. All the rest of the kingdom was more or less permanently in the hands of the princes.⁸

The alienation of the land by the princes would have not been so important to the monarchy if they had retained their feudal organization. However, as with the crown lands, the fiefs had paralleled the evolution of the monarchy and by this time had become regular states with their own administrative apparatus and officials. The financial organisation of the fiefs also paralleled that of the monarchy, and the princes also found that they

could not live exclusively on the resources of the lands they controlled. One of the ways in which the financial scarcity was resolved, in many cases, was to take to local yield of royal taxes.

Accordingly, the 'extraordinary finances' which the monarchy enjoyed were now levied, more or less, only on a royal domain continually reduced by fresh alienations. Even this was too much for the princes' taste. While they were in power they proposed to turn their services to account and have their costly expenses paid 'to maintain their state.' First calculated daily in proportion to services rendered, these expenses were soon paid monthly in advance, and so came to be fixed pensions. That of Philip the Bold reached 100,000 francs a year in 1402. To his permanent source of revenue were added special grants, at first given on some valid ground, but soon for no reason whatever. In Burgundy's case they more than doubled his pension. ... Burgundy's takings, which were only 100,000 francs in 1375, reached and exceeded 500,000 in 1400.⁹

The financial activities of the princes gradually forced the French state into bankruptcy. This situation occurred in spite of the periodic increase of the taxes levied permanently since 1383.

The tax on merchandise rose from 12 to 18 deniers a livre, that is, from 5 to 7.1/2 percent, and the tax on wine from 12.1/2 to 15 percent. ... The hearth-tax which brought in 1,200,000 livres in 1402, reached 1,800,000 in 1408. Despite all this, the gulf widened. ... In 1411 the tax coffers of Languedoc contained only 2,500 livres. The government lived on expedients which, while they were not novel, multiplied dangerously: anticipation of receipts; tenths from the clergy ...; withholding of salaries; forced loans from officials and burgesses; advances on jewellery; mortgaging of domainial revenues.¹⁰

As a consequence of the State's financial and administrative anarchy, when the threat of war arose again with England, France was ill-equipped to cope with it. In 1407 the confusion surrounding the monarch was increased by the assassination of Louis of Orleans. The assassination had been ordered by John, Duke of Burgundy; the latter having succeeded his father Philip the Bold in 1404.

By 1411 there was open civil war in France, with every noble choosing sides in the hope of personal advantage. As Ferguson indicates, the disruption revived the spirit of feudalism as the state was split into various warring factions. The principle factions were the Burgundians and the Armagnacs, the later count being a son of the late Louis of Orleans.

The 'Burgundians and Armagnacs' were to be at each other's throats for more than a quarter of a century. Above all, despite prolonged attempts at patching up a truce, suspicion led both sides to negotiate for the support of England and it is hardly surprising that Henry V invaded France and was remarkably successful there. Nor had the Burgundians for long the monopoly of assassination. At an interview at Montereau designed to end the civil war, supporters of the dauphin Charles murdered John the Fearless in 1419. His successor Philip became an outright ally of England and, by the treaty of Troyes in 1420, co-regent of France with Henry V. When Charles VII acceded in 1422 he was accepted only in the south and centre and was termed the 'roi de Bourges', which was his principle seat for the next fifteen years.¹¹

In 1435 the situation in France for the monarch was made easier by Burgundy's abandoning the English cause and making peace with Charles VII. The peace with Charles left Burgundy in a strong position, however, as it freed him from the feudal obligations for the fiefs he held in France.

The Burgundian duke now held an independent principality which included, besides the duchy and county of Burgundy, all the provinces of the Netherlands; but any future danger to France in such a powerful neighbor was for the moment compensated by his break with England.¹²

With only the English to fight, Charles VII, over the next twenty years was able to regain lost territory until in 1453 only Calais remained in English hands.

The civil wars, the war with the English, and the financial problems that the French kings had to cope with during the early part of the

fifteenth century, meant that, politically, France was in a transitional state. The wars, particularly the Hundred Years' War enabled the monarchy to make certain important advances towards a centralised state at the expense of the feudal system, however, the progress was slow and was not effectively concluded during the fifteenth century. Part of the problem lay with other factors that affected France either as a direct or indirect consequence of the long period of warfare conducted during the fourteenth and part of the fifteenth century. To some extent the problem was general to Europe, but particularly acute in France under the conditions of war. In 1348 the bubonic plague struck Europe with particular severity and recurred during the late fifteenth century.

...in the Burgundian village of Givry, where in normal years deaths ranged between 14 and 43, in 1348 the parish register recorded 49 deaths. Nor were the years 1347-50 the end of the story. The Black Death not only lingered on as it spread to remoter communities, in this way becoming endemic; it returned in epidemic proportions again and again, as in 1361-62. After this and before 1500 epidemics occurred in Italy in 1371-74, 1381-84, 1400, 1422-25, 1436-39, 1447-51, 1474-79, 1485-87; in England there were eleven other 'national' epidemics between 1362 and the end of the fifteenth century.¹³

The figures that Hay quotes above are mainly for Italy, but France also suffered from the effects of the plague during the same period, and perhaps with greater severity given the conditions of war which did not allieviate such problems as contamination and famine.

The decline of population, for Europe in general, had further effects on agriculture and the conditions of the rural population which will be discussed in more detail in the section on the economic conditions. The conditions, particularly in the rural areas of France, occasioned by the plague, the accompanying famine conditions, and made worse by the ravaging armies, had the effect of making labour scarce and consequently raising prices.

The result of the prolonged scarcity, endemic and pandemic plague, the intermittent but catastrophic invasions of ruthless armies, and the constant threat in many areas from well-organized robber bands, was seen not only in the dwindling population but in roads abandoned to brambles and briars, in arable land out of cultivation and in deserted villages. Contraction in the area of cultivation in its turn made death the more likely. There was in every sense a vicious circle. A sober estimate suggests that 'in 1470 the number of households was halved in most European villages compared with the start of the fourteenth century'; ... 14

The conditions in France occasioned by the plague, famine and other associated problems did, however, indirectly benefit the growth of centralised royal power. The impact of a money economy had, at an early date in France, forced many of the smaller feudal lords to commute traditional services into annual dues, and rents.

In France, where feudalism flourished in all its anarchical vigour, the relation of the lords to their land was more political and jurisdictional and less purely economic than England. It was therefore more subject to the operation of non-economic forces. Sub-infeudation was here much commoner than in England. The necessity of keeping a large military force caused most great lords, both lay and ecclesiastical, to grant out large parts of their land to armed vassals, so that much of the land was held directly by petty lords, who were constantly engaged in warfare and whose economic condition was generally precarious. ... The insecurity caused by feudal warfare, together with the chronic financial embarrassment and general irresponsibility that seems to have characterised the French nobles, may also go far to explain why they resorted to the expedient of renting out the greater part of their demesne lands at an unusually early date.¹⁵

The immediate effects of such procedures, outlines above, may have made the feudal lord financially secure, however, with the general rise of prices during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Europe, the fixed income became a problem. As the financial independence of the noble class was threatened, the power of the monarchy to raise money on a more general scale in France was increasing. The noble courtier, dependent upon the favour of the monarch was far in the future, but the gradual process that

led to such a situation was apparent during the fifteenth century.

Apart from the financial embarrassment of many of the smaller nobles in France, they were further alienated by developments in military organization.

The crisis through which the noble class passed in these centuries was rendered more acute by a prolonged agricultural depression, by rising prices resulting from monetary inflation, and by the devastation and social disorder caused by wars and epidemics of unprecedented magnitude and duration. Finally, warfare on a national scale forced drastic changes in military organization and technique, which deprived the nobles of their monopoly of armed force, laid their castles open to siege by artillery, substituted royal armies for the feudal levy, and brought the heavily armored knight to the verge of obsolescence.¹⁶

Increasingly during the fifteenth century mercenaries replaced the feudal lords in the conduct of war.

On the whole at the end of the fifteenth century the really strong elements in the king's army were the paid professional troops; the compagnies d'ordonnance, the foreign detachments of infantry, and the artillery. These constituted a powerful instrument of warfare soon to be put to the test in Italy.¹⁷

The feudal knight concerned with chivalric conduct survived the fifteenth century but was increasingly an anachronism. The mercenary character of warfare was antagonistic to the spirit of chivalry. Warfare had become a business enterprise, and, for many of the common-born foot soldiers, a trade.

Though never averse to plunder, the medieval knight had fought at his own expense, and so retained a kind of amateur standing. During the fourteenth century, however, the growing disparity between falling income and the rising cost of plate armor, together with the long terms of service, made pay a necessity even for nobles who owed service as vassals of the crown. After the early stages of the war, both sides depended increasingly upon mercenaries. Aside from the notorious "Free Companies" which fought wherever there was pay and in time of truce plundered the countryside, the English army was from the beginning composed of companies raised on contract by nobles or knights who acted as military entrepreneurs.

Under Charles V and again toward the end of the war, the French adopted a similar system. Under these circumstances pay, plunder and ransom money became aims more and more openly avowed. 18

By the end of the Hundred Years War, in 1453, the monarchy was in a much stronger position than was the case at the beginning of the conflict. The changes in the conduct of warfare had taken the advantage out of independent action on the part of the feudal lords. At the same time the general impoverishment of the noble class made any serious problems of power and control unlikely. In many cases, by the end of the war, the impoverished nobles had only one alternative if they were to maintain their state and that was to enter the service of one of the royal princes or the king. At the same time the opposition to the English which by the end of the war became fairly general in France, encouraged national sentiment and as a corollary, devotion to the monarch.

Charles VII still had a further problem to contend with, however, in the strength of the Duke of Burgundy.

The ducal territories were enormous. The duchy itself and the Free County lay in north-east France and on its borders. The addition of Flanders in the north-west gave the dukes every inducement to join together their divided patrimony. This junction was achieved in the early decades of the fifteenth century: 1421, Namur; 1428, Hainault, Holland, Friesland and Zeeland; 1430 Brabant and Limburg; 1435, Luxemburg. The 'free' bishoprics of liège, Cambria and Utrecht were under Burgundian control. Thionville, Rethel, Lower Lorraine and Upper Alsace were linked by subsidiary alliances. The treaty of Arras not only excused the duke for his lifetime from ties of homage to the king, but added to his territories Auxerre and the 'Somme Towns' ... which threatened the Seine valley and Paris; these last places it was agreed, might be repurchased by the king, a course which no one in 1435 could imagine a king affording or a duke conceding. 19

The strength of Burgundy became a focal point in the later part of

Charles VII's reign and that of his successor, Louis XI. The relative independence of the duke of Burgundy was an incentive to many of the rebellious princes.

In 1437 Charles VII was faced with rebellious magnates, led by Charles of Bourbon; in 1440 a major rising of the grandees (John V of Brittany, the duke of Bourbon, Dunois, and the Dauphin Louis) caused so much disturbance that it was called (from contemporary troubles in Bohemia) the 'Praguerie'. The duke of Alençon was a traitor to both Charles VII and Louis XI (1456, 1774) and so was the count of Armagnac (1455, 1469). 20

The struggle against the rebellious magnates occupied much of the reign of Louis XI (1461 - 1483). In 1465 the magnates organized a coalition against the king known as the League of the Common Weal. The leader in this revolt was the Duke of Burgundy. The League was organized in terms of traditional feudal privileges, they wanted a decrease in royal taxation and a free hand in their feudal domains. The name of the League was, in many respects, a misnomer. The magnates were basically concerned with their own privileges and position. If they had been able to obtain the support of the lesser nobles and the bourgeoisie they may have been successful. Louis XI was able to outmaneuver the League, but Burgundy remained a problem throughout the reign. The succession of Charles VIII (1483 - 1498), a minor, precipitated further trouble with the nobles, in particular, Brittany.

The Breton dukes had always regarded themselves as sovereign in their own duchy. They admitted no royal officers in their domain; their subjects paid no royal taxes; and they followed a completely independent foreign policy. The size, military strength and strategic position of Brittany made it, when in alliance with foreign powers, a real menace to the security of France, and the regent accordingly devoted her energies to subduing it. 21

Brittany was finally subdued in 1491 by the marriage of Anne of Brittany to Charles VIII.

By 1491 Charles VIII was in a strong position in France. His control over France encouraged him in his foreign ambitions, and in 1494 he invaded Italy. The invasion of Italy was an indication of the increased centralization of power around the monarchy and the consequent decline in traditional feudal organization which had left the monarch, politically and militarily, at the mercy of the great landed magnates

The reigns of Louis XI and Charles VIII witnessed not only the territorial consolidation of France and the extension of royal authority to all parts of the realm, but also a steady, if less spectacular growth in all the organs of royal government, and this growth continued at an accelerated pace under Louis XII (1498 - 1515) ... 22

The structure of the government was not changed in any radical manner, rather the process begun under earlier kings was continued.

The institutions of central government were elaborated and made more efficient, while local government was brought more directly under the control of the absolute monarchy. The administration of justice and the fiscal system were reformed by royal ordinances, and were made more systematic and more highly centralized. Above all, there was a notable increase in the number and activity of royal officers throughout the kingdom. 23

In many cases it was the activity of the royal officials which helped to accelerate the process of consolidation and the extension of royal power. As was indicated earlier, these officials were drawn increasingly from the middle classes; they were lawyers and clerks. They were dependent upon the monarchy for their positions, their security, and their advancement. Consequently, it was in their interests to further the ambitions of the monarch, at the expense of traditional feudal privileges.

The political situation in France during the fifteenth century may be related to two important and interrelated factors, the conflict with the English and the internal conflict for power between the

monarchy and the feudal nobles. By the end of the century, both conflicts had been reduced, although not entirely solved, and the monarchy had managed to assert its power over the whole kingdom. Although the political climate had thus changed during the fifteenth century, and to some extent the institutions had changed to deal with the situation, nevertheless, many of the older forms remained. The assertion of royal power in many cases merely involved the absorption of the older forms of administration and jurisdiction under the monarch, and these, in many instances, were to remain static until the French Revolution.

Yet despite the triumph of centralization over particularism which the royal government achieved during this period, it did not succeed in imposing uniformity upon the laws and institutions of France. Many local variations of custom and jurisdiction, as well as inequalities in the weight of taxation and methods of collection, survived as a result of the piece-meal absorption of the various fiefs into the royal domain. In general the rising monarchy was content to assert its authority over local institutions of law and government without destroying them or replacing them with a uniform system.²⁴

What the monarchy had achieved over this period was to break the power of the nobles and with this the old feudal traditions. Many of the customs and privileges of the medieval period remained, but these usually took an economic or social form rather than a political or military form.

No longer able to rebel successfully, and stripped of the greater part of their authority over their dependents, the great nobles became courtiers and pensioners of the crown, finding in the pageantry and etiquette of the royal court a compensation for the loss of real power. The lesser nobility, too, impoverished by agricultural depression and the necessity of facing rising prices with a fixed income, sought careers in the royal army and took the king's pay.²⁵

It would appear that France, during the fifteenth century, represents as Ferguson points out, a period of transition. The framework of the society remained medieval in many respects, and the great nobles fought

against the changes in this pattern. However, the war and the ambitions of the various monarchs had, by the end of the century, changed and undermined the situation, such that only the empty forms of the medieval society remained.

The above trends are apparent only to some extent in the other spheres of cultural life as will be shown below. France was a contradiction during the fifteenth century. The political structures were undergoing change, but the character of the general social life gave the impression of little or no change. France cannot be compared to Italy during the same period in terms of its political development, although its political institutions were gradually evolving along different but equally 'modern' lines.

Economic Trends in France during the Fifteenth Century

The nature of the French economy during the fifteenth century was also affected by the progress of the Hundred Years War. At the same time the economic reversals of the fourteenth and early fifteenth century that were common to most areas in Western Europe, as was illustrated in the discussion of Italian economy in a previous chapter, affected the French economy. The most serious factor in the decline in the French economy was de-population. This factor was common to most of Western Europe as a consequence of the plague, but for an economy that revolved around agriculture as did the French, it was particularly serious.

The most serious blow to Europe's economy, however, was the radical decline in population which began with the wide-spread famines of 1315-17, but did not assume serious proportions until mid-century when the Black Death (1348-50) cut the population of Western Europe by a third or more. Thereafter recurrent visitations of the same plague, together with the devastation caused by

war, prevented the normal recouping of losses until the second half of the fifteenth century.²⁶

As a primarily agricultural and rural country, France was, until the fourteenth century, the center for international trade by land. It has already been indicated in Chapter Three of this study the importance of the fairs of Champagne and Brie as centers of international trade in the late middle ages.

For nearly a century the Champagne fairs filled their place as the great market of commerce and Western Europe with success. The Italian merchants, in particular, came thither in crowds and as they had long practice in commerce on a great scale, and as the transactions concluded at the Champagne fairs involved large monetary payments, their banker, or "money-dealers," soon occupied an important place there, ...²⁷

However, with the advent of the Hundred Years War, French commerce declined rapidly as did its agricultural prosperity.

At the end of the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th France seemed to longer of any importance from an economic point of view. Everywhere the suppression of fairs was proclaimed, on account of the insecurity of the roads, the decline in the population of towns, and the stoppage of looms; at Provins in 1399, only 30 were counted, where formerly 3,200 had been in full work; at Troyes, the number of workmen and apprentices fell from 500 in 1317 to 10 in 1419. The workmen, reduced to misery, were obliged to emigrate in order to find work: in 1417 the cloth-workers of St. Lô in Normandy thus migrated to Brittany; at the same time Rouen lost almost all her working population...²⁸

In general, the changes in the economic situation in France resulted in a greater use of a money economy, with the consequent disintegration of the traditional manorial economy.

As a predominantly rural economy the manorial system and its attendant feudal organization was particularly prevalent in France, despite the growth of the towns during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The populations of the latter areas did not form a majority in France, unlike their importance in Italy. By the beginning of the fifteenth

century agriculture had declined and those that lived on the land found themselves in severe economic difficulties.

The twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in short, had been a period of fairly general prosperity for both lords and tenants, and the changes involved in the introduction of money economy had been achieved without too great strain and largely within the framework of traditional institutions. Before the end of the thirteenth century, however, most of the land that could be worked profitably with existing techniques had apparently been cleared. Thereafter the expansion of the cultivated area ceased, and no improvement in agricultural methods occurred to make possible an expansion of production by more intensive cultivation. On the contrary, there is some evidence, though not conclusive, that average yields per acre in England declined during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, while in France large areas were laid waste and abandoned during the Hundred Years War. Landlords were thus forced to meet the loss of real income, which resulted generally from the expansion of money economy, without the compensation of increasing production.²⁹

In this situation, two trends became apparent: "the abandonment of direct farming of the demesne by the lord of his agents and the commutation of labor services to money payments."³⁰ When these trends took effect the manorial organization ceased to have any meaning,

... when the lord became a rentier, whose only interest in the land was the cash income he derived from it, he lost that close relation with his manorial tenants which was an essential part of the medieval system.³¹

The effects of these changes in the agricultural situation were reflected in the position of the peasant. The feudal lord who had altered the traditional feudal relationships of the land to a basically economic relationship found, during the late fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries, that he was condemned to a fixed income in a situation of rising prices and an increased standard of living. In order to off set some of the effects of these trends, the lord was often forced to grant concessions to the peasants. In many cases the concessions took a monetary form, and often the peasant was able to obtain

his freedom in this way.

The necessity of making concessions in order to keep their tenants, in addition to their own chronic need for money, sooner or later forced lords to grant freedom to their serfs, whether for a lump sum or for an annual payment added to the normal rent for the tenant's land. This change was facilitated by the fact that servile obligations had generally become fixed by custom in money terms and so could be more easily regarded as simply an additional charge upon the land.³²

Freedom did not necessarily improve the economic position of the peasant but it did give the peasant independence that reflected the gradual change in the medieval view of the three Estates and their relationships with each other. The changed position of the peasant was a reflection of the economic situation rather than a political reflection, as is illustrated by the retention, in many cases, by the lord of various jurisdictional powers. In other words, the political implications of status were retained despite the change in the original economic basis. Lacroix gives some indication of these privileges and dues exacted by the lords from their tenants.

The nobles enjoyed also the right of disinheritance, that is to say, of claiming the goods of a person dying on their lands who had no direct heir; the right of claiming a tax when a fief or domain changed hands; the right of common oven, or requiring vassals to make use of the mill, the oven, or the press of the lord. At the time of the vintage, no peasant might sell his wine until the nobles had sold theirs. Everything was a source of privilege for the nobles. ... If a noble was made a prisoner of war, his life was saved by his nobility, and his ransom had practically to be raised by the "vilains" of his domains.³³

The privileges retained by the nobles and lords were often, themselves an economic resource.

Thus in the domain of Montignac, the Count of Perigord claimed among other things as follows: "for every case of censure or complaint brought before him, 10 deniers; for a quarrel in which blood was shed, 60 sols; if blood was not shed, 7 sols; for use of ovens, the sixteenth loaf of each baking; for the sale of corn in the domain, 43 setiers: besides these, 6 setiers of rye, 161 setiers

of oats, 3 setiers of beans, 1 pound of wax, 8 capons, 17 hens, and 37 loads of wine." There were a multitude of other rights due to him, including the provostship fees, the fees on deeds, the tolls and furnaces of towns, the taxes on salt, on leather, corn, nuts; fees for the right of fishing; for the right of sporting, which last gave the lord a certain part of quarter of the game killed, and, in addition, the dime or tenth part of all the corn, wine, etc. ...³⁴

These traditional rights and privileges which the nobles retained despite the changed status of the peasant provided a source of revenue, but not on any sufficient scale as to offset the difficulties felt by the increased costs and prices, and the agricultural reversals of the period.

The disintegration of the manorial system in France, ... was accompanied by the enfranchisement of the unfree peasant, but the process was not as universally effective. By the end of the fifteenth century there were only a few serfs left in France, but where serfdom survived it continued until the French Revolution. That the enfranchisement of the French peasantry stopped short of completion was largely because of the jurisdictional rather than economic powers retained by the French nobles. The seigneurie, in short, outlasted the manor.³⁵

The possibilities of trade and commerce were not explored by the French noble class, in fact, in contrast to the Italian situation, the French aristocracy retired to the country during the fifteenth century, rather than being absorbed in the populations of the developing towns and cities.

Although France was primarily an agricultural and rural country, it had not been immune to the commercial developments of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In fact, France during that period enjoyed great prosperity with the rise of international commerce, the introduction of money on a large scale, and the consequent growth of towns and cities. In particular, the Netherlands, which was largely controlled by the Dukes of Burgundy and at this period consisted generally of modern Belgium and Holland and parts of northern France, was a prosperous

commercial and industrial area during this period.

Flanders and other states of the southern Netherlands, ... had been flourishing centers of industry and commerce since the Early Middle Ages. Favored by their geographical position on the North Sea, and close to the mouths of the Rhine and the Meuse which drained the commerce of western Germany and northern France, blessed, too, with rich agricultural land capable of supporting a large population, these territories occupied a place in the economic life of northern Europe comparable to that of Italy in the Mediterranean.³⁶

By the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, however, the commerce of the Netherlands was declining. Part of the reason for the decline was the change from inland trade to sea trade, the latter monopolized by the Italians.

... the Netherlanders, unlike the Italians, did not continue to exploit actively the opportunities afforded by their central position, but allowed the carrying trade which passed through their ports to slip out of their hands. Of the several factors which contributed to this strange development, perhaps the most important was the general shift in the center of gravity of European trade from the inland fairs to the ports of the northern and western coast. After the turn of the century, Flemish merchants ceased to frequent the Champagne fairs, which had dwindled away, smothered by the fiscal solicitude of Philip the Fair. Flemish cloth still travelled south in great quantities, but it went in Venetian or Genoese galleys, ... At the same time, the sea-borne trade of the Hanseatic cities was replacing the older overland routes to northern and eastern Germany.³⁷

The decline in sea ventures was only one factor in the changes in the economic position of the Netherlands and northern France. Related to the monopoly of the Italians over the carrying trade, the merchants who had formed a patrician oligarchy and controlled the cloth trade to their own advantage in the earlier period, gradually lost their exclusive control. They failed to develop in a comparable manner to their Italian counterparts. One factor that contributed to the gradual decline in power, in a general socio-political sense as well as an economic one, were the series of revolts on the part of the craft guilds, in

particular, the weavers, in 1302.

This revolt left the guilds of wool-workers and the minor crafts in control of the government of Flemish cities. It destroyed the old patrician houses and left the cities with a strongly anti-French sentiment which the English kings later exploited to good advantage. Deprived of the political power to protect their monopolies, the merchant patriciate declined, to be replaced by the newly risen classes of drapers and courtiers. The latter, though large and prosperous groups, and comfortably wealthy, were prevented by their concentration on the local market from making the great fortunes that had been characteristic of the older merchants, or the still greater fortunes made by the Florentine cloth dealers through the combination of industrial with commercial and financial enterprise.³⁸

As Ferguson indicates above, the merchant oligarchy in the Netherlands did not develop in the same manner as their Italian counterparts. The system continued to be organized along capitalistic lines, but the merchants themselves did not take any initiative in political activities in relationship to their social and economic standing. The reaction of the minor guilds to their victories in 1302 only reinforced the conditions that the weavers had been concerned about in the first place. The minor craft guilds reinforced their exclusive monopolies and the weavers, and also the dyers and fullers continued to be wage workers. In further uprisings on the part of the workers during the fourteenth century, the merchant class and the masters of the minor guilds joined together to suppress the revolts.

By 1450 the woollen industry was declining and the social unrest of the preceding century had died out. The major reason for the decline of the woollen industry was not the commercial revolution of sea-trade as opposed to land-trade or the social unrest in the Netherlands, but the decreased supply of their raw materials, that is, English wool.

... economic and social changes in England, ... reduced the production of wool or, at least, held it in a state of stability.

Finally, and by far the most important factors, the English weaving industry was advancing with rapid strides and was using more and more of the native wool. What chance the Flemings had of competing with English industry was wrecked by the fiscal policy of the English kinds, who placed an enormous export tax on wool. ... By the second half of the fifteenth century, the thousands of weavers in Bruges, Ghent, and Ypres had shrunk to a miserable handful, whose labor served only the local market. Ypres, with an economy dependent almost entirely on the weaving industry, was the hardest hit. There the population dropped from more than twenty thousand in the early fourteenth century to less than eight thousand toward the end of the fifteenth. In 1486, a third of the remaining inhabitants were reported to be destitute and reduced to begging.³⁹

Although the Netherlands was gradually losing its importance in the wool industry by the fifteenth century, the Netherland merchant was still an important economic factor. Copper-beating and bronze-founding were also important industries located in this area, and Liege was the center of a large iron industry; all of these industries flourished, particularly those whose produce was in some way utilized for war, such as the production of firearms. At the same time Bruges was the center of international exchange. The colonies of Italian merchants and bankers in Bruges made the city the money market of Europe during this period.

The Netherlands, although connected with France through the allegiance of the Duke of Burgundy, cannot be considered typical of French economy or urban development. As has been indicated earlier, France developed flourishing urban centers at an early date. However, the effects of the war, the plague, and the resulting de-population, had an adverse effect on the economy in general. From the start of the Hundred Years War, France appeared to gradually stagnate economically, but the towns survived even if the populations were reduced, and as Tilley points out, by the middle of the fifteenth century, when the war was beginning to abate, the economy began to revive rapidly.

But France was to recover from her state of ruin with that astonishing rapidity, ... The Hundred Years' War was not yet over, the national territory was not yet liberated, when already at those places where danger no longer threatened, economic activity revived.⁴⁰

The establishment of silk manufacture in Lyons by Louis XI in 1466 is some indication of the revival of commerce in France during the fifteenth century. Although the industry did not thrive in Lyons, because of the clash with the interests of the local authorities, Louis transferred the workmen and imported craftsmen to Tours in 1470 which was more amenable to royal control and the industry flourished.

From the small beginnings of the first colony of about sixteen members the establishment grew until at the beginning of the sixteenth century there were some eight hundred masters and four thousand workers involved in the various processes of the manufacture of silk, ...⁴¹

Although the monarchy, particularly Louis XI, took an interest in the revival of commerce, this interest did not extend to classes other than the merchant class.

Certainly the government of that time little understood the advantages which a country derived from commerce when it forbade the higher classes from engaging in mercantile pursuits under penalty of having their privileges of nobility withdrawn from them. In the face of examples of Italy, Genoa, Venice, and especially Florence, where the nobles were all traders or sons of traders, the kings of the line of Valois thought proper to make this enactment. The desire seemed to be to make the merchant class a separate class, stationary, and consisting exclusively of bourgeois, shut up in their counting-houses, and prevented in every way from participating in public life.⁴²

The lack of interest shown by the monarchy in expanding the merchant class may have been related to the political position of the bourgeois. An alliance with the nobility, even in a strictly economic form, could have had serious consequences for the monarchy's attempt to consolidate its power over and above the power of the noble classes. The impoverishment of the nobility, particularly the lesser nobility, after the

War may have prompted this class to recoup their fortunes and their power in commercial endeavours. The actions of the monarchy, however, in terms of their enactments concerning nobility and their increased control over the financial returns of the country effectively prevented any recruitment of nobles to commercial activity.

The attitude of the monarchy towards the merchant also prevented, indirectly, the establishment of a stable patrician class. In Italy, although the "second generation" of merchants sons tended to adopt aristocratic styles of life, they nevertheless remained, in the majority of cases, connected with commerce and the sources of their wealth. Commerce did not, in Italy, carry a social stigma that it appeared to carry in France, basically because the patrician class had nearly all achieved their social positions through commerce. In France, mobility for the merchant or bourgeois in an upward direction, by implication of the monarch's decree, involved rejection of their commercial activities.

Commercial activity was only one avenue of mobility for the bourgeoisie. Increasingly, during the fifteenth century, the administrators and councillors for the monarch were drawn from this class. Again, the interests of the monarchy in relationship to the suppression of the power of the nobles, may have prompted this situation. As was indicated in the previous section, the bourgeois office-holder was likely to be more diligent and more loyal to the monarch than was the case with the noble class who retained interests and allegiances apart from those of the monarchy.

Education and legal training, too, opened the way to profitable employment in the administration of city or state. Royal government, indeed, was being staffed increasingly in these years by trained men drawn from the upper bourgeoisie. Some patrician

families established actual dynasties of royal jurists and administrators.⁴³

In general, the economic conditions in France during the fifteenth century were not as advanced in their organization and complexity as was the case for Italy. With few exceptions, commercial activity on any large scale was confined to the Duchy of Burgundy, in particular Flanders, and to some extent to the ports in Southern France which exported wine to the Mediterranean countries. Again with the exception of Flanders, industrial activity was still in the hands of the master craftsmen concerned basically with the local market. Although a revival of trade and commerce is apparent in France in the later part of the fifteenth century, the concentration of small industries in the hands of a few master craftsmen in many cases impeded the development of "capitalistic" enterprises. The craftsmen, initially, intensified the controls of the guild organizations and in many cases curtailed the potential for mobility that trade and commerce opened up for many Italians.

All over Europe guilds appeared in cities where none had existed before or in crafts that had hitherto been regulated only by the city government. In France their number increased enormously, fostered by the royal policy of using the guilds as instruments of governmental control.⁴⁴

An example of the contradictory nature of France's economic recovery is to be found in the career of Jaques Coeur. Coeur was the son of a Bourges furroer, who made a fortune in international trade. His career was similar to the rise of the great merchant families in Italy. Unfortunately, Coeur was unable to consolidate his position in a manner similar to the Italian patricians. By 1451 he had fallen from royal favour and by 1456, when he died, he had lost his fortune. Part of the

reason for the decline of the Coeur fortunes lies in the fact that the monarchy controlled, in the last resort, the mobility of such enterprising merchants. In the case of the Italian merchant, mobility was mainly curtailed by the activities of the market. In France, a merchant's career was not only dependent upon the nature of the market, but also upon the benevolence of the monarch. Unlike Italy, Coeur is the only example of the rising capitalist entrepreneur in France during this period.

In general, the revival of trade and commerce in France during the later part of the fifteenth century was on a very small scale. At the same time, the transition, which this revival indicates, takes a very different form in France with its increasingly centralized monarchy, than was the case for Italy.

In the commercial competition in which all of the countries of Europe now took part, France's share was very much smaller than it had been before the long trial she had just experienced. Flanders, Artois, and Burgundy were no longer integral parts of the kingdom, and their wealth, greatly increased since 1450, did not profit the king or his subjects. The routes of international trade, which had formally crossed the Capetian provinces, had definitely deserted them. From Florence and Venice they crossed the central Alps, brought prosperity to the fairs at Geneva, which Lyons never managed to rival seriously, then crossed southern Germany, a regular paradise for international banking, and by way of the Rhineland, ended at Antwerp, whose rise now eclipsed the fading fame of Bruges. The French fairs, which multiplied through a kind of artificial emulation, took part only remotely and indirectly in this European development, from which the king's subjects were too often excluded.⁴⁵

More important than the problems France encountered in relation to international trade, particularly after the Hundred Years War, was the decline in agriculture that had been a consistent feature throughout the War period. The towns had not suffered to the same extent as the populations of the countryside during the war. The epidemics, and the

war had greatly reduced the population of the countryside and consequently France's productive capacity.

For it was the rural economy which, as always in such cases, had suffered the most. ... Some districts were practically deserted; their inhabitants were either dead or had fled from epidemics or on the approach of routiers. Once the danger had passed, the more courageous returned, but in such small numbers that villages once prosperous now counted only a few families. Farming was so diminished that it threatened to be insufficient for feeding the towns, in which scarcity of food and the high cost of living endangered the wretched workpeople. Such a situation impoverished all those who lived on the land, especially the lords who found their rents reduced to nothing by the encroachments of heath and waste land.⁴⁶

For a country that had been and still had primarily an agricultural basis, the situation in the fifteenth century was serious. Attempts were made to attract people to the land, in particular through the commutation of many of the feudal labour services into payments in cash. However, improvements in the peasants conditions with respect to the changes in feudal obligations were largely offset by the increased burden of royal taxation, and the general rise in the cost of living.

During the fifteenth century, it would appear that France, in terms of its economy, was only gradually emerging from the feudal forms that had been characteristic of the period prior to the Hundred Years War. The changes that were to have more important effects during the sixteenth century were apparent in the later period of the fifteenth century; however this period represents the initial stages of the transition. France remained, in terms of its institutional economic structure, largely feudal in form. The greatest impetus for change was the increased power of the monarchy. However, the consolidation of royal power and the real change in the status of the feudal nobility, is only beginning during the fifteenth century.

Some indication has been given in the above two sections of the

nature of social life during the fifteenth century in France. In the following section, this aspect will be considered in more detail.

Family and Social Life in France during
the Fifteenth Century

Prior to the fifteenth century, France represented, in its characteristic social structure, the best example of the feudal social relationships. The idea of the "three Estates," discussed in Chapter Three, was characteristic of the interrelationships of French society. Increasingly, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the bourgeois of the developing towns were introducing an alien element into this structure, but their influence was minimal compared, for example, to their development in Italy.

The distinction between the noble and the non-noble was clearly drawn in France. Nobility was an hereditary status, based upon the feudal tenure of land. In their relationship with the land, the noble had many rights and privileges, some of which have been indicated in the previous section. These rights and privileges not only defined the relationship between the noble and his peasant tenants, but also contributed to the nobles' style of life.

When the feudal nobles granted to their vassals the right of assembling on certain days, in order to hold fairs and markets, they never neglected to reserve to themselves some tax on each head of cattle, as well as on the various articles brought in and put up for sale. As these fairs and markets never failed to attract a great number of buyers and sellers, this formed a very lucrative tax for the noble.⁴⁷

The style of life of the noble of the fifteenth century was related in many of its details to the code of conduct delimited by the term "chivalry." The basis of such a code of conduct was the military function that the nobility was supposed to perform in the structure of the

"three Estates." Initially the term chivalry referred to the cavalry or the armed horsemen of the middle ages. The term was gradually restricted to those who had been knighted and formed the "order of chivalry." The term referred to a number of customs and ideals which were seen to be the exclusive prerogative of the knightly class. The behaviours expected of the noble knight were supported by the Church. Christian virtues were part of the code of conduct and the Crusades were supposedly the practical expression of the religious aspect of chivalry.

Apart from the implications the chivalric code of behaviour had upon the military behaviour of the nobles, the code was an important part of the educational system of the nobility. The noble youth, of either sex, was sent as a page, squire or maid of honour into the service of the sovereign or one of the princes or princesses of the blood. The service was a combination of education in behaviour and chivalric ideals.

Under Charles VIII, Louis XII, and Francis I, the service of the young nobility, which was called "apprenticeship of honour or virtue," had taken a much wider range; for the first families of the French nobility were most eager to get their children admitted into the royal household, either to attend on the King or Queen, or at any rate on one of the princes of the royal blood.⁴⁸

For the females, the educational process was the preliminary to an arranged marriage in which the romantic love concept, so much a part of the poet's conception of the knight, rarely played any part. The idea of romantic love was reserved for the favours of a lady other than one's wife, and was assumed to be a courtly and platonic love. According to Hauser, the origins of courtly love lie in the educational procedures of the period.

The princess or lady of the castle was the center around whom all the life of the place revolved. Knights and court singers all paid

homage to this well-educated, wealthy, and powerful lady, who no doubt may often have been young and attractive as well. Daily contact between a host of young unmarried men and so desirable a woman in insular seclusion from the outside world, the caresses of husband and wife which they would inevitably witness with the ever present thought that she belonged to him wholly and to him alone--all this must have produced in so insular a world a state of erotic tension. This tension, since it had, as a rule, no other means of satisfaction, found expression in the sublimated form of courtly love. The beginnings of this nervous eroticism would date from the time when many of the young men now in the lady's retinue first came to court, as children into her household, and spent the most important years for a boy's development under her influence. The whole system of chivalric education favoured the growth of strongly erotic ties. Till his fourteenth year a boy was entirely under the control of women, spending his childhood in the care of his mother and the subsequent years in that of some lady of the court, who supervised his education. For seven years he remained in the service of this lady, attended her about the house, accompanied her on jurneys, and was instructed by her in all the arts of courtly behaviour, in courtly manners and accomplishments. The whole enthusiasm of a half-grown boy would be concentrated upon this lady, and his fancy would form his ideal of love after her image.⁴⁹

The education of the noble was completed by instruction in the arts of warfare from the prince whose service he entered at fourteen. By the fifteenth century, the chivalric order was largely an anachronism in practical terms. The art of warfare and the changes in weapons during this period made the code of chivalry a decorative and ideal concept divorced from reality. Nevertheless, the code was adhered to by the nobility. The best example of this situation is to be found in the Burgundian Order of the Golden Fleece.

If the Golden Fleece eclipsed all the other orders, it is because the dukes of Burgundy placed at tis disposal the resources of their enormous wealth. In their view, the order was to serve as a symbol of their power.⁵⁰

The Order of the Golden Fleece was primarily a political manouver on the part of the dukes of Burgundy and had little relationship to the art of warfare other than a symbolic relationship. In conjunction with this order, Philip the Bold, in 1454, took the 'vow of the peasant,'

which was a ceremonial pledge to undertake a crusade. The crusade was, of course, never undertaken, and the whole situation was a symbolic means of restating the position and social customs of a particular social class which was increasingly under pressure from the more general social changes of the period.

The medieval framework of the nobility's social condition during the fifteenth century is in sharp contrast with the style of life of the Italian princes and merchant oligarchy. Apart from the possibility of losing one's right to claim nobility, the French noble class did not attempt to take part in or to understand the economic and commercial changes of the age. The typical pattern of education for the nobility is medieval, with no emphasis upon the more "functional" learning for commerce that characterized the Italian's education. The impractical nature of the nobility's style of life during the fifteenth century was, to some extent, an indication of their future status as courtiers to an all-powerful monarch.

As knighthood lost much of its practical value and the exclusive privileges that had pertained to it, it became a more purely decorative honor. To this gradual change in the character of knighthood, which seems to have begun about the middle of the fourteenth century, the kings and princes contributed in two divergent ways. On the one hand, they robbed it of something of its exclusively military character by conferring it on wealthy aldermen, jurists, and administrators. On the other hand, they created within the universal order of chivalry special decorative orders, such as the English Order of the Garter (1340), the French Order of the Star (1352), the magnificent Burgundian Order of the Golden Fleece (1430), and some dozen others. These orders had no other function than to enhance the prestige of the monarchy by the performance of elaborate and colourful ceremonies at court. They were highly valued, however, because of their exclusive character and as evidencers of royal favor, for to acquire favor with the king was becoming a major aim in the life of those nobles fortunate enough to secure a position at court.⁵¹

It has already been indicated in the first section of the present

chapter that the financial position of the nobility during the fifteenth century was increasingly strained. In a society in which land was the major economic resource the position of the nobility was supreme; however, as money became a more viable and desirable form of economic exchange, the nobility found that their land did not allow them to compete with the newer economic forms. The problem for the nobility accentuated by the de-population of the countryside by the plague, famine and the war. The nobility in France, unlike the old Italian nobility, did not move into the towns and become, in time, part of the urban social scene.

The northern nobles, save for rare exceptions, were not drawn into the cities and hence did not merge with the wealthy urban class. They still formed a predominantly landholding class, the distinguishing characteristics of which were noble birth and a congenital propensity to warfare and plunder. Their spheres of activity were the castle, the camp and the court. Even when attendance at a royal or princely court brought them into the capital city, they did not become part of the city's society. However desperate their need for money, they shunned the marts of trade and regarded with mingled envy and contempt the merchants and financiers, whose profitable activity they could not emulate without losing their privileged noble status. The northern nobles thus continued through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to live, as far as changing conditions permitted, within the traditional patterns of social life that had been established in the preceding period.⁵²

The court of the duke of Burgundy in the fifteenth century is an example of the type of noble behaviour divorced from the realities of the social situation. Philippe de Commynes comments on the state of Burgundy in his memoirs;

The subjects of the house of Burgundy were very prosperous at this time because of the long era of peace which they had enjoyed and because of the kindness of the ruling prince, who levied few taxes on the people. It seems to me that at this time his territories more than any others in the world could be called promised lands. They were abundant with riches and in perfect repose, such as they have never been since; ... The expenditures and clothes of men and women were sumptuous and extravagant; the entertainments and banquets were larger and more prodigal than any given elsewhere to my knowledge; the bathing parties and other diversions with

women were on a grand scale, disorderly and rather immodest: I refer to women of low estate. In short, it seemed at the time to the subjects of this house that no prince could be magnificent enough to suit them or even to startle them.⁵³

The period between 1419 and 1467 represents the period in which the Burgundian court was amongst the most powerful in Europe and in many aspects outshone the court of the French monarch. The style of life enjoyed by the dukes of Burgundy included all the courtly and feudal aspects of the medieval nobles' life style, only on a more extravagant scale.

When, at Lille, in 1454, Philip the Good, preparing for his crusade, crowns his extravagant feasts by the celebrated Vows of the Peasant, it is like the last manifestation of a dying usage, which has become a fantastic ornament, after having been a very serious element of earlier civilization. The old ritual, such as chivalrous tradition and romance taught it, is carefully observed. The vows are taken at the banquet; the guests swear by the pheasant served up, one "bluffing" the other, just as the old Norsemen vied with each other in fool-hardy vows sworn in drunkenness by the boar served up. There are pious vows, made to God and to the Holy Virgin, to the ladies and to the bird, and others in which the Deity is not mentioned. They contain always the same privations of food or of comfort: not to sleep in a bed on Saturday, not to take animal food on Friday, etc. One act of asceticism is heaped upon another: ... The method of accomplishing the vowed exploit is minutely specified and registered.⁵⁴

The crusade for which the vows of the Pheasant were taken, never took place. The style of life of the duke of Burgundy rivaled that of the Medici or the Renaissance Popes in conspicuous consumption. However there is a difference in the manner in which the style was accomplished and the ends pursued by such expenditures. The duke was competing with the French monarchy in the splendour of his court, however, monetary expenditure was not sufficient to confer the sort of prestige desired.

Lacking a royal title, but determined to play a royal role on the European stage, Philip advertised to the world the unrivalled financial resources that made him in fact the equal of kings.

Wealth alone, however, was not enough to make a royal court. The prestige of the prince also demanded that he be surrounded by formal ceremony and attended by a hierarchy of court officials at every hour of the day, all regulated by the most minute protocol. He had also to play the generous and discriminating patron of the arts. Finally, he called into his service the still unbroken prestige of nobility and chivalry, filling the court with nobles of ancient lineage from his own estates and abroad, and creating in the Golden Fleece the most magnificent of all the orders of chivalry.⁵⁵

The Burgundian court was the last example of the older feudal forms and they existed in a context that was rapidly changing. The dukes of Burgundy may have rivalled the kings of France in their style of life, but the political and economic developments of the fifteenth century eventually overcame the power of such feudal nobles to affect the position and power of the monarch.

If the position of the noble class was being gradually undermined during the fifteenth century, that of the bourgeoisie was becoming increasingly important. The bourgeoisie however, cannot be said to have formed a coherent class during this period, and their economic power was not comparable to that of their Italian counterparts in the same period.

Save for parts of Italy, Germany, Catalonia and the Low Countries, towns and townsmen were relatively less important in public life than the nobles and gentlemen. On the other hand, although they constituted a minute proportion of the population, they were by now an indispensable ingredient of western society. Commerce, local and long distance, was now essential to the organization of daily life; seigneurs and peasants were profoundly affected by it; commercial wealth had come to be a supplement to agrarian wealth. And the key points for trade and commerce were the towns.⁵⁶

Although the bourgeoisie did not form a coherent class, and were not politically important in France, within the bourgeoisie certain divisions are apparent. The most striking contrast is that between the "patricians" and the petty burghers. The term, "patrician" was used by Pirenne

to describe the economically and socially dominant class in the towns which emerged during the thirteenth century.⁵⁷ By the late fifteenth century this group had become entrenched in its position as the dominant group in the urban centers.

What gave the patrician his social eminence was partly his connection with long distance trade, partly his possession of property in the town, partly his control over town government. The aristocracy of the town was composed of families used to the monopoly of power, accustomed to the enjoyment of greater wealth than other townsmen. In important towns the patricians formed a coterie or caste, intermarrying within themselves, jealous of newcomers to fortune, anxious to manipulate town government, and above all town taxation, in their own interest.⁵⁸

Whereas in Italy, the patrician class had formed an important part of the political control of the cities and in many cases had intermarried with the older nobility, in France, this class was clearly distinguished from the nobility and their political power outside the immediate urban environment was curtailed. It is not until the later part of the fifteenth century that this class is able to exert any influence upon the political conditions of France, and even at this point, their influence is curtailed by the increasing absolutism of the monarchy.

Whatever political power or influence the patrician class was able to exert was indirect. It has already been indicated that Charles VI and Louis XI utilized the bourgeoisie in their consolidation of their power through the various ministeries established at this time. Nevertheless, the usefulness and the influence of this class of administrators and jurists was largely confined to the regional and local level. This point is reinforced by a consideration of the Estates General. The Estates General were in theory the representative assemblies summoned by the monarch and included the nobility, the clergy, and the representative of the bourgeoisie. Initially this body had been used by Philip IV

in 1302 to enlist support for his quarrel with the pope.

In the beginning at least, the Estates General, like other similar assemblies created in nearly every Western European state at the beginning of the fourteenth century, was summoned on the king's initiative and its sole purpose was to extend royal power. Feudal kings had always summoned a Great Council of their vassals-in-chief for consultation when important decisions had to be made. It was natural, then, that kings who were beginning to exercise an extra-feudal authority should wish to summon a more widely representative body, including representatives of the townspeople with whom the king had no feudal relation. The Estates General was in essence an extra-feudal extension of the Great Council, and was composed of the three Estates of the realm, the clergy, the nobles and the bourgeoisie respectively.⁵⁹

Assemblies of the Estates General were usually convened for the purpose of granting consent to some extraordinary royal tax during a period of national crisis. However, Charles V (1364-80) effectively prevented the development of the theory that the king must ask the consent of the Estates for any annual subsidies. By 1440 the Estates had permitted the monarch to assume the permanent right to levy a direct tax on all but the nobles and the clergy.

The absolute monarchy now had no further need of the Estates General, and after 1440 it dwindled quietly into obsolescence, though provincial Estates long remained active in local affairs. As a national institution it had been doomed from the start by the preponderance of regional interests, and by the fact that it was composed of three separate parts, each voting separately and each representing an exclusive class interest. The kings used to to gain national support when it suited their purpose, but rejected it when it threatened to limit their power. They had no inclination to exchange feudal restrictions for constitutional limitations. On the other hand, the nobles preferred to fight a losing battle to retain their individual prerogatives rather than to unit among themselves or with other classes in an attempt to control the royal government.⁶⁰

The bourgeoisie did not manage to assert their power on the national level as the position of the Estates General illustrates. The Estates as a controlling political body was hampered by both its composition and the regional interests, the latter often fluctuating during the war, such

that as a body it became largely ineffective. However, it was the one body through which the bourgeoisie had a voice in the political affairs of France, and their failure to take advantage of this body, like the failure of the nobles to form any coherent defense against the crown, is an indication of their lack of class organization during the fifteenth century.

The lack of any class consciousness on the part of the urban patriciate was furthered emphasized by the mobility of this class. In many cases, the establishment of the family fortunes through trade and commerce led to the gradual adoption of a "noble" life style, often consolidated by patents of nobility. In a society in which nobility retained many of its former privileges and status, despite the general economic reversals of this class, it is not surprising that the urban patriciate aspired to this status. However, the acquisition of such status was, in many ways, an economic and political mistake in the long run.

The patrician dynasties of the larger towns also, ... acquired much property in the countryside round the towns. They did this partly because land was the only secure investment, and partly because it gave them control over a regular supply of provisions. Acquisitions of rural property (especially in the north) tended to make the purchasers become founders of families of the lesser nobility. There were also many nobles who married their sons to wealthy bourgeois heiresses. Other connections with the nobility offered themselves: the law might lead a merchant's son to court; an ecclesiastical career enabled a townsman to rise in the social hierarchy; ...⁶¹

Although the patrician class of the Italian towns also became more aristocratic in their style of life as the fifteenth century progressed, there is a difference in that the nobility in Italy had, by that time, lost any distinctiveness in terms of status, style of life, or political influence from the urban patriciate.

Although the urban patriciate in France was politically ineffective except in terms of their local influence in a city or town, they maintained a high standard of living that in many cases rivalled that of the nobles. During this period sumptory laws were passed in an attempt to control the dress and expenditures of the bourgeoisie.

... the ladies of this class, proud of their immense fortunes, but above all proud of the municipal powers held by their families, bedecked themselves, regardless of expense, with costly furs and rich stuffs, notwithstanding that they were forbidden by law to do so.

Then came an outcry on the part of the nobles; and we read as follows, in an edict of Philippe le Bel, who inclined less to the bourgeoisie than to the nobles, and who did not spare the former in matters of taxation; - "No bourgeois shall have a chariot nor wear gold, precious stones, or crowns of gold and silver. Bourgeois, not being either prelates nor dignitaries of state, shall not have tapers of wax. A bourgeois possessing two thousand pounds (tournois) or more, may order for himself a dress of twelve sous six deniers, and for his wife one worth sixteen sous at the most." ...

But these regulations as to the mode of living were so little or so carelessly observed, that all the successors of Philippe le Bel thought it necessary to re-enact them, and, indeed, Charles VII., one century later, was obliged to censure the excess of luxury in dress by an edict which was, however, no better enforced than the rest. 62

The Parisian bourgeoisie appear to have been particularly lavish in their expenditures not only on dress, but also upon their houses and furnishings.

In spite of the laws, the Parisian bourgeoisie soon rivalled the Flemish in the brilliancy of their dress. Thus, in the second half of the fourteenth century, the famous Christine de Pisan relates that, having gone to visit the wife of a merchant during her confinement, it was not without some amazement that she saw the sumptuous furniture of the apartment in which the woman lay in bed. The walls were hung with precious tapestry of Cyprus, on which the initials and the motto of the lady were embroidered; the sheets were of fine linen of Rheims, and had cost more than three hundred pounds; the quilt was a new invention of silk and silver tissue; the carpet was like gold. ... It should be remarked that this lady was not the wife of a large merchant, such as those of Venice and Genoa, but of a simple retail dealer, who was not above selling articles for four sous; ... 63

The above remarks indicate that the bourgeoisie in the North could compete with the Italian merchant during this period in terms of their style of life. However, not all of the urban dwellers formed a part of this exclusive class. A large proportion of the town populations was made up of petty burghers.

The petty burghers included the local shopkeepers, smaller merchants, the masters of the craft guilds, and the various members of such professions as notaries, barber-surgeons, and lay school teachers. These members of the towns were primarily concerned with the local market and functioned within the framework of social and economic organization established in the previous eras. Below the petty burghers were the mass of urban workers and artisans who were generally deprived of any political rights in the administration of the town. Often the petty burghers, and increasingly so as the fifteenth century progressed, were also disenfranchised by the patrician bourgeois class.

At the start of the fourteenth century the group in control of the town's administration was generally either 'patrician' ... or else composed of a mixture of patrician and guild elements (by guild is meant the full members of the craft guilds, whose 'masters' represented broadly speaking a middle-class section of the urban population). Competing as they often were for power, the patricians and the guildsmen were of one mind about the exclusion from influence of the third component: the porters, labourers, unskilled workers. 64

Like the lesser guilds in Florence, by the late fifteenth century, the guild masters in the North had generally been manouvered from any real control over the administration of the towns and were as politically impotent as the group of labourers and unskilled workers making up the majority of the town population. However,

unlike the Italian situation, the dominance of the patrician element was in most cases curtailed by the authority of the monarch or some noble who had final control over the towns in their jurisdiction.

During the fifteenth century the guild regulations were more rigidly enforced and the masters of the guilds became more conservative and exclusive. Gradually more and more journeymen found it difficult to become masters. To a large extent the conservative reaction on the part of the guild masters was an attempt to preserve some of their traditional power in the town setting against the encroachments of the more wealthy patrician element. Some indication of the situation of the bourgeoisie, particularly the petty burghers class is to be found in the Journal D'un Bourgeois de Paris.⁶⁵ The Journal is an anonymous record of the events in Paris from 1405 to 1449. As such, the journal covers the period of the English occupation of Paris and the eventual recognition of Charles VII as King of France. The term, bourgeois, used in the title of the journal is not meant to refer to the author's position in the society, rather it is to indicate that the writer was a citizen of Paris. There has been speculation as to the social position and authorship of the journal, but it would appear that the only clearly defined knowledge of the author is that he was among the middle class, (Les moyens) as opposed to the nobility or the very poor, and in his discussion of the behaviours of the great princes and nobles he expressed a great deal of contempt.

Alloit ainsi le royaume de France de pis en pis; et povoiton mieux dire la Terre Déserte que la terre de France. Et tout ce estoit, ou la plus grant partie, par le duc de Bourgongne, qui estoit le plus long homme en toutes ses besongnes c'ont peust trouver; car il ne se mouvoit d'une cité quand il y estoit, ne que se fust paix par tout, se le peuple par force de plaintes ne l'esmouvoit; dont tout enchérit dans Paris de plus en plus.⁶⁶

Apart from the general effects of the war upon France, any discussion of the position of the townsmen should take into account the fact that in the early part of the fifteenth century the towns were often depopulated by the same causes as the countryside, and business may have been held up, if not ceased altogether, for certain periods. Siege warfare was still common, and the effects upon the commercial functions of any city or town subjected to such treatment were bound to be serious. At the same time, many cities, like Paris, were under English rule for some time and although commerce may have revived, it would nevertheless be expropriated by the occupying forces. Consequently, the townsman, whether petty burgher or patrician was bound to have suffered economically during the early part of the fifteenth century. Any discussion of the position of the townsmen during this period in comparison to that of the Italian urban population must be made in the light of the severe restrictions the war and the attendant problems such as plague and famine had imposed on the population in general.

The Journal gives some indication of the conditions in Paris during the early part of the fifteenth century in terms of rising prices and scarcities of foodstuff. A comparison of some of the prices quoted in the Journal for various years gives some indication of this situation.

(1421)

Item, le troisieme jour de novembre ensuivant, mil quatre cents vingt-un, fut de rechef la monnoye criée que les gros de seize deniers ne seroient mis que pour deux deniers; et firent autre monnoye qui ne valoit que deux deniers tournois; dont le peuple fut si oppressé et grevé, que pouvres gens ne povoient vivre; car comme choux, poreaux, oignons, verjus, etc., on n'avoit à mains de deux blancs, car ils ne valoient que un denier après le cri; et qui tenoit à louaige, maison ou autre chose, il en conveniot payer huit fois plus que le louaige, c'est à scavoir du franc huit francs, de huit francs soixant-quatre francs, ainsi des autres choses; dont le pouvre peuple ot tant à souffrir de faim et de froid, que nul ne le scet que Dieu.⁶⁷

(1417)

Item, en ce temps fut la char si chère, que un petit quartier de moutin valoit sept ou huit sols parisis, et un petit morsel de boeuf de bon endroit deux sols parisis, que on avoit en octobre pour six deniers parisis; une froissue de mouton deux ou trois blancs; une teste de mouton six deniers parisis; la livre de beurre salé huit blancs.⁶⁸

(1420)

Item, en ce temps avoit si grant faute de change à Paris, que les pouvres gens n'avoient nulles aumosnes, ou bien pou; car en ce temps quatre vieils deniers parisis valaient mieux qu'un gros de seize deniers, qui pur lors couroit, et faisoit-on de très mauvais lubres de huit deniers, qui par-devant furent tant refusés, et par justice deffendus les gros dessusdits. Et pour plus grever le povre commun, fut mis le pain de huit deniers à dix, et celui de seize à vingt.⁶⁹

The conditions in Paris were in many ways duplicated in other areas in France during the war. Paris was often the target of the rival forces and was occupied for a long period by the English. Some of the effects of the English occupation are mentioned in the Journal;

(1423)

Item, la darraïne sepmaine d'aoust vint le duc de Bourgongne à Paris, à petit preu pour le peuple, car il avoit grant compaignie qui tout dégastoit aux villaiges d'entour Paris, et les Anglois aussi y estoient. En icelui temps le vin estoit trop cher plus que long-temps n'avoit esté, et si y avoit très pou raisins es vignes; et encore ce pou dégastotent lesdits Anglois et Bourguignons, comme eussent fait porcs; et n'estoit nul qui en osast parler. Ainsi estoit le peuple gouverné par la malle et convoiteuse volenté de gros, qui gouvernoient Paris, qui tousjours estoient avec les signeurs, et n'avoient nulle pitié du povre peuple qui tant avoit de pauvreté;⁷⁰

The Journal indicates an antagonism in relation to the nobles and princes responsible, in the author's view, for the war and its attendant problems. In parts of the Journal, the author expresses his partisan views with respect to the waring factions, but all factions are condemned in terms of the effects of the war upon the Parisian population. There is also an indication of the general change of opinion on the part of the Parisian population towards the end of the war which made the consolidation of the monarchy's power easier. The increasingly nationalistic

attitudes of the population in general are expressed in terms of an increasing antagonism towards the English and the nobles who aligned themselves with them. However, this nationalistic attitude does not prevent the author from criticising the actions of the king towards the city of Paris. In certain places the author complains about the neglect of the city on the part of the monarch.⁷¹

Whatever the attitudes of the petty burgher class, or the patrician class towards the nobility, during this period they adopted the latter's standards in terms of general cultural attributes. The "middle classes" did not evolve any distinctive cultural traditions of their own. The possible exception to the latter point is to be found in the burghers of Flanders. The styles in painting, sculpture and literature, however, even in this area do not differ in any real respect from the tastes of the medieval nobility. The bourgeoisie had not adopted any distinctive style as was the case for their Italian counterparts, they were content to demonstrate their success in the styles patronised by the nobility.

They were still a far from homogeneous class, a great differentiation of wealth and status dividing the merchant capitalists and members of the learned professions from the rank and file of shopkeepers and guild masters. With rising prosperity and an increasing volume of production and exchange the population of the cities was growing in numbers and wealth, and hence in political influence. But, as we have seen, the growth of that influence was minimized by the desertion of the wealthiest and most influential families, who were able to fulfill their social aspirations by joining the ranks of the nobility or gentry. The time had not yet come when the French bourgeoisie would try to destroy the privileges of the nobility. As yet their highest ambition was to find a place for themselves among the privileged.⁷²

Whereas for the Italian bourgeoisie the adoption of an aristocratic style occurred after the changes that art and literature underwent during the fifteenth century, and consequently bore little resemblance to the former

aristocratic style of life; for the French bourgeoisie, the adoption of an aristocratic style included the adoption of the older feudal forms with its consequent repercussions on art and literature styles.

To a large extent the condition of the rest of the population that made up the town, the workers skilled and otherwise, was not very different from that of their Italian counterparts. Like the latter, the skilled workers and apprentices were finding it more difficult to obtain the position of "Master" as the guild regulations became more rigid, and the position became increasingly a hereditary position. The feudal framework exemplified in the guild structure was maintained, and the continuation of the system appears to have been a product of an increasingly conservative reaction that ultimately brought about the downfall of the system. From the accounts given in the Journal it is apparent that the poorer inhabitants of Paris in the early part of the fifteenth century lived precariously, being the victims of most of the severe restrictions that the English occupation and the constant warfare imposed.⁷³

The peasants in the countryside were not in any better position than the poor workmen in the cities and towns. Many areas of France were devastated several times in the course of the Hundred Years War, and this devastation was usually accompanied by the annihilation of the local population.

Item, en ce temps estoient les loups si affamés, qu'ils desteroient à leurs pattes les corps des gens qu'on enterroit aux villaiges à et aux champs; car partout où on alloit, on trouvoit des morts et aux champs et aux villes, de la grant povreté du cher temps et de la famine qu'ils souffroient, par la maudite guerre qui tousjours croissoit de jour en jour ... en ce temps estoit très grant mortalité...⁷⁴

Although many of the serfs were freed during the fifteenth century, and the depopulation of the countryside and consequent shortage of agricult-

ural labour enabled them to obtain advantages they could not have obtained otherwise, their condition was little improved. The hierarchic conception of society remained in force despite the continued growth of the merchant and burgher class, and the "commons" or the third estate were still regarded as of little importance. The middle classes were also included in the conception of the third estate.

This failing to see the importance of the common people, which is proper to nearly all authors of the fifteenth century, may be regarded as a kind of mental inertia. ... The idea which people had of the third estate had not yet been corrected and remodelled in accordance with altered realities. This idea was simple and summary, like those miniatures of breviaries, or those bas-reliefs of cathedrals, representing the tasks of the year in the shape of the toiling labourer, the industrious artisan, or the busy merchant. Among archaic types like these there is neither place for the figure of the wealthy patrician encroaching upon the power of the nobleman, nor for that of the militant representative of the revolutionary craft-guild. Nobody perceived that the nobility only maintained itself, thanks to the blood and the riches of the commoners. No distinction in principle was made, in the third estate, between rich and poor citizens, nor between townsmen and country-people. The figure of the poor peasant alternates indiscriminately with that of the wealthy burgher, but a sound definition of the economic and political functions of these different classes does not take shape.⁷⁵

During the fifteenth century peasants' revolts were a feature of most Western European countries and France was no exception. However, the risings in France, particularly in Normandy, were very quickly suppressed and did not have any real effects upon social or economic change during this period.

One cannot regard these violent episodes as doing much to affect the course of economic or social change. The movement towards a rent-paying tenantry continued. By the end of the fifteenth century there are few serfs to be found in western Europe.⁷⁶

Whatever the status of the peasant, the general condition of France precluded any real improvement in their position. If the peasant was freed and paid rent to the noble, the latter, given the economic situation

would be rigorous in extracting his dues, and the peasant still had to cope with the problems of the war, famine, and general misery, in order to pay that rent, apart from making a living for himself. Even after the reign of Louis XI (1483), the condition of the peasantry remained poor.

There is much contemporary evidence to prove that at the time of Louis' death the condition of the country was, indeed, sombre in the extreme. ... A sober English statesman, who knew the country well, had noted with a feeling akin to horror the degree of impoverishment to which war and taxation had reduced the people. Sir John Fortescue found the French peasantry subsisting on a diet of brown bread and water unvaried by a taste of meat unless it were the sodden refuse from the kitchens of the well-to-do; their scanty garments were of canvas, their legs were bare, and their feet unshod.⁷⁷

In general, the conditions of social life in fifteenth century France were little changed in their forms from the middle ages. The hierarchic conception of the society with its associated privileges and rights remained in force despite the changes that the country was undergoing with the growth of the middle classes. To a large extent, the influence of the money economy and the attendant rise of the middle classes and the expansion of the towns which were a particular feature of Italy and dominated the social scene, took place in France almost "apart from" the general social situation. The War with the English and the consequences of the prolonged warfare, however, made any expansion or consolidation of the changes in the social structure almost impossible for much of the fifteenth century. As a consequence, although France was not immune to the changes that affected Italy during the same period, the effects were not felt socially, politically, or economically at this time, in relation to the effects of changes found in Italy.

Religious and Philosophical Attitudes in France
During the Fifteenth Century

The condition of the church in France during the fifteenth century was affected by the Great Schism. Clement V (1305-14) had been the first pope to settle in Avignon and it remained the seat of the curia for the following seventy years. The exile of the popes in Avignon gave rise to the assertion that the papal policy was influenced by French interests. This assertion was seen to have foundation in the fact that all of the seven popes who ruled from Avignon were French, as were many of the cardinals they appointed. At the same time, the residence of the popes at Avignon undermined the idea of the universality of the Roman church.

Pope Gregory XI restored the papacy to Rome in 1377, and on his death in 1378, there was a movement to elect an Italian pope to ensure that the curia did not return to Avignon.

The French cardinals went in fear of their lives, and with a threatening mob rioting outside the conclave, they hastily elected an Italian, ... who took the title Urban VI (1378-89). There is no evidence that the cardinals, however terrified and reluctant, did not at the time regard the election of Urban as valid, but within a few months they turned against him. ... The French cardinals accordingly withdrew from Rome, declared the election of Urban invalid because carried out under threat of force, and elected in his place one of their own number, Robert of Geneva, who took the name Clement VII (1378-94). Urban, meanwhile created a number of Italian cardinals who remained in Rome with him. Thus began the Great Schism of the West, which for nearly forty years divided Catholic Christendom and dealt an irreparable blow to the prestige of the papal office.⁷⁸

The unity of the church was eventually restored in 1417 under Martin V after the Council of Constance.

The effects on the church of the Schism were not immediately apparent partly because the Council of Constance, although restoring the unity of the papacy, failed to institute any of the reforms that had been proposed during the Schism.

The papal monarchy thus emerged from its long crisis with its sovereignty within the Church unimpaired, and in the following decades its administrative control of the Church was further systematized and centralized. The papacy became, in fact, the first absolute monarchy in Western Europe and the prototype of modern centralized bureaucracy.⁷⁹

But the papacy achieved its position at the cost of losing the supremacy over temporal governments it claimed during the middle ages. In France particularly the autonomy of the French church was promoted by both the clergy and the monarchy. To a large extent the monarch's relationship with the papacy was increasingly motivated by political conditions during the fifteenth century. The use of the Pragmatic Sanction on the part of the French kings gives a good idea of the fluctuating relationships with the papacy after the Schism.

A council of French clergy at Bourges in June 1438 advised the acceptance of the reform legislation of the Council of Basle and this was embodied by the king in a solemn ordinance known as the Pragmatic sanction. This not only enacted the moral reformation of Basle (regularity of services, condemnation of concubinage and so forth) but also conciliar supremacy over the pope. ...

The Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges became the basis of future Gallicanism, but it remained at the mercy of the political situation. There was much to be gained by the use of papal prerogative at the behest of a king. Louis as dauphin had opposed the ecclesiastical policy of his father and as king he revoked the Pragmatic Sanction. When Pius II failed to support royal nominations and did not aid French policy in Naples the Pragmatic Sanction (with other anti-papal measures) was brought back in 1463-64. Similar gambits were tried with Paul II in 1467 and with Sixtus IV.⁸⁰

Whatever the particular relationships of the monarch with the papacy, after the Schism, the monarch was able to control the clergy in France. As a consequence the problems of the "state within a state" in relationship to the Church did not arise in France.

On a more immediate level, France was a country in which religious forms and observances were very important to the ordinary man in the

course of his everyday existence.

Individual and social life, in all their manifestations, are imbued with the conceptions of faith. There is not an object nor an action, however trivial, that is not constantly correlated with Christ and salvation. All thinking tends to religious interpretation of individual things; there is an enormous unfolding of religion in daily life.⁸¹

The saturation of everyday life with religious significance has various effects, one of which Huizinga points out, the religious connotations of all aspects of life renders the holy less holy; "...a constant blending of the spheres of holy and of profane thought."⁸² An example of this tendency is to be found in the conventions of chivalry. By the fifteenth century, as has already been noted, the chivalric code was an anachronism in relationship to the developments in the art of warfare. However, the duties and rights of the knight were closely related to the religious conception of the knight's position in the total social and heavenly scheme. By the fifteenth century the religious ideals surrounding the concept of chivalry had become merely part of the pagentry of the various events rather than having any intrinsic significance for the participants.

The emphasis upon religious forms and conventions in everyday life and the consequent confusion of the holy and the profane provides some explanation for the divergent attitudes towards the clergy, as individuals, and the clergy as representatives of the religious office. There are many expressions of contempt for the clergy and their habits; Chaucer's Canterbury Tales illustrates some of the practices of the clergy which are far removed from the sanctity of their office; in France, Francois Villon's poems are scathing attacks on the habits of the clergy.

But there is no doubt that the audience for light literature in the later Middle Ages took for granted a norm of priest, monk, friar and nun which cast them readily for parts involving lechery, trickery and sloth.⁸³

At the same time that the particular habits of the clergy were held in such contempt, the religious function they served was held in profound reverence. As the author of the Journal illustrates on many occasions religious processions for the relief of Paris or the success of a particular battle, or just for the occasion of a saint's day, were frequent occurrences even during the worst periods of the war.⁸⁴

There appears to be a coexistence of other-worldliness in relationship to the forms of religious behaviour and contempt for the representative of those forms in the everyday setting. Part of the contempt may have been a product of the actual conditions in the church during this period, conditions made worse in France by the Schism and the War.

When one descends from these generalities to the actualities of parochial life in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it is clear that there was still a chasm between the rules and practices of the Church. ... The supervision of the clergy was defective. Absenteeism meant that parishes often lacked the services not only of the rector or vicar but of the curate who was supposed to act for him; for months or for years no mass might be said in a remote rural church, which became ruinous or was maintained as a barn or stable. The level of education of the average parish clergyman was low, his manners boorish, his stipend so meagre that he insisted on his petty privileges in cash or kind - for burying, for marrying, for baptizing, even for giving Easter communion - in mean ways which often angered and alienated his flock.⁸⁵

On an individual level, Huizinga notes the curious blending of piety and worldliness in many of the nobles of the fifteenth century.

Among the princes and lords of the fifteenth century, more than one presents the type of an almost inconceivable mixture of devotion and debauchery. Louis of Orleans, an insane lover of luxury and pleasure, addicted even to the sin of necromancy, has his cell in the common dormitory of the Celestines, where he shares the privations and duties of monastic life, rising at midnight and sometimes hearing five or six masses a day.

The coexistence in one person of devotion and worldliness is displayed in a striking fashion in Philip the Good. The duke, famous for his "moult belle compagnie" of bastards, his extravagant feasts, his grasping policy, and for a pride not less violent than his temper, is at the same time strictly devout. He was in the habit of remaining

in his oratory for a long time after mass, and living on bread and water four days a week, as well as on all the vigils of Our Lady and the apostles. ... He gives alms on a great scale and in secret.⁸⁶

Part of the explanation for the above dualism may be found in the fact that whatever the failing of the Church "on earth," as God's representative organization on earth, it was still the only means to salvation. Death and salvation were important events in the life of the individual in the fifteenth century. The Church's most effective weapons remained the power to excommunicate the individual and deny him the sacrament, or the interdict which withdrew the services of the Church from the whole community. Consequently any proposals for reform during this period, were proposals framed within the context of the Roman Church. The position of the Church was possibly further reinforced by the various crises that France in particular underwent during this period. For example, the death of nearly a third of the population in a short period of time from the Black Death must have been a dreadful experience and left a mark on the religious sensibility of the survivors.

Although the religious sensibility remains strong during the fifteenth century some of the expressions of this sentiment illustrate the increasingly precarious position of the Church. The various ideas and forms that religious movements or sects propound during this period are to some extent related to the wider social changes. As was the case in Italy, the Church's role as educator was increasingly under attack in the development of capitalistic forms of trade and commerce, the latter demanding more "functional" forms of learning than the Church education provided. At the same time, the very form of economic life that revived trade and commerce in terms of usury was contrary to one of the basic doctrines of the Church.

In the presence of these contradictory situations there appears to have been a revival of mysticism and the development of heretical sects.

Mysticism had been, formally, found amongst the members of various religious orders within the Church, particularly in the monasteries. However, in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries mysticism had become prevalent amongst the laity and in certain areas, took the form of "corporate mysticism." The important part of the developments of lay mysticism lie in their rejection of formal theology and an emphasis upon the cultivation of the inner life of the spirit according to the doctrines of the Gospels. One of the most important of the mystical movements was that of Groote, a Netherlander. The association, the Brethren of the Common Life, spread through Germany and the Netherlands and remained active throughout the fifteenth century. The Brethren were not priests and their organization was not set up in the hierarchial manner of the monastic organization. They were primarily concerned with the relationship of the ordinary individual to God without the dogma and systematic theology characteristic of the Roman Church. However, they were not heretics.

They were simply humble Christians who sought in contemplation and in imitation of the life of Christ a closer communion with God. Yet the movement contained elements dangerous to the Church, especially as it spread beyond the confines of the cloisters and houses of the Brethren to literate lay men and women who found themselves dissatisfied with the spiritual sustenance offered by the contemporary clergy. The radical shift in emphasis it involved represented a movement away from the sacramental-sacerdotal aspects of medieval religion, on which the authority of the official Church over the lay world was basically founded. ... it was in essence a personalization of piety and its ultimate effect a laicization of religion.⁸⁷

In France lay piety did not take the systematized form seen in the organization of the Brethren. Popular devotion of its mystic sense took more fantastic forms. One of these forms relates to superstition. Many of the popular saints were endowed with properties that had little relationship to their original religious behaviour. The use of astrology by princes and lords to forecast the outcome of important events as well as to determine policy was widespread. The Church attempted to counter the more fantastic beliefs in witches and balck magic but they were often unsuccessful particularly in the more remote areas of rural France.

Unhappily, the zeal of the Church for the purity of the faith did not affect demonomania. Its own doctrine prevented it from uprooting belief in it. For it kept to the norm, fixed by the authority of Saint Augustus and Saint Thomas: Omnia quae visibiliter fiunt in hoc mundo, possunt fieri per daemones. Conjurations, says Denis, continuing the argument we have just cited, often take effect in spite of the absence of a pious intention, because then the devil has taken a hand in it. This ambiguity left room for a good deal of uncertainty. The fear of sorcery and the blind fury of persecution continued to darken the mental atmosphere of the age. 88

If the religious ideas of fifteenth century France survived in their medieval form with a few of the variations discussed above, the philosophical trends during this period represent little advance upon the scholastic philosophy and theology of the former period. Again, the conditions in France, especially in the early part of the century, were not particularly conducive to the pursuit of learning. To a large extent the great philosophical schools that flourished at the University of Paris during the fourteenth century experienced a period of decline.

The three great schools of scholastic philosophy and theology - Thomist, Scotist and Ockhamist - had reached their fullest

development before the middle of the fourteenth century. Their followers could add little but an increasingly empty refinement of subtle distinctions and logical niceties. Lacking the vigorous tradition of the Averroist natural philosophy which still flourished in Padua and Bologna, what intellectual energy remained in the northern schools was expended on bitter feuds between the followers of the via antiqua (the Thomists and Scotists) and the Ockhamist via moderna. 89

In the thirteenth century France had been the centre of philosophical learning in the Western world, and the major influence at this time was the work of Aristotle.

Thus the writings of Aristotle had become by the middle of the thirteenth century the basis of philosophical instruction at the universities. ... Aristotle was not studied as a "great book", but as a textbook that was the starting point for commentaries and questions and supplied a frame of reference for all trained philosophical thinkers even when they ventured to reinterpret him, or to depart from his doctrine, according to their own opinions. The Aristotelianism of the later Middle Ages was characterised not so much by a common system of ideas as by a common source material, a common terminology, a common set of definitions and problems, and a common method of discussing these problems. 90

Although the Aristotelian tradition came under attack during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, nevertheless, the tradition remained throughout the fifteenth century and well into the sixteenth century in France.

We have learned through recent studies that the chief progress made during the later fourteenth century in the fields of logic and natural philosophy was due to the Aristotelian, and more specifically, to the Occamist school at Paris and Oxford. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, university instruction in the philosophical disciplines continued everywhere to be based on the works of Aristotle; consequently, most professional teachers of philosophy followed the Aristotelian tradition, used its terminology and method, discussed its problems, and composed commentaries and questions on Aristotle. ... This Aristotelian orientation of the university philosophers can be traced at Paris, Louvain, and other centres far into the sixteenth century, ... 91

Unlike the Italian philosophical concern with Neoplatonism, France in the fifteenth century retained the realism of Aristotle and accommodated the nominalist tendencies of the Occamist school by separating the domain of faith from philosophical speculation. The Occamist position, then, did not involve a fundamental break with the assumptions of Scholasticism.

If Scholasticism meant anything, it was that a rational God was the author of a rational universe, and that both were legitimate objects of man's rational knowledge. ... One of the beauties of Scholasticism was its extreme adaptability in expressing those assumptions for the Middle Ages. Thus, even though it was primarily a methodology for exploiting a priori truths, it suggests the direction of all medieval Christian thought: that basic urge to reconcile reason and faith that culminated in Thomistic rationalism. The mental gymnastics of Abelard's Sic et Non, of the intricate polyphony of Aquinas' Summa, of what Bacon called the vermiculate questions of post-Scotist thought fell into disfavor, as all things do, in a later and more "advanced" age. But it is significant that the Schoolmen were condemned for their method rather than for the truth which they sought to establish by their method, or for the assumptions which made that kind of truth possible. 92

The effect of the philosophical tradition discussed above on the fifteenth century mind takes the form of symbolism. Everything has a place and a relation in the world that is ultimately connected to the Divinity. Everything, ideas, objects, have a relationship to a general type that was in turn connected to a more general order or hierarchy.

The ethical and aesthetic value of the symbolic interpretation of the world was inestimable. Embracing all nature and all history, symbolism gave a conception of the world, of a still more rigorous unity than that which modern science can offer. Symbolism's image of the world is distinguished by impeccable order, architectonic structure, hierarchic subordination. For each symbolic connection implies a difference of rank or sanctity: two things of equal value are hardly capable of a symbolic relationship with each other, unless they are both connected with some third thing of a higher order.⁹³

It is the perception of order in ultimate relationship with the Divine that perhaps accounts for some of the curious contradictions indicated earlier in the religious sentiments of the age. Whatever the actions of the individual man, there is some connection with a more general order which must at some time be resolved. For the medieval man the resolution lies in the practice of his faith.

The symbolic conception of the universe is carried over into the literature of the period, primarily through the use of allegory.

Froissart, in *Li Orloge amoureux*, compares all the details of love to the various parts of a timepiece. Chastellain and Molinet vie with each other in political symbolism. The three estates represent the qualities of the Virgin. The seven electors of the Empire signify the virtues; the five towns of Artois and Hainaut, which in 1477 remained faithful to the house of Burgundy, are the five wise virgins. In reality this is symbolism turned upside down; it uses things of the higher order as symbols of things of the lower order, for these authors in effect raise terrestrial things to a higher level by employing sacred conceptions merely to adorn them.⁹⁴

In terms of the religious and philosophical ideas of the fifteenth century in France, there is a great contrast with the tendencies indicated in the earlier section for Italy. France remained "medieval" in its conceptions despite any of the changes which the general social world underwent at this time.

Conclusion

The general tendencies in France during the fifteenth century in many areas are comparable to developments in Italy. However, the developments exhibit a "time lag" for France. That is, there was an increased development of an urban economy with the rise of the merchant and petty burgher, but this development was neither as important politically or socially as was the case for Italy during the same period. The political

situation underwent a profound change, in the increased consolidation of the monarchy over the power of the nobles, but this change was not fully established until the sixteenth century. The general condition of the population remained static, and in certain cases declined, during this period as a result of the conditions of war, plague, famine and depopulation. Although the majority of peasantry were freed, their condition did not generally improve, and in many cases, as was seen in the previous section, their condition was worse than before the wars.

In general, France maintains the medieval framework in a situation of increasing change. In many cases the medieval forms have become mere conventions, for example, the chivalric code, but they are maintained with increased emphasis. France had not yet attained the "transitional" stage that Italy attained during the same period. Part of the explanation undoubtedly lies in the generally extreme conditions that obtained in many parts of France during this time as a consequence of the war and the other problems connected with such a situation. At the same time, as Huizinga indicates, France had held a leading position in the culture of the middle ages, unlike Italy, and the forms that this culture took were undoubtedly more difficult to discard than was the case for Italy.

The fifteenth century in France and the Netherlands is still medieval at heart. The diapason of life had not yet changed. Scholastic thought, with symbolism and strong formalism, the thoroughly dualistic conception of life and the world still dominated. The two poles of the mind continued to be chivalry and hierarchy. Profound pessimism spread a general gloom over life. The gothic principle prevailed in art. But all these forms and modes were on the wane. A high and strong culture is declining, but at the same time and in the same sphere new things are being born.⁹⁵

The following chapter will discuss the role of the painter in the fifteenth century in France, in the light of the above discussion. The

role of the French painter will be evaluated in terms of the changes discussed earlier in the role of the Italian painter for the same period. From the above discussion, and the following discussion of the painters' role, certain conclusions will be drawn regarding the Sorokin thesis of the rise of Visualism, or the Sensate cultural type, for the fifteenth century.

FOOTNOTES

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- 4 Ibid., p. 175.
- 5 Ibid., p. 177.
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- 7 Ibid., p. 141.
- 8 Edward Perroy, The Hundred Years War, intro. to English edition by David C. Douglas (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1951), p. 219.
- 9 Ibid., p. 221.
- 10 Ibid., p. 223.
- 11 Denys Hays, Europe in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, p. 141.
- 12 Wallace K. Ferguson, Europe in Transition, p. 188.
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- 17 Arthur Tilley, ed., Medieval France, p.161.
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- 20 Ibid., p.144.
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- 22 Ibid., p. 461.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid., p. 462.
- 25 Ibid., p. 402.
- 26 Ibid., p. 96.
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- 31 Ibid., p. 134.
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- 38 Ibid., p. 116.
- 39 Ibid., p. 118.
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- 44 Ibid., p.131.
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- 46 Ibid., p. 324.
- 47 Paul Lacroix, France in the Middle Ages, p. 31.
- 48 Ibid.,p. 80.
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- 50 Johan Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1954), p. 87.

- 51 Wallace K. Ferguson, Europe in Transition, p. 256.
- 52 Ibid., p. 250.
- 53 Samuel Kinser, ed., The Memoirs of Philippe de Comynes
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South Carolina Press, 1969), p.100.
- 54 Johan Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages, p. 92.
- 55 Wallace K. Ferguson, Europe in Transition, p.258.
- 56 Denys Hays, Europe in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries,
p. 71.
- 57 See, Henri Pirenne, Economic and Social History of Medieval
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- 58 Denys Hays, Europe in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries,
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- 60 Ibid., p. 180.
- 61 Denys Hays, Europe in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries,
p. 72.
- 62 Paul Lacroix, France in the Middle Ages, pp. 85-86.
- 63 Ibid., p.87.
- 64 Denys Hays, Europe in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries,
p. 117.
- 65 Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris, préface et notes D'André
Mary (Paris: Chez Henri Jonquières, 1929).

66

Ibid., p. 109. (The kingdom of France went from bad to worse deserving to be called rather a desert land than the land of France. And this was entirely, or almost entirely, the fault of the Duke of Burgundy, who was the slowest man in the world in everything that he did, for he did not move from the city once there, just as if peace reigned everywhere, unless the people managed to rouse him by their complaints and compelled him to move; for this reason everything in Paris was getting dearer and dearer.)

67

Ibid., p.151. (On the third of November 1421 new currency rates were again proclaimed: the sixteen gros to be worth only two; they issued another coin that was worth only two deniers; the people were so oppressed and burdened by these measures that the poor could not live; nothing not cabbage, leeks, onion, verjuice, or anything else could be got for less than two blancs, for they were only worth one denier now. Anyone who rented a house had to pay eight times the usual, that is for one franc, eight francs, for eight francs sixty-four francs, also with everything else; so the poor suffered cold and hunger as only God can tell.)

68

Ibid., p.90. (Firewood became very dear, a small quarter of mutton cost seven or eight sols, and a small morsel of beef was now two sols which would only have cost six deniers in October; a part of a sheep cost two or three blancs; a sheeps head six deniers; a pound of salt butter eight blancs.)

69

Ibid., p. 141. (There was such a lack of coin in Paris that poor people got little or no alms; for four old parisis deniers were worth more than one of the current sixteen deniers, and very bad eight denier pieces were made, which everyone refused and the authorities banned the gros. And to add to the poor peoples distress eight denier loaves were ten deniers, and sixteen denier loaves to twenty.)

70

Ibid., p.176. (In the last week of August the Duke of Burgundy arrived in Paris, which did no one any good, as he had many soldiers who took everything from the villages around Paris, and the English were there also. Wine was much dearer than it had been for a long time, and there were few grapes on the vines and the Burgundians and the English even destroyed these, like pigs, and no one dared say anything. And so the people of Paris were ruled by greedy and evil men, who were always on the side of the lords, and had no sympathy for the poor people who had such poverty.)

71

Ibid., p. 305.

72

Wallace K. Ferguson, Europe in Transition, p. 503.

- 73 Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris, p. 143.
- 74 Ibid., p.149. (The wolves were very hungrey in these times they used to uncover with their paws the bodies of the people buried in the villages and countryside; for wherever you went you found people dead in the town and country from the dreadful poverty of these times and the famine caused by the dreadful war, which got worse every day ... mortality was very great at this time,...).
- 75 Johan Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages, p. 50.
- 76 Denys Hays, Europe in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, p. 38.
- 77 John S.C. Bridge, A History of France (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1921), p. 20.
- 78 Wallace K. Ferguson, Europe in Transition, p. 226.
- 79 Ibid., p. 235.
- 80 Denys Hays, Europe in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, p. 295.
- 81 Johan Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages, p. 151.
- 82 Ibid., p. 152.
- 83 Denys Hays, Europe in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, p. 303.
- 84 Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris, p.49.
- 85 Denys Hays, Europe in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, p. 308.
- 86 Johan Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages, p. 180.

- 87 Wallace K. Ferguson, Europe in Transition, p. 352.
- 88 Johan Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages, p.241.
- 89 Wallace K. Ferguson, Europe in Transition, p. 532.
- 90 Paul O. Kristeller, Renaissance Thought (new York: Harper & Row, 1961), p, 31.
- 91 Ibid.,p. 34.
- 92 Herschel Baker, The Image of Man (New York and Evanston: Harper Torchbooks, Harper & Row, 1961),p-205.
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- 94 Ibid., p. 209.
- 95 Ibid., p. 335.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SOCIAL ROLE OF THE PAINTER IN FIFTEENTH CENTURY FRANCE

In the previous chapter the social conditions prevailing in France during the fifteenth century were discussed, and these conditions it will be seen, are reflected in the condition of the arts during this period and consequently the role of the painter. In a general sense, French art during the fifteenth century made little progress from the medieval, and Gothic forms of the previous era. As Hauser points out, it is possible to divide geographically the features associated with the Renaissance. That is, northern Europe remains essentially medieval, whereas as in southern Europe, and in particular Italy, art undergoes change in terms of the features commonly associated with Renaissance art.

The frontier here seems to be more geographical and national than purely historical. In the problematic cases - as, for instance, in that of Pisanello or the van Eycks - as a rule, one will assign southern phenomena to the Renaissance and northern phenomena to the Middle Ages. The spacious representations of Italian art, with their freely moving figures and the spatial unity of their settings, seem to be Renaissance in character, whilst the impression made by the confined spaces of Old Netherlandish painting, with its timid, somewhat awkward figures, its laboriously assembled accessories, and its delicate miniature technique, is wholly medieval. ...the Renaissance appears to be the particular form in which the Italian national spirit emancipates itself from universal European culture.¹

For most of the fifteenth century, only two areas of France may be considered important in relation to art production; Paris and Burgundy. In the late fifteenth century, Tours becomes an important art centre, and Avignon also undergoes an artistic revival. Unlike Italy, however, France during this period does not exhibit any of the advances in technique and style in painting and has no real centre of artistic development. Of

the work that survives from this period it may be seen that the earlier Gothic style of the thirteenth century International school remains the basic style.

At the end of the fourteenth century no national school of painting was to be found in France. It was the age of Poitiers (A.D. 1356) of Agincourt (1415) and of Jeanne d'Arc (1429). The defeat of Poitiers was followed by the rising of the Jacquerie, when the villeins rose "like enraged dogs"....The French chronicles state that the public weal came to an end and brigands appeared on every side.²

The conditions that prevailed in France during most of the fifteenth century, which have been elaborated upon in the previous chapter, in themselves precluded any large-scale art production or any innovations in styles. The majority of art production is concentrated in the north, in particular in Burgundy.

If we ask why the Flemish cities were better fitted to foster a vigorous school of painting in the early years of the fifteenth century than other centres of northern Europe, the answer is to be found in the wealth and relative security which the trading cities of the Netherlands enjoyed through the diplomatic skill of the Dukes of Burgundy. Between A.D. 1337 and 1453, France was in the throes of the Hundred Years War. The political chaos which resulted brought it about that the honour of fostering the first recognised school of painting in Northern Europe went to the rival of royal France, the Valois House of Burgundy.³

The general social condition of France during the fifteenth century has important implications for the type of patronage extended to the arts, and consequently reflects upon the status of the artist at this time. Only two classes could supply patronage on any extensive scale during this period - the aristocracy and the patrician bourgeoisie. With reference to the former, the extent of their patronage was necessarily curtailed by the financial reverses this class suffered during the fifteenth century. Moreover, patronage of the arts may be generally attributed to only the wealthiest of the noble class, and to the monarchy.

The wealthy bourgeoisie, which may be compared to the patrician class in Italy, were also a source of patronage, but they were not as innovative in their tastes as were their Italian counterparts.⁴

The tastes of the nobles and the patricians were basically religious and aristocratic. The naturalism and the influence of the antique that developed in Italy during the same period is not apparent in the art of France or Flanders. The form that painting took during the fifteenth century was concentrated upon manuscript illumination and panel painting. Of the two forms, manuscript illuminations have survived in greater quantity than have the panel decorations.

The illuminated manuscripts illustrate the tastes of the noble class and, to the extent that the wealthy bourgeoisie imitated the tastes of the former, the type of painting common to this period and area. The various Books of Hours that have survived from this period are the best examples of this art form.

The jewel-like perfection of these Books of Hours is proof that they were collectors' items, designed for a luxury-loving clientele that could be satisfied only with what was costly, and they were valued as much for their exquisite workmanship as for their intrinsic beauty. The taste of a courtly aristocracy, feverishly exaggerating the symbols of status as it felt its hold on the realities of power slipping, is also reflected in the stylized artificiality which prevented the paintings of this school from being entirely naturalistic representations of a real world.⁵

The tastes and social position of the patrons of the fifteenth century may have been reflected in their attitude towards the painter. To a large extent, the basis for any estimation of either the public's reaction to the painter, or the painter's own reaction to his position, is uncertain. The information gathered regarding these points is based largely upon secondary sources. Neither the painters nor the patrons during this

period in the north were particularly prolific in their discussions of art.

The scarcity of materials, however, provides a point of contrast with the number of commentaries to be found in Italy during the same period. The latter commentaries revolve, initially around techniques, but gradually during this period the discussions are extended to include the individual styles and lives of various painters.⁶ Given the scarcity of data relating to the painters of the north the present chapter does not follow the format of the chapter on Italian painters. In the present chapter the evaluation of the public reaction and the attitude of the patrons towards the painter, and the painter's own attitude towards his position are not set out as separate discussions.

The Painter's Position in France and Flanders During the Fifteenth Century

The public for art products during this period appears to have been limited. Although the cost of art products was not large, in comparison with the present day, nevertheless given the level of income even amongst the nobility of the fifteenth century and the financial reverses illustrated earlier, expenditures on art products could only have been afforded by a minority.

Despite the fact that the painter had to rely upon a small minority for patronage, the type of product demanded in large numbers would have ensured a steady flow of orders. Manuscript illuminations and panel decoration can be executed in less time than was the case for mural decorations and large frescoes. At the same time, this type of art is, comparatively, less costly than the mural or frescoe forms. The demand for

these art forms, in conjunction with the demand for the more "applied" forms of art, such as decorating banners and wedding chests, makes it likely that the painter would not suffer any drastic shortage of patronage.

Consequently, the demands made upon the Northern painter during this period differ from those made in Italy. With respect to what has been termed "applied" art, which refers to the decoration of useful or functional products such as wedding chests, the Italian artist was also called upon to fulfill such orders. However, the Italian artist has a greater scope than his Northern counterpart in relation to the type and extent of patronage. The Italian painter was likely to receive large orders for frescoes and murals, for church decoration, and in the later part of the fifteenth century, for household murals and frescoes.

The great masters in the service of the courts of Flanders, of Berry, or of Burgundy, each of them an artist of a very marked personality, did not confine themselves to painting pictures and illuminating manuscripts; they were not above colouring statues, painting shields and staining banners, or designing costumes for tournaments and ceremonies. ...at wedding festivities and funeral ceremonies court painters were laid under contribution. Statues were painted in Jan van Eyck's workshop. He himself made a sort of map of the world for Duke Philip, on which the towns and the countries were painted with marvellous delicacy. Hugo van der Goes designed posters advertising a papal indulgence at Ghent. When the Archduke Maximilian was a prisoner at Bruges in 1488, the painter Gerard David was sent for, to decorate with pictures the wickets and shutters of his prison.⁷

For the Northern painter, then, the demands made upon his talents were more likely to take the form of personal, and easily portable, devotional items amongst which the illumination of Books of Hours" takes a major place, or the more functional or "applied" art forms.

The character of lay patronage in the North was, however, different from that in Italy. It was centred chiefly in royal and princely courts. The princes of the House of Valois and the great nobles who

frequented the royal court were the patrons whose taste set the tone of northern illumination. Such wealthy burghers as could afford illuminated books aped the tastes of their social superiors and so did little to influence the style of the illuminators' workshops. ...Most popular of all were the "Books of Hours," designed for private devotion. Combining piety with conspicuous consumption these called forth the finest products of the illuminators' art.⁸

Manuscript illumination had formerly been a monastic art, however, by the fourteenth century lay painters had taken the lead in this art form. But there is no evidence to suggest that the increased importance of the lay painter in this art form led to any significant change in the painter's status. The painter was still under the control of the guilds, and rather than diminishing in strength during the fifteenth century, the guilds appear to have consolidated their position and in doing so, to have tightened the regulations covering the education of the painter and the distribution of patronage.

The Guild of St. Luke at Bruges, to which all "preparers of vellum, copyists, lubricators, illuminators, miniaturists, book-binders and book-sellers residing at Bruges or resorting thither to sell their works" belonged, was founded in 1351; that of Tournai dated from 1341, Louvain from 1359 and Antwerp from 1382. Nor was membership an empty form. Five or seven years service as an apprentice was required before a painter could present the "chef d'oeuvre", which might secure admission to the ranks of the master-painters. Often the period of apprenticeship was followed by further years of study, during which the student moved from town to town, working in the studios of recognised masters. When the painter settled down, his career was still conditioned by guild associations. When a prince was to be welcomed, the Painter's Guild might organise the reception, or arrange the wagons with the tableaux vivants, which figured so largely in the festival. ...In relation to his craft, the association was even closer. A member pledged himself not to undertake work at a lesser rate of pay than that laid down by the guild. The dean and chapter, moreover, claimed the right of entry into his studio; if they found his materials to be below the recognised standard - if the oak of a panel was gnarled or the colours were of inferior quality - he was fined. On receiving a commission, the custom was for a guildsman to deliver a sketch of the complete picture and bind himself by a deed to finish it within a fixed period. In the case of default, appeal could be made to guild authority.⁹

Compared to the Italian painter during this period, the Northern painter appears to have no potential mobility. For the Italian painter who made his living catering to the demands of the lower middle class for "applied art," the restrictions of the guild organization may have been equally severe. However, there is evidence to suggest that the "fashionable" painter and the painters attached to the powerful patrician or noble families, were increasingly able to liberate their art from the rigid restrictions of the guilds as the fifteenth century progresses. For the Northern artist there does not appear to have been any comparable advance.

The role of the Northern painter in the eyes of the public and of the patrons was that of a craftsman. Even for a painter like van Eyck, there is no evidence to suggest that he was regarded as other than a superior craftsman.

For the fifteenth century painter in the north, the most comfortable position that could be obtained appears to have been service at a royal or princely court. The position held in this capacity does not still compare to the position held for example, by some of the Italian court or papal painters. The painter retained the position of craftsman, and as a member of the third estate, he did not obtain any benefits from his position other than those accruing to the servants of some lord.

Perhaps the most striking confirmation of the public's attitude toward the painter is to be found in the fact that very few of the works that have survived from this period can be attributed with any accuracy to any particular individual. Most of the artists are known by their work for particular patrons, or according to the locality they worked in, but there are few painters whose lives are known in any detail.

Some of the painters who worked for princely patrons may be identified by their characteristic styles. But even this source of identification is problematic, because some art historians dispute the ascription of many of these works to some of these unknown masters. Given the scarcity of material about the lives of most of the painters of this period, the available data will be summarized below. It should be emphasised that this summary cannot be considered a definitive description of the various painters and their roles.

Of the painters in Paris at the beginning of the century, three manuscript illuminators stand out. The Bedford Master appears to have been influential in the early part of the century. What is interesting about this painter is his reliance upon English patronage.

...the Bedford (or Salisbury) Breviary..., begun in 1424 for John of Lancaster, Duke of Bedford, who was regent in France for the youthful Henry VI of England, following Charles VI's death in 1422, and was ruled in Paris until 1435.

The change to English, rather than French, patronage and the frequent appearance of the figure of St. George, England's patron saint, are the only indications in the manuscripts of the sweeping changes that resulted from the decisive Battle of Agincourt in 1415.¹⁰

Although the Hundred Years War made patronage on any scale difficult in France, it is apparent that the painters in Paris were able to find some employment, regardless of the changing political status of the city.¹¹

The influence of the Bedford Master is to be found in the work of another Paris illuminator, the Boucicaut Master. The latter painter's name is derived from the Book of Hours illuminated for Marechal de Boucicaut. On the basis of certain stylistic innovations it would appear that this master ran a flourishing workshop during the early part of the fifteenth century.

The Boucicaut shop produced a great number of manuscripts. Possibly the earliest manuscript that can be connected with the shop is a Book of Hours in Oxford (Bodleian Library, Ms. Douce 144), which contains an inscription relating that it was made and completed ("Factum et completum est") in 1407, "the year in which the bridges broke up in Paris," during a long, cold winter.¹²

The third identifiable painter during the first part of the century in Paris is the Rohan Master. The Rohan Master, named for the Rohan Hours, may have worked with the above two mentioned painters.

The third member of the dominant triumvirate of Parisian illumination in the first quarter of the 15th century is known as the Master of the Rohan Hours, ... He collaborated with the Beford and Boucicaut masters as late, according to Porcher, as 1415-30, when he seems to have passed into the service of the dukes of Anjou.¹³

The three painters discussed above appear to have run workshops in Paris during the first part of the century, and it may be assumed that their position was that of craftsmen and that they were so regarded by their patrons. The Rohan master appears to have become attached to the court of the duke of Anjou, having left Paris for Angers for a position in the court.

The most famous of the manuscript illuminators at the beginning of the century were, however, the Limbourg brothers employed by the Duke of Berry. The Duke of Berry was one of the foremost patrons of the arts during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Apart from his extensive building, he collected precious stones and illuminated books.

His collection of precious stones was especailly rich in rubies, at that time accounted the most valuable of all stones. Like his brother he had magnificent specimens of goldsmith's work. ... But his chief renown as a collector is due to his library. His three hundred manuscripts, having been collected, not for the promotion of learning, but to please his own taste as a lover of art and literature, ... About half were richly illuminated by the best artists of the day. The most famous of all was the great Book of Hours (Les très riches Heures), which Paul de Limbourg and his brothers were illuminating for him at the time of his death, ... ¹⁴

The Limbourg brothers appear to have been court painters previously employed by the Duke of Burgundy, and there is some indication that they were on good terms with the Duke of Berry.

The Limbourg brothers, Pol, Herman, and Jean (or Jehanequin), at least two of whom were in Paris by 1399, apprenticed to a goldsmith, entered the service of the Duke of Berry after earlier employment (1402-1404) by Philip the Bold. Whether they entered the Duke's employment immediately after Philip's death is not known, but they were on such good terms with their patron that their New Year's present to him in 1410, was, as is known from the inventory of the Duke's possessions, "a counterfeit book made of a piece of wood in which there are no leaves nor anything written, covered with blue velours with two silver-gilt clasps enameled with the arms of Monseigneur (the Duke), which book Pol de Limbourg and his two brothers gave to the Duke ..." What the Duke gave them in return is not recorded, but he willed them a ruby ring.¹⁵

It has been indicated that the court painter had a more favourable position than the painter who worked on commission in a workshop setting. The court painter was more likely than other painters to receive an annual pension, whatever the amount of work available. However, it has also been pointed out that given the financial reverses of the fifteenth century, the number of princes and nobles able to support lavish expenditures on art diminishes during the fifteenth century.

There is no indication that the painters, even those attached to the courts and held, presumably, in high regard such as the Limbourg brothers, could be considered as other than craftsmen. During this period when Italian painters are beginning to assert the equality and supremacy of their art with the traditional "fine arts," no French painter is to be found who either articulates the same concern or appears to hold any position superior to the traditional craft position. Neither is there any comparable support for the painter's position to be found in the literature of the period as was the case for the Italian painters association with the humanist movement.

The position of the court painter may be estimated by the contract of Jan van Eyck with the Duke of Burgundy.

Jan van Eyck, former painter and equerry of the late Lord John, Duke of Bavaria, was known for his ability and craftsmanship by my said Lord who had heard thereof from several of his people and which he knew to be true, being acquainted personally with the said Jan van Eyck. Confident of his loyalty and probity, my lord has retained said Jan as his painter and equerry, with the customary honours, prerogatives, franchises, liberties, rights, profits and usual emoluments pertaining to this position. And to the end that he shall be held to work for him in painting whenever it pleases him, my lord has ordered him to have and to take on his general receipt from Flanders, the sum of 100 parisis in Flemish money in two settlements yearly, half at Christmas and the other half at Saint John's, of which he wishes the first payment to be at Christmas 1425 and the other at Saint John's, and so from year to year and payment to payment, as long as it shall please him. ... 16

Jan van Eyck was obviously counted amongst the Duke's retinue of servants, and he was subject to the Duke in terms of the work he was required to execute. There is some evidence, however, that the Duke favoured van Eyck to the extent of granting him a life pension in lieu of the annual salary. This would obviously have contributed to the painter's security but at the same time, it also tied the painter's services exclusively to the Duke.

To our beloved and faithful keepers of our accounts at Lille.

Very dear and beloved, - we have heard that you do not readily verify certain of our letters granting life pension to our well beloved equerry and painter, Jan van Eyck, whereby he cannot be paid said pension; and for this reason, he will find it necessary to leave our service, which would cause us great displeasure, for we would retain him for certain great works with which we intend henceforth to occupy him and we would not find his like more to our taste, one so excellent in his art and science. Therefore, we desire and expressly order that, according to these wishes, you do verify and ratify our said letters of pension and have this pension paid to the said Jan van Eyck, all according to the content of our said letters with no further talk or argument from you nor any omission, change, variation, or difficulty, as much as you would not anger and disobey (us). ... 17

The position of Jan van Eyck appears to have become more than that of

court painter. He was apparently entrusted by the Duke with various secret missions of a diplomatic nature.

(Jan van Eyck) ...became a member of the Duke's Council and, on several occasions, undertook honourable diplomatic missions for his master. In 1482, Jan visited Spain and painted the Infanta Isabella. The embassy of which he was a member sought Isabella as a wife for Duke Philip, ... 18

Further evidence of the special position that van Eyck acquired in the Duke's service may be gathered from the record that on the death of the painter in 1441 the Duke gave a generous gift to the painter's wife, and "...made a further gift in 1450 to enable Jan's daughter Livinia to enter the convent at Maaseyck, ...". 19

Jan van Eyck appears to have been exceptional in terms of the position he held with regard to his patron. The fact that there are records of his association with the Duke is exceptional. Comparable records for other painters are rare during this period. In fact, the attempt to reconstruct the life of Rogier van der Weyden illustrates this point. Van der Weyden did not sign any of his works and the reconstruction of his oeuvre is based entirely upon the critical work of art historians. A few facts are known about his life, but compared to the documentation on van Eyck, the material is scarce. Van der Weyden was apprenticed to Robert Campin and was made a master of the Tournai guild in 1432. He is next recorded in Brussels in 1435, where he settled and became the city painter of Brussels in 1436. Weyden is also recorded as having made a trip to Rome in 1450. 20

The scarcity of material regarding the activities of this master would appear to illustrate the more typical reaction on the part of the public and the patrons of the fifteenth century than the case for van Eyck.

That is, the painter, although he may have been held in high esteem by some patron or sector of the public remained an anonymous figure when it came to the recording of important events and personages.

The chronicles of the fifteenth century do not record the activities or the lives of the members of the third estate, and it would seem that whatever the position of the painter with regard to some particular patron, his status as a member of the third estate remained unchanged. The position of the painter as a "superior" individual by virtue of his talents that is implied in the writings of da Vinci towards the end of the fifteenth century, and the rise in status of certain of the painters, does not find any counterpart in the North.

Although Flanders, along with the court of the Duke of Burgundy, provided the major source of artistic patronage during most of the fifteenth century, certain areas of France also produced a few painters apart from the illuminators discussed earlier. The problem concerning any discussion of French art during this period relates to the scattered and tentative nature of artistic effort. In fact, other than the Paris illuminators discussed earlier in this chapter, there are few paintings to be found in France prior to 1440.

Even at that time, to create a national art was an impossibility. What appeared was a series of local styles created by distinct artistic personalities. One can scarcely say even that there were regional styles, except possibly in Provence, then ruled by King Rene of Anjou. In northern France, Burgundy, the Touraine, Anjou, central France, and Provence the artistic trait d'union was a lack of interest in the spatial chiaroscuro of Flemish art and an avoidance of its mystic drama; yet there was a dominance of Flemish conceptions of naturalism. In short, the art of France in the 15th century absorbed a portion of the artistic outlook of its two powerful neighbours, Flanders and Italy, which it wedded to its pre-existent Gothic models.

No longer in the forefront of art developments, France could not, even in its greatest productions of 15th century art, surpass the great Flemings and Italians, ... 21

One of the more notable French painters of this period was Jean Fouquet. Fouquet born about 1420, came from Tours and there is some indication that he may have been a priest's illegitimate son, as there is a record of a Jean Fouquet applying in 1449 to have his birth legitimized by papal decree.

He was famous early, for in Rome sometime between 1443 and early January, 1447, he painted Pope Eugenius IV with his two nephews, ... Eugenius IV died on February 23, 1447, and it is possible that Fouquet accompanied a French mission sent to Rome in the summer of 1446. On his return he set up his shop in Tours, where it remained until his death sometime before November 8, 1481, when the records of his parish church refer to his widow and heirs.²²

Fouquet ran a large workshop in Tours and trained many of the painters who worked in France in the later part of the fifteenth century, such as Colombe, Bourdichon. Fouquet is one of the few northern artists for whom an independent self-portrait survives. The self-portrait is a small enamel showing the head and shoulders of the artist with the artist's signature around the edges. This self-portrait should not be taken as an indication of the painter's increase in status or awareness of his talent, rather it represents an interesting anomaly for this period of French art. Fouquet, however, appears to have had no shortage of patrons.

Though Fouquet did not receive the title of court painter until 1474, he was often busy working for the court. In 1461, on the death of the monarch, he painted the leather effigy of Charles VII, and in the same year the city council of Tours commissioned decorations for a triumphal entry by Louis XI, though these were never executed. Other work at Tours is recorded: Archbishop Jean Bernard, in his will of 1463, provided 70 ecus for an altarpiece by Fouquet for the church at Candes, the summer residence of the bishops of Tours, and Fouquet was to take back a Madonna worth 25 ecus, clear evidence that Fouquet was also a panel painter. In collaboration with Michel Colombe he designed the tomb of Louis XI; in 1476 he was commissioned to design the canopy used on the visit of the King of Portugal to Tours; in 1472 he went to Blois to paint a prayer book for Mary of Cleves; in 1476 he painted another prayer book for Cardinal Charles de Bourbon; and there is another record (which has been questioned) that in 1477 he had to sue the chronicler Philippe de Commines for

the balance of payments on two prayer books he had made. The picture is thus one of an active artistic life extending over more than thirty years.²³

The majority of the work produced by the painter's of the fifteenth century in the north has one general characteristic; it was easily portable. The panel paintings, the illuminated manuscripts and books, and the decoration of wedding chests and various other pieces of furniture could easily be transferred, unlike the murals and frescoes of the Italian painters. Although not necessarily the reason or cause for this feature of northern painting, it is possible that the seasonal mobility of the nobles and the court influenced the situation. That is, many of the nobles and the kings had summer residences separate from their winter quarters, and many of them had residences scattered over their various domains which they visited periodically. Such articles as a Book of Hours, or a panel painting could easily be transported from place to place. In consequence, the gothic style fitted into the scale and size of the works in contrast to some of the monumental efforts of some of the Italian painters of this period who had been influenced by the antique. A further factor that may be related to the retention of the gothic style in the north during this period was the position of the church with respect to patronage of the arts.

Church patronage of painting during this period was not extensive. At the same time, lay patronage of church decoration did not compare with the amount to be found in Italy during the same period.

Lay patrons did not take over the control and direction of church decoration as they so frequently did in the Italian cities, but this fact did not affect the patronage of painting, since it has been almost entirely divorced from architecture. The structure of the Gothic church left little or no place for mural paintings and even painted altarpieces remained rare until the fifteenth century.²⁴

Part of the explanation for this situation with respect to the painter lies in the fact that Gothic architecture does not lend itself to mural or frescoe decoration. At the same time the church did not take advantage of the art of manuscript illumination to any large extent.

The intellectual and moral life of the fifteenth century seems to us to be divided into two clearly separated spheres. On the one hand, the civilization of the court, the nobility and the rich middle classes: ambitious, proud and grasping, passionate and luxurious. On the other hand, the tranquil sphere of the "devotio moderna," of the Imitation of Christ, of Ruysbroeck and of Saint Colette. One would like to place the peaceful and mystic art of the brothers Van Eyck in the second of these spheres, but it belongs rather to the other. Devout circles were hardly in touch with the great art that flourished at this time. In music they disapproved of counterpoint, and even of organs. ... As to painting, the writers of the "devotio moderna" do not speak of it; it was outside their range of thought. They wanted their books in a simple form and without illuminations.²⁵

The attitude of the Northern public to the painter and his work during the fifteenth century provides several points of contrast with the Italian situation. First, the public to which the painter catered was limited and the reaction to his art was also curtailed. "Public" art, in the sense of art on view to the rest of the population, was most likely to be confined to the decorated banners, signs, and festival floats that most of the painters worked on. Any other form that painting took, such as illumination, or easel painting, were confined to a small and exclusive elite group. Unlike the patronage of the elites in Italy, the northern patron was not concerned with patronage that would glorify either the family or the city state in the eyes of the world. Patronage was designed, in the North, for private consumption.

Secondly, in contrast to the Italian situation, the patron of the arts was not exposed to the influence of the humanist movement with its changed conception of the painter's status, and its glorification of the

antique. The demands upon the northern painter were related to the medieval gothic tradition.

A third point of contrast is provided by the position taken by the Church with respect to patronage. Apart from architecture, the Church did not extend any significant patronage to the arts, unlike, for example, the papal court in Italy. Consequently, the painter in France and Flanders during the fifteenth century is dependent upon a small and exclusive market.

In terms of his market position, the northern painter, in contrast to some of the Italians, was dependent upon market demand. To the extent that such demand is likely to be restricted by the numbers that can afford or are interested in the arts, the painter is at a disadvantage in market terms. Although the Italian painter undertook craft work such as banner decoration, or the painting of wedding chests, it is likely that in the North this type of commission formed the bulk of the work for many of the painter's workshops. There is little indication, then that the northern painter was regarded by his patrons or public as other than a craftsman; a member of the third estate, in the fifteenth century.

According to Huizinga, the perception of the painter as other than a craftsman was curtailed by the seeming lack of distinction made by patrons and public alike between "applied" or functional art and decorative, non-functional art. Of the works that survive for this period very few of the extravagant "applied" works survive. Froissart describes one instance of what must have been many, of the type of painting demanded in this context.

There are whole departments of applied art of which we can hardly even form a conception. For this we lack the power to compare with the priestly vestments that have been preserved, the court costumes with their precious stones and tiny bells, that have perished: we

lack the actual sight of the brilliantly decorated war-ships of which miniatures give us but a conventional and clumsy representation. Froissart, who, as a rule, is little susceptible to impressions of beauty, fairly exults in his descriptions of the splendours of a decked-out fleet, with its streamers, gay with blazonry, floating from the mast-heads, and some reaching the water. The ship of Philippe le Hardi, decorated by Broederlam, was painted azure and gold; large heraldic shields surrounded the pavilion of the castle; the sails were studded with daisies and the initials of the duke and the duchess, and bore the motto Il me tarde. The nobles vied with each other in lavishing money on the decoration of their vessels. Painters had a good time of it, says Froissart; there were not enough of them to go round and they got whatever prices they asked. According to him, many nobles had their ship-masts entirely covered with gold leaf. Guy de la Tremoille spent 2,000 on decorations.²⁶

Other aspects of this attention to detail in the context of ceremonials and feasts are to be found in the tableaux vivants that were designed by the painters and which formed a part of any large festival or feast. A feast given by the Duke of Burgundy is described by Oliver de la Marche.

Besides the guests, a great number of noble spectators were present at the feast, disguised for the most part. First everyone walked about to admire the fixed show-pieces; later came the "entremets," that is to say, representations of "personnages" and tableaux vivants. Oliver himself played the important part of Holy Church, making his appearance in a tower on the back of an elephant, led by a gigantic Turk. The tables were loaded with the most extravagant decorations. There were a rigged and ornamented carack, a meadow surrounded by trees with a fountain, rocks, and a statute of Saint Andrew, the castle of Lusignan with the fairy Melusine, a bird-shooting scene near a windmill, a wood in which wild beasts walked about, and, lastly a church with an organ and singers, whose songs alternated with the music of the orchestra of twenty-eight persons, which was placed in a pie.²⁷

The extravagant festivals and feasts to which the painters of the period contributed their talents are related to the attitude towards symbols in everyday life. It was indicated in Chapter Seven that although the clergy may have been held in poor regard, nevertheless, everyday life appears to have been profoundly affected by religious symbolism. The decorations and the tableaux vivants are indications of the symbolism of

lay culture. Many of the works have some literary or historical significance, such as the glorification of a battle, and many were associated with some religious theme. The importance of these symbolic frames of reference meant that, for the craftsman such as the painter, no distinction was made in the mind of the patron or public between such "applied" art and other works. The "purpose" or function of art takes precedence over its aesthetic value.

...we might venture the paradox that the Middle ages knew only applied art. They wanted works of art only to make them subservient to some practical use. Their purpose and their meaning always preponderated over their purely aesthetic value.²⁸

Conclusion

To reiterate, the scarcity of materials, particularly of a primary nature, make any evaluation of the painter in the North during the fifteenth century, difficult. It was indicated earlier that the very fact that the Northern painters were not given to any extensive discussions of their art or of their position in society, is some indication of their standing. Generally, despite the high regard that, for example, Jan van Eyck appears to have been held by his patron, it would seem safe to assume that the Northern painter during the fifteenth century retained the position of craftsman.

The type of paintings produced in France and Burgundy also indicate the retention, and in some cases the consolidation, of the medieval forms. The attention to detail, the emphasis upon the symbolic nature of art, and the largely religious significance of the paintings show little change from the preceeding era. Even the "applied art" of the period, from the small amount that survives, indicates that the symbolic content was its most important feature.

To some extent, the differences indicated between the Italian developments and those in the North may be related to the more general socio-political conditions during the fifteenth century. Italian painters had an advantage over their counterparts in the North in terms of the extension of patronage that the rise of the patrician class afforded. Although the bourgeoisie began to assert themselves during the fifteenth century in the North, their position is in no way comparable to the dominant position that the patrician bourgeoisie managed to attain in Italy.

The bourgeoisie of the North were more concerned with establishing their position in relation to a still dominant aristocracy. Unlike their Italian counterparts, they were not in a position to "infiltrate" or to usurp the position of the older aristocratic families. This situation was further precluded by the gradual rise of the monarchy during the period in France, and the consolidation of a weakened but socially important courtier aristocracy. As a consequence of their position, the bourgeoisie was more concerned with copying the attitudes and values of the aristocracy than with innovation in such areas as the arts. In such a situation the painter is unlikely to have an opportunity to assert his position in other than traditional terms.

There is evidence of a strong workshop or craftsman tradition in the North throughout the fifteenth century. The workshop emphasises the craft status of the painter and ties the individual to a particular position and status in the society. Even Jan van Eyck, as painter to the Duke of Burgundy, still ran a workshop and was consequently subject to the rules of the guild. Unlike some of the Italian painters, who were able to

circumvent the restrictions of the guilds when they travelled and worked for various patrons, the northern painter does not appear to have had this advantage.

The following chapter will examine the evidence collected for Italy and France during the fifteenth century in terms of Sorokin's contention that this period represents, for Europe in general, a period of Sensate dominance. Sorokin's findings for the paintings he has examined will be compared to the sample of paintings examined for this period for France and Italy. The results of the comparison will then be examined in terms of the more general evaluation of socio-cultural conditions for the two areas during the fifteenth century.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Arnold Hauser, The Social History of Art (4 vols.; New York: Vintage Books, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. and Random House, Inc., 1951), 2,9.

² Ernest H. Short, The Painter in History (London: Hollis & Carter, 1948), p.288.

³ Ibid., p.195.

⁴ The terms "patrician" and "wealthy bourgeoisie" are used synonymously. It has been indicated in Chapter Seven that the term "patrician" was used by Pirenne to describe the wealthy bourgeoisie of the urban medieval towns.

⁵ Wallace K. Ferguson, Europe in Transition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962), p.389.

⁶ See Chapter Six of this study.

⁷ Johan Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1954), p.246.

⁸ Wallace K. Ferguson, Europe in Transition, p.388.

⁹ Ernest H. Short, The Painter in History, p.195.

¹⁰ Charles D. Cuttler, Northern Painting, From Pucelle to Bruegel (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1968), p.34.

¹¹ During the Hundred Years War, Paris was, for some time, occupied either by the English or the Burgundian forces.

¹² Charles D. Cuttler, Northern Painting, p.38.

¹³ Ibid., p.39.

¹⁴ Arthur Tilley, The Dawn of the French Renaissance (New York: Russell & Russell, 1968), p.59.

¹⁵ Charles D. Cuttler, Northern Painting, p.27.

¹⁶ Elizabeth G. Holt, ed., A Documentary History of Art (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1957), p.304.

- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ernest H. Short, The Painter in History, p.200.
- 19 Charles D. Cuttler, Northern Painting, p.84.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid., p.213.
- 22 Ibid., p.215
- 23 Ibid., p.219
- 24 Wallace K. Ferguson, Europe in Transition, p.387.
- 25 Johan Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages, p.260.
- 26 Ibid., p.247.
- 27 Ibid., p.252.
- 28 Ibid., p.244.

PART 111

CHAPTER NINE

COMPARISON OF THE EMPIRICAL FINDINGS WITH SOROKIN'S DATA

This chapter will be divided into three parts; the introduction which discusses the methodological problems encountered in the study; the empirical data compared with Sorokin's findings; and third, the conclusions drawn from the comparison of the two sets of empirical data.¹

Introduction: The Problem of Methodology

In the preceding chapters the information regarding the character of social life in France and Italy has been discussed. The information was related to the characteristics of Sorokin's ideal types in an attempt to delimit the extent to which both the role of the painter and the general socio-cultural situation met the requirements of the various types.

Much of the information in the preceding chapters was based upon secondary sources and is consequently open to the problem of "interpretation". That is, the conclusions of the historians and sociologists regarding the social life in the two areas during the fifteenth century that contradict, or at least qualify, Sorokin's conclusions are not sufficient evidence alone that Sorokin is incorrect in his analysis. Where possible, the records, commentaries and letters of "men of the time," including the painters themselves, have been used. However, the latter source was unfortunately more meagre than might have been the case.

Data of a primary nature is relatively scarce for the period investigated. For example, it was not until the later part of the sixteenth century that commentaries and letters by painters about their work and life become common in Northern Europe.

Part of the problem in dealing with the data such as that connected with the role of the painter during the fifteenth century is pointed out by Martindale:

...no methodology acceptable to the majority of sociologists has been developed for dealing with the major problems of the sociology of culture.²

Not only are the materials that the sociology of culture utilizes difficult to discuss in an objective manner, but the method by which they can be analysed also leads to difficulties. In most of the cases that Sorokin included, the data has been incorporated into a theoretical framework that interprets history from a particular point of view. Mannheim discusses the problem of documentary interpretation in the same light.

If, then, we have several different interpretations of an epoch all of which are correct in this sense, we can only ask which of them is most adequate, i.e. which one shows the greatest richness, the greatest substantial affinity with the object. Where there is seeming contradiction between correct interpretations of a given epoch or Weltanschauung, handed down by different generations of interpreters, what we have to do is to translate the less adequate, (but still correct) interpretations into the language of the more adequate ones.³

The problem does not rest at this point, as Mannheim perceives that an objection may be raised concerning "relative" interpretations. This objection is to be countered by considerations of the framework, theory or model within which the documentary meaning is a part. The problem then becomes, "...how can we describe the unity we sense in all works that belong to the same period in scientific terms capable of control and verification?"⁴

The first approach to the solution of the problem is the development of general concepts that are applicable to all spheres of cultural activity. The second point involves the "longitudinal" nature of the concepts.

...culture is in the process of historical evolution, so that the concepts we use in comparing various fields of cultural activity in a contemporaneous cross-section should serve the purpose of a 'longitudinal' analysis of successive temporal stages.⁵

Sorokin's ideal types represent an attempt to formulate a general conceptual framework, in conjunction with a theory of cultural change, that is adequate for an analysis of socio-cultural trends over a period of time. The question at issue in the present study relates to the generality of the framework Sorokin suggests. That is, do the types present an adequate explanation for particular historical periods and particular social roles? According to Mannheim, verifiability of socio-historical materials may be accomplished in two ways:

...(1) by the empirical confrontation of the hypotheses with the historical materials; (2) by an attempt to establish logical links connecting the various symptomatic, documentary phenomena ...with one another and with one guiding principle.⁶

Both methods recommended by Mannheim have been utilized in the present study. The documentary evidence relevant to the period Sorokin designates as Sensate has been examined in terms of:

- 1) the agreement among the sources, and
- 2) their relationship to the central framework delimited by Sorokin.

The applicability of the Sorokin types has also been examined in terms of an empirical investigation of part of the data. Sorokin's conclusions regarding the character of the fifteenth century were based partly upon his study of the art produced during that period.⁷ An attempt was made, therefore, to duplicate Sorokin's study of paintings produced during the

fifteenth century.

The present chapter discusses the findings from the study of the paintings. With respect to the categories used by Sorokin in his analysis of the paintings, not all of these categories were used. Those categories not included were seen to have subjective connotations. Given the lack of precise explanations as to how they were used in Sorokin's study, it seemed necessary to exclude them. They are such categories as the "spiritual-sensual character of the paintings," those categories concerned with estimations of nudity, and those dealing with the "gloomy" or "joyful" character of the paysage, were omitted.⁸

Several additional factors made the use of the "objective" categories necessary, apart from the reason stated above. First, the sample of paintings available in the University of Alberta slide collection was small, compared to the number Sorokin used. Second, there was a scarcity of investigators available who were willing to undertake the task of classifying the paintings. Third, given the problems regarding the interpretation of paintings, even amongst art historians, it was felt that objective categories would result in less disagreement or misinterpretations than, for example, some of the more "subjective" categories illustrated above.

The categories used in the present study therefore included;

1. Religious - secular theme.

2. Urban - rural scenes.

3. Portraits:

(a) aristocracy (b) clergy (c) bourgeoisie (d) intellectuals
(e) lower class (f) male or female

4. Genre:

(a) everyday life (b) festivals (c) dramatic events (d) military scene
(e) love scene (f) satire, humour

5. Activity:

- (a) farming (b) trading (c) manual labour (d) crafts, special skills
(e) religious activity (f) political activity, diplomacy.

Categories one to four were taken from Sorokin's work, and category five was added by the present writer to those elaborated by Sorokin.

The latter category was added as a result of a preliminary survey of the paintings for the fifteenth century. It was apparent, particularly with respect to the manuscript illuminations for fifteenth century France, that Sorokin's category for "Genre" did not give sufficient indication of the particular activities that many of the works depicted. In many of the Books of Hours, for example, the seasons of the year are depicted in terms of the type of activities in everyday life that characterized each season or month. In the Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry, the month of May is illustrated by peasants tilling the ground and tending the grapes in front of the chateaux of Jean de Berry.⁹

The particular type of occupational activity portrayed, in our view, gives an essential indication of the importance attached to certain social roles during the period. In the French paintings of the period the type of activity often portrayed is either religious or of a rural-craft nature, whereas the Italian paintings for the same period usually depict religious and political activities, and some activities that, although mythical or "antique," have some pertinent political or diplomatic import for the particular city. In the latter regard, the Bellini paintings of the festivals of Venice, although mythical in the traditions they depict, are also designed to glorify the Republic of Venice.

In the evaluation of the paintings two sources were finally used. The collection of slides belonging to the University of Alberta, Department

of Fine Arts, were examined; and to add to this data, which was not a complete survey of the works of the period for the two countries, the available art books were examined.¹⁰ As a consequence, relying upon the sources available, only 362 paintings for the three areas of Florance and Venice, and France and Flanders, were examined. This number does not compare very favourably with the number (approximately, 8,554) that Sorokin examined for the same periods. However, with Sorokin's figures there is no breakdown according to particular areas within the countries studied, and his figures also include an examination of the sculpture produced during the same period.

In this study only one art form, painting, was examined, and for Italy the production of such work during the fifteenth century was limited to the cities of Florence and Venice. With these restrictions the sample obtained was fairly representative, including as it did not only the artists who were native to these areas and who worked there, but also the works of artists from other areas who also may have worked in the two cities, at least for a period of time. For France, the case was slightly different. No one city or area was concentrated upon, partly because, with the exception of Flanders, there was no real art centre in France for most of the fifteenth century. In the early part of the century much of the art work appears to have been concentrated in Paris. However, with the progress of the Hundred Years War, art production became dispersed in France such that there was no one centre that had a monopoly upon art production during this period. As a result, for France and Flanders, within the limits of the material available, all works for the period were examined.

Before discussing the results of the survey described above, the hypotheses of the present study will be briefly restated. Sorokin contends that the fifteenth century marks the beginnings of a Sensate period, not only in painting but also in the more general socio-cultural life of Europe.¹¹ It was indicated in Chapter one of this study that Sorokin appears to have neglected two important factors that may qualify this contention. The two factors are the rural-urban dichotomy and the division between the North and the South during the fifteenth century. Taking these two factors into account it was hypothesised that;

- 1 France is most likely to approximate the Ideational type.
- 1a. As a consequence of hypothesis one, French painters are likely to retain the craft role.
- 2 Italy is most likely to approximate the Sensate type.
- 2a. As a consequence of hypothesis two, the Italian painter is likely to change his role from that of craftsman.

Italy, during the fifteenth century had more urban areas than was the case for France or Flanders. To the extent that many of the developments equated with the rise of the Sensate cultural type are connected with urbanization and associated types of activities and institutions, it is more likely that Italy in contrast to the other two areas will produce more Sensate paintings. Not only were France and Flanders less urban, but their development in this regard was impeded throughout much of the century by the Hundred Years War.

Despite the above remarks, Flanders could be considered more urban than France during this period. Flanders had been, and continued to be for most of the fifteenth century, a centre of European trading activities. Antwerp was one of the cities in which the Italian merchant bankers often

had branches. As a consequence, it was also hypothesised that;

3 Flanders is most likely to approximate the Idealistic type.

3a. As a consequence of hypothesis three, the Flemish painters are likely to show some evidence of role changes.

The rest of this chapter will examine the results of our survey in the light of the above hypotheses. We will compare our findings to those of Sorokin's survey. The concluding chapter will be an evaluation of the findings of this study in terms of Sorokin's work.

The Empirical Data

A. Religious - Secular Category

The breakdown for Italy according to Sorokin's findings for the religious - secular category is shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1

FLUCTUATION OF THE RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR IN ART		
Italian		
	1400 - 1450	1450 - 1500
	Percentage	
Religious themes	84.9	80.4
Secular themes	15.1	19.6
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, 380.

It can be seen in the above table that Sorokin found a progressive increase in secular themes in art during the fifteen century for Italy. The category for religious-secular relates to the content of the art.

The religious subject generally, and in Christian culture particularly, belongs, as a rule, to the supersensory and superempirical world; it is then Ideational in its nature. The secular picture is almost always empirical in its subject; therefore, by definition, it belongs to the Visual world.¹²

It should be remembered that the figures in Table 1 refer not only to paintings but also to sculpture produced during the fifteenth century.

It is apparent that whilst there was an increase in the secular theories during this period, this change was not large, 4.5%.

The duplication of Sorokin's work for this study found the following results for the religious-secular content of painting.

Table 1.2

FLUCTUATION OF RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR THEMES IN PAINTING

	Florence	Venice
	1400 - 1500	1400 - 1500
	Percentage	
Religious theme	53.2	73.3
Secular theme	46.8	26.7
Total	100.0	100.0

From the results in Table 1.2 it can be seen that there was a great variation between the two cities regarding the content of the paintings. Florence had a much greater percentage of secular paintings than did Venice. Such a result is surprising, given the facts that both cities were major trading and commercial centres, and that Venice, in particular, had a longer history of urban development and trading activity than did Florence. That is, on the basis of the economic characteristics of the two cities and the type of class structure and institutional development

that might be expected from such characteristics, Venice, it might be assumed, would have been more likely to have a greater percentage of secular paintings.

Comparing the findings with those of Sorokin, keeping in mind that the sculpture of the period has been excluded from Table 1.2, it can be seen that in contrast to his findings for all of Italy, Florence and Venice do not fit into the classifications Sorokin found. Florence, in terms of the content of the paintings, is more Sensate than is the case for Venice. However, Venice also shows a greater percentage of secular works than is the case for either part of Sorokin's findings.

Sorokin's work relates to all of the paintings produced in all of Italy during the fifteenth century, and although the findings in Table 1.2 must be qualified with respect to the areas and number of paintings considered, the problem in comparing the two findings is, to what extent did the rural areas in Italy weight Sorokin's findings for the whole country. That is, the two cities examined represent highly urbanized areas for Italy during the fifteenth century, in contrast to many areas, particularly in southern Italy, which remained rural-agricultural or at least were less urbanized than Florence or Venice. A quick examination of some of the works produced in Naples and some of the smaller Italian towns indicates that they were less receptive to change of any type in the arts. Florence, more than any other city in Italy during this period, appears to have taken the lead in many of the innovations in the arts. From the findings in Table 1.2 it would appear that both Florence and Venice fall into the Sensate category with respect to the content of the paintings. Florence would appear to be "more sensate" than Venice. The

variation between the two cities is revealing in that, although the findings substantiate those of Sorokin, it would seem that a closer examination of particular areas or cities may be more relevant than a general examination for Italy as a whole, particularly in view of the fact that during this period, Italy was far from unified.

As Sorokin indicates;

...a study of the change in the proportion of the religious and secular art in the total art of the country for a certain period is important in itself and throws light upon many cultural changes. If, for instance, in the course of the art evolution of a country, one notices that the proportion of the religious pictures decreases systematically - that art becomes more and more secular - this may be one of the most important symptoms of what is happening with the religion of the country and with the country itself: the religion which does not exert any influence upon art (even Ideational art), which does not influence the philosophical and scientific mentality of the people...which likewise does not affect and mold the law and mores of the country, its "rights" and "wrongs," its political, social, and economic organization - such a religion in all probability is dead and does not live and function any more.¹³

In terms of the examination of historical and sociological material for the fifteenth century relating to Florence and Venice, it could be seen that of the two cities, Venice appeared to have a greater independence with respect to the church than Florence. Being independent of Rome to a greater extent than Florence does not necessarily mean that the Venetians were less "religious." However the treatment of the church by the Venetians, discussed in chapter five, in conjunction with their view of the papacy, would lead to the conclusion that Venice would be equally, if not more, "sensate" than Florence in its attitude toward art. The contradiction that Table 1.2 illustrates in this regard makes the more comprehensive figures reported by Sorokin for Italy in general, misleading. Although Italy may exhibit tendencies towards a more sensate pattern in the content of art, this trend may have been biased by the trends in a few, particular

areas, and given the disunity amongst the Italian states during this period, a general evaluation may represent a distortion of the characteristics.

With respect to France and Flanders there is a problem regarding the presentation of Sorokin's findings. The examination of French art starts with the sixteenth century in Sorokin's work, and Flemish paintings fall under the figures for Dutch art. To compare Sorokin's findings with those obtained in this study for the fifteenth century leads to certain difficulties. In the tables that follow the figures for "Dutch" art and the figures for French art which are included under the heading "Ancient and Medieval Christian," are used.

So far as the art data by countries are concerned, for most of the European countries they begin only about the fifteenth century, when the differentiation into national art, as well as into the secular and religious began to crystallize. Before that, especially before the thirteenth century, the art of Europe is taken as a whole, as Christian art.¹⁴

Although France, for example, did not have any "national" art prior to the sixteenth century, nevertheless from the twelfth century onwards, France was one of the areas in which the "International Style" was predominant. As such, some indication of the trends in France during the fifteenth century would have been useful, particularly given Sorokin's contention that for Europe as a whole, the fifteenth century marks the turning point from Idealistic to Sensate cultures. From Sorokin's work it might be assumed that France, as one of the areas for which there is no individual breakdown of art works, was either Idealistic or remained Ideational during the fifteenth century.

The following table indicates Sorokin's findings for Medieval Christian and Dutch art for the fifteenth century.

Table 2.1

FLUCTUATION OF THE RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR IN ART

	Ancient and Medieval Christian	Dutch
	XIV - XV	- 1500
	Percentage	
Religious theme	83.6	86.0
Secular theme	...14.4	...14.0
Total	98.0	100.0

Source: Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics 1, 378 - 379.

Comparing the above table to Table 1.1 for fifteenth century Italian art, it becomes apparent that there is very little difference between the areas according to Sorokin. Although there is no indication of the trends for the two particular areas this study is concerned with, nevertheless an analysis of paintings for France and Flanders during this period had results comparable to those of Sorokin's, as Table 2.2 illustrates.

Table 2.2

FLUCTUATION OF RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR THEMES IN PAINTING

	France	Flanders
	1400 - 1500	1400 - 1500
	Percentage	
Religious theme	88.1	88.7
Secular theme	...11.9	...11.3
Total	100.0	100.0

From Table 2.2 it can be seen that the study of paintings for France and Flanders gave results comparable to those of Sorokin's in Table 2.1. Compared, however, to the findings for Italian art, neither the "Ancient and Medieval Christian" or "Dutch" art differ in any significant manner. The question that arises is whether the findings indicate a Sensate cultural type, or whether they are indicative of an Idealistic phase. The fifteen to twenty percent of secular content that characterises both Italian and Dutch and Ancient and Medieval Christian art is a small percentage on which to base the conclusion that during the fifteenth century, Europe had entered a Sensate phase.

From the above tables it would appear that for Florence, given the numbers of paintings with secular content, the Sensate cultural type may be applied. However, for the other areas investigated such a conclusion appears to be doubtful. Sorokin's own figures for the period would seem to indicate that the Sensate phase, in terms of the content of art, was a relatively minor factor during this period. The examination of the rest of the categories will indicate whether more sensate characteristics appear in the art of Italy or in that of France and Flanders.

B. The Urban - Rural Category

In investigating this particular category, the fluctuation of urban and rural landscape in art, Sorokin expected that with the development of urbanization, the urban landscape would also increase. His study found that this was not the case, in fact the proportion of urban-rural landscape did not appear to depend upon rates of urbanization in the various countries.

Generally it seems reasonable to expect that with the growth of urbanization, the percentage of urban landscape will grow also, while that of rural scenery will decrease. The figures in the tables do

not support such an expectation. ...the proportion of the urban and rural paysage is not determined directly by urbanization but by some other factors.¹⁵

Despite this conclusion, it was decided to include the rural-urban dichotomy not only to test Sorokin's conclusions, but also to investigate the status of France and Flanders with respect to this category. Sorokin indicates that for "Ancient and Medieval Christian" art there were no urban or rural paysage works to be recorded.

By paysage Sorokin means "Visual paysage," as opposed to Ideational or symbolic paysage. In this context, visual paysage refers to the treatment of paysage in a non-symbolic manner.

...paysage is a modern invention. In the Oriental and antique paintings it played a purely decorative role; in the Middle Ages this role was still less because even the mere elements of nature had there an "ideogrammatic (Ideational) meaning only." Before the fifteenth century there was practically no paysage.¹⁶

Paysage of either the rural or urban type is a characteristic found generally in Sensate cultures. As such, indications of such paysage in French and Flemish paintings, and in Italian works will illustrate the extent to which any of the areas can be characterised as Sensate. Sorokin's findings are reported below in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

URBAN AND RURAL PAYSAGE IN ART

	1400 - 1450	- 1500
	Percentage	
Italy		
Urban	-	60
Rural	100	40

cont'd.

Table 3.1 (cont'd.)

URBAN AND RURAL PAYSAGE IN ART

	1400 - 1500	- 1500
	Percentage	
France		
Urban	-	-
Rural	-	-

Source: Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, 461.

Sorokin also reports that for the fifteenth century, "In the Netherlands, ...100 percent of the paysage is urban;...." The findings from the present study indicate that both for France and Flanders there is some disagreement with Sorokin's findings.

Table 3.2

URBAN AND RURAL PAYSAGE IN PAINTING

	Florence	Venice
	1400 - 1500	1400 - 1500
	Percentage	
Urban	45.6	37.0
Rural	54.4	63.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 3.3

URBAN AND RURAL PAYSAGE IN PAINTING

	France	Flanders
	1400 - 1500	1400 - 1500
	Percentage	
Urban	70.0	65.5
Rural	30.0	34.5
Total	100.0	100.0

From Tables 3.2 and 3.3 it would appear that far from depicting no paysage during the fifteenth century, both French and Flemish paintings have a preponderance of urban paysage. For Italy, rather than indicating a decline in rural paysage during the fifteenth century as was the case for Sorokin's findings, rural paysage appears to be the dominant form. The existence of paysage in French and Flemish paintings seems to indicate that in both areas there is a movement towards the Sensate cultural type.

In attempting to adhere to Sorokin's definition of paysage, there appeared to be evidence of such forms in the French and Flemish paintings of the fifteenth century. In fact, Sorokin's findings for fifteenth century French paintings appear to be misleading, given his recognition that: "In the fifteenth century paysage appears suddenly in France...in the form of the famous Très riches heures of Chantilly made for the Duke of Berry in 1416, and the Heures of Tourin, made in 1418 by the three Limbourg Brothers and the two Van Eycks."¹⁷

From the above statement it would appear that far from indicating no paysage in French fifteenth century painting, as Sorokin does in Table

3.1, this period indicates the beginning of paysage in French painting. What is surprising in this context is that the results from this study tend to confirm Sorokin's main point, whereas Sorokin's findings tend to negate the point that the fifteenth century marks the beginnings of the Sensate cultural type. The contradiction found in relation to the type of paysage or the existence of paysage in French or Flemish paintings compared to Sorokin's findings may be the result of one of two factors; inaccurate reporting as a consequence of a misunderstanding of Sorokin's description of visual paysage, or the fact that for Sorokin's study the percentage of paysage reported for this period and area was minimal and not significant statistically. With respect to the former possibility, if this is the case, then part of the problem lies with Sorokin's inaccurate description of what is meant by "visual paysage." With respect to the significance of the numbers reported for this period, given the fact that Sorokin reported his findings in percentages, then such a problem should not arise.

With the urban - rural category, no conclusion can be reached regarding the preponderance of either type as an indication of the cultural mentality. However, the discrepancy between the findings of this study and those of Sorokin's creates a problem. In the presuppositions regarding the character of Sensate paintings, the findings of the present study support Sorokin's conclusions, but they refute the second hypothesis of this study whereas Sorokin's results support our second hypothesis, that Northern Europe, was more likely to produce Ideational paintings during the fifteenth century. The absence of "visual paysage" according to Sorokin would tend to support this hypothesis. But Sorokin also claims that the fifteenth century

marks the beginnings of the sensate cultural type. An examination of the rest of the findings may clarify this particular discrepancy.

C. Portraits

According to Sorokin, portraiture is more likely to be a sensate or visual development. Comparing visual art with idealistic art, Sorokin states that;

Only the empirical world which always consists of individual objects, persons, events, is and can be the concern of such an art. It is the art of the portraiture of individuals; the art of the depiction of the daily genre; the art of empirical events, historical scenes, landscapes; in brief, the art of life and the world as they appear to the organs of sense.¹⁸

The fluctuation of portraiture in the fifteenth century is illustrated below.

Table 4.1

FLUCTUATION OF PORTRAITURE, EUROPE BY CENTUREIS

	XII - XIII	XIV - XV	XVI
Portrait number	43	928	1508
Total secular number or portraits	142	1707	3845
Percentage of total secular	29.0	54.4	39.2
Percentage of total secular and religious	0.9	6.6	11.5

Source: Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, 469.

The fifteenth century in the above figures shows a substantial increase in the number of secular portraits, and a slight increase in the number of religious portraits. The decrease noted in the sixteenth

century is attributed to the fact that prior to the fifteenth century secular pictures constituted only a small fraction of the art produced. Taking into account the progressive increase in secular paintings from the fifteenth century, the seeming decline in the sixteenth century may be explained by the greater number of secular paintings including portraits, produced.

Even for the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which give the highest percentage of portraits in the total secular art, the percentage of portraits in the total - secular and religious - art of these centuries is only about 6: 928 portraits out of the total 13,969. For the sixteenth century this percentage becomes (in regard to the total - religious and secular) more than 11; ... So far the contention that portraiture and Ideational art are negatively associated while portraiture and Visual art are associated positively is corroborated by the data.¹⁹

According to Sorokin's findings, the fifteenth century marks the beginning of the rise of portraiture. The findings from the present study indicate 57 portraits for Florence, 8 for Venice, 12 for France and 27 for Flanders. The above figures would seem to indicate that Florence and Flanders may be considered more sensate with regard to portraiture than either Venice or France.

Sorokin also indicates the types of social classes portrayed and the manner in which the proportions changed. The fluctuations in this regard are seen to reflect the main changes in social stratification in Europe.

...in the Ideational and Idealistic phases of even the secular art ...not to mention the main stream of religious art, the bourgeoisie and the lower classes were absent. As the art has become more and more Visual, they emerged, and have been steadily growing, while the aristocracy and the clergy have been as steadily declining. ...The gods, deities, saints of the Ideational period, are replaced by heroes, kings, princes, dukes, and popes of the Idealistic period; and these are more and more crowded out by the Babbitts from Main Street, and by honest plain peasants or labourers or by the criminal and hobo and urchin of the lower classes.²⁰

From the examination of the historical data it may be assumed that portraits in Italy during the fifteenth century would reflect the change from the Ideational subjects to the more visual or Sensate subjects. That is, the popes, princes and bourgeoisie are likely to predominate. In France it might be expected that the more Ideational aspects of portraiture would remain during this period, and for Flanders, that the portraits would reflect the Idealistic phase. The tables below indicate the results obtained from an examination of the paintings for the fifteenth century.

Table 4.2

FLUCTUATION OF SOCIAL CLASSES IN PORTRAITURE

	Italian	
	1400 - 1450	1450 - 1500
	Percentage	
Aristocracy	53.4	35.7
Clergy	26.2	16.4
Bourgeoisie	4.9	27.7
Intellectuals,	6.8	13.6
Artists		
Military	8.7	6.6
Lower Classes	-	-
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, 475.

From the above table, Sorokin's findings indicate the visual or Sensate characteristics of portraiture for Italy in the fifteenth century. The aristocracy and the clergy are well represented at the beginning of the century, but are giving way to the bourgeoisie in the latter part. There is also a marked increase in the number of artists and intellectuals

depicted, which would seem to indicate their increased status during this period. The findings reported below for this study would tend to confirm Sorokin's findings when the figures for Florence are examined. However, those for Venice give indications of an idealistic phase rather than the sensate phase.

Table 4.3

FLUCTUATION OF SOCIAL CLASSES IN PORTRAITURE

	Florence	Venice
	1400 - 1500	1400 - 1500
	Percentage	
Aristocracy	32.6	54.5
Clergy	15.2	18.3
Bourgeoisie	38.7	27.2
Intellectuals,	6.1	-
Artists		
Military	1.5	-
Lower classes	6.1	-
Total	100.0	100.0

In the above table it can be seen that, not only do the bourgeoisie predominate, but also some of the lower-class citizens are portrayed in Florentine paintings. The findings for Florence more than substantiate Sorokin's contention that this period marks the beginnings of the sensate cultural type. However, the figures for Venice approach the idealistic type in terms of the social classes they portray.

The Idealistic art...is bound to render mainly those classes and groups, like the aristocracy, clergy, and so on, which occupy the top of the social pyramid and, in the scale of the values of these periods, are considered as "superior," "nobler," "better," more valuable than the lower classes.²¹

The aristocracy predominate in the Venetian portraits, and there is no indication of increased status for the intellectuals or the artists in terms of their portrayal, as is the case for Florence.

As was the case with the former categories examined, Sorokin does not include any figures for France prior to the sixteenth century, and the figures for Flanders are included in the figures for Dutch art. According to the figures given under the heading "Ancient and Medieval Christian" art, only the aristocracy and the clergy are represented in portraiture during the fifteenth century.

Table 5.1

FLUCTUATION OF SOCIAL CLASSES IN PORTRAITURE

	Ancient and Medieval Christian
	XIV - XV
	Percentage
Aristocracy	79.2
Clergy	20.8
Bourgeoisie	-
Intellectuals,	-
Artists	-
Military	-
Lower classes	-
Total	100.0

Source: Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, 472.

Assuming, again, that the above figures also include French paintings, it would appear that during the fifteenth century, France remained largely Ideational in terms of the characteristics of the portraits produced. Dutch painting appears more Idealistic than Sensate according to Sorokin's figures. In the figures reported in Table 5.2, it can be

seen that the clergy predominate in the Dutch portraiture for the fifteenth century.

Table 5.2

FLUCTUATION OF SOCIAL CLASSES IN PORTRAITURE

	Dutch
	- 1500
	Percentage
Aristocracy	29.4
Clergy	47.0
Bourgeoisie	23.6
Intellectuals	-
Artists	-
Military	-
Lower classes	-
Total	100.0

Source: Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, 478.

In the above table, the figures appear to support our third hypothesis that Flemish painting during the fifteenth century was likely to be Idealistic. The intellectuals, artists, the military and the lower classes are not represented and presumably, if Sorokin is correct, they are not regarded as "important" or of much account in the stratification of the society. In comparison to Table 5.1, however, the bourgeoisie are well represented. This tends to confirm the differences between French and Flemish society during this period that has been noted in the historical research. Although the bourgeoisie were becoming a more important factor in French social life during this period, they were still excluded from the traditional regard that the feudal artistocracy commanded, and this appears to be reflected in Table 5.1.

In comparison to Sorokin's findings, the present study found that some of the bourgeoisie were represented in the paintings of fifteenth century France. Table 5.3 illustrates the findings for this study.

Table 5.3

FLUCTUATION OF SOCIAL CLASSES IN PORTRAITURE

	France	Flanders
	1400 - 1500	1400 - 1500
	Percentage	
Aristocracy	66.6	42.8
Clergy	8.3	5.7
Bourgeoisie	25.1	51.5
Intellectuals	-	-
Artists	-	-
Military	-	-
Lower classes	-	-
Total	100.0	100.0

Compared to Sorokin's figures, the above table indicates a larger number of bourgeoisie portrayed for both countries. It is difficult to make any definite comparison with Sorokin's work because of the lack of information for France during the fifteenth century and because the figures for Flanders are not separated from the rest of the states that made up the Netherlands during the fifteenth century. However, assuming that the inclusion of social classes other than the clergy and the aristocracy indicates the Idealistic cultural type, then both France and Flanders fit into this category.

From the above table, the findings for Flanders tend to confirm the third hypothesis that this society was more likely to produce Idealistic

paintings. The findings for France tend to negate the hypothesis that France would produce Ideational art during the fifteenth century. The same conflict that was noticeable with the urban-rural category is found with reference to the results for France. That is, Sorokin's figures tend to confirm the hypothesis that France remained Ideational. However, our figures in Table 5.3 negate this conclusion and suggest that French portraiture was Idealistic during this period. The conflict in both cases, for the urban-rural category and the social classes portrayed, may be a consequence of assuming that the results in Sorokin's tables for "Ancient and Medieval Christian" art cover French painting. It cannot be assumed that either urban-rural paysage or portraiture was absent from French painting prior to the fifteenth century. As a consequence it would seem logical that without any particular report for France that the results for these two categories would be found in the results recorded in the "Ancient and Medieval Christian" tables.

The problem in findings results for France or for Flanders as a separate entity appears to relate to Sorokin's level of analysis. Sorokin is concerned with trends over time for the whole of Europe: minor fluctuations for particular areas are not regarded as significant unless they show a consistent deviation from the major trends. As a consequence, French art prior to the sixteenth century may have been seen as part of the more general "International" style that characterised European art prior to the fifteenth century. A national art in France did not appear until the "Renaissance" under Francis I in the sixteenth century.

Making a large allowance for work that has been destroyed, it would seem that a national school of painting was not possible until Louis

XII laid the foundations of a united France and Francis I tamed the turbulent nobility by establishing a court.²²

Consequently, France, according to Sorokin's study, only becomes significant in terms of the general trend towards Sensate culture in the sixteenth century. Analysing the data in this manner, however, means that minor deviations may be overlooked. With respect to the units with which Sorokin works, that is, whole societies, to disregard deviations from the general trend at this level means that the empirical support that Sorokin claims for his types may be refuted by a more particular analysis of the various countries and their art.

The problem regarding the type of data Sorokin uses and the level of analysis will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter Ten. For the rest of the analysis, the Dutch and the Ancient and Medieval Christian categories will be used to compare the findings from the two studies.

In the analysis of the social classes portrayed Sorokin also includes figures for the percentage of males and females represented. According to Sorokin's results the increased representation of females in art is an indication of the increasing emancipation of women and a characteristic of a Sensate culture.

All the centuries after the thirteenth show a notably increased percentage of female portraits. This increase undoubtedly reflects the process of increased participation of women in socio-cultural functions - among them the artistic, scientific, and political activities - which has taken place in comparison with women's activities in the Middle Ages. On the other hand, it corroborates the theory of the satellites of the Ideational and Visual art mentioned above - that the predominance of Visual art seems to manifest itself in a greater proportion of the pictures and sculptures which depict women, especially pretty and voluptuous women.²³

In terms of the hypotheses of this study, it may be expected that Italy would show a preponderance of female portraits compared to France

and Flanders. The results from the two studies are found in the tables below.

Table 6.1

FLUCTUATION OF THE SEXES IN PORTRAITURE

	Italy	
	1400 - 1450	1450 - 1500
	Percentage	
Male	61.8	80.8
Female	38.2	19.2
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1. 475.

Table 6.2

FLUCTUATION OF THE SEXES IN PORTRAITURE

	Florence	Venice
	1400 - 1500	1400 - 1500
	Percentage	
Male	43.9	75.0
Female	56.1	25.0
Total	100.0	100.0

In comparison to Sorokin's results, Florence supports the contention that the importance of females in social life was increased during the fifteenth century. Venice also shows a fairly substantial number of female portraits. The hypothesis that Italy would be more Sensate in its characteristics is borne out by the results in this particular

category. However, the results for France and Flanders do not differ significantly from those for Italy. as the tables below illustrate.

Table 7.1

FLUCTUATION OF THE SEXES IN PORTRAITURE

	Ancient and Medieval Christian
	XIV - XV
	Percentage
Male	73.3
Female	26.7
Total	100.0

Source: Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, 472.

Table 7.2

FLUCTUATION OF THE SEXES IN PORTRAITURE

	Dutch
	- 1500
	Percentage
Male	72.1
Female	27.9
Total	100.0

Source: Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, 478.

Table 7.3

FLUCTUATION OF THE SEXES IN PORTRAITURE

	France	Flanders
	1400 - 1500	1400 - 1500
	Percentage	
Male	50.0	74.1
Female	50.0	25.9
Total	100.0	100.0

From the results in the above tables, the hypothesis that France would exhibit Ideational traits is negated. France has a higher percentage of female portraits than any other area studied with the exception of Florence. With respect to the representation of females, France would appear to be more Sensate than either Venice or Flanders. The results for France are surprising given the nature of social life for most of the fifteenth century. The conditions of war that prevailed for most of the century, and the retention of the more feudal forms of organization, would lead to the assumption that women would not participate in any significant regard in socio-cultural functions. On explanation for the high rates for France may lie in the chivalric code. Women were idealized in the institution of chivalry and their portrayal in paintings during this period may be a reflection of this idealization. If this is the case, the paintings reflect a more Ideational than a Sensate approach to the portrayal of the female.

D. Genre

According to Sorokin, genre is not to be found in any significant

degree in Ideational art.

...I indicated that the very nature of the Ideational art is little conducive toward the genre pictures and sculpture which depict the empirical daily events of ordinary people, their work, their festivities, their games, their fights, their lovemaking, marriages, funerals, and so on and so forth. The Visual art and mentality, on the contrary, would be interested in such subjects greatly,...²⁴

On the basis of Sorokin's assumptions it may be expected that France would have few paintings depicting genre, in contrast to the two Italian cities. Flemish painting, it might be assumed would have more genre paintings than France, not only because of the hypothesis of Idealistic type, but also because genre paintings are most commonly associated with Netherlands paintings.

The comparatively greatest development (quantitatively, in proportion to the total of the secular art) we find in Holland, as is to be expected; and one of the lowest, in England, Italy, and France. (Here the influence of the Academy and of classicism is evident.)²⁵

The results obtained for this category are found in the tables below.

Table 8.1

FLUCTUATION OF TYPES OF GENRE IN ART

	Italy	
	1400 - 1450	1450 - 1500
	Percentage	
Everyday life	48.9	43.0
Festivals	35.6	24.1
Satire, humour	-	-
Dramatic events	4.4	12.6
Military scenes	11.1	15.2
Love scenes	5.1
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, 495.

Table 8.2

FLUCTUATION OF TYPES OF GENRE IN PAINTING

	Florence	Venice
	1400 - 1500	1400 - 1500
	Percentage	
Everyday life	21.5	16.7
Festivals	7.6	22.2
Satire, humour	-	-
Dramatic events	63.1	61.1
Military scenes	6.2	-
Love scenes	1.6	-
Total	100.0	100.0

Comparing tables 8.1 and 8.2, it can be seen that the results for Florence compare favourable with those of Sorokin for the whole of Italy. However, the category for dramatic events for both Florence and Venice makes up the majority of the genre in the paintings, in contrast to the relatively minor part it plays in Sorokin's research. In contrast to Florence, Venice does not appear to lay much stress on the depiction of genre. In evaluating the paintings in this study it was noticed that for Venetian paintings the depiction of genre was usually accompanied by some religious, or secular theme unlike the genre paintings for Florence, which were more likely to depict genre for its own sake. Taking this into account, and in terms of the results in table 8.2, it may be assumed that for Florence the sensate or visual trend is apparent, but for Venice a more idealistic pattern is evident.

Sorokin's results for Dutch art are surprising. In the category for the fifteenth century no genre is recorded.²⁶ This result is not duplicated by the present study as Table 9.1 illustrates.

Table 9.1

FLUCTUATION OF TYPES OF GENRE IN PAINTING

	France	Flanders
	1400 - 1500	1400 - 1500
	Percentage	
Everyday life	42.1	22.5
Festivals	-	-
Satire, humour	-	-
Dramatic events	57.9	77.5
Military scenes	-	-
Love scenes
Total	100.0	100.0

Contrary to Sorokin's results, this study found that the two categories, "everyday life" and "dramatic events" were well represented in Flemish paintings during the fifteenth century. The results in Table 9.1 for France also conflict with the results Sorokin records for Ancient and Medieval Christian art.

Table 9.2

FLUCTUATION OF TYPES OF GENRE IN ART

	Ancient and Medieval Christian
	XIV - XV
	Percentage
Everyday life	36.0
Festivals	9.9
Satire, humour	7.1
Dramatic events	4.7
Military scenes	11.6
Love scenes	30.7
Total	100.0

Source: Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, 493.

In the above table, the results would indicate a Sensate type of culture. The present study found slightly more paintings falling into the category "everyday life," and the rest of the works examined falling into the "dramatic events" category. The discrepancy between the two studies with respect to genre may be a consequence of the way in which the results for the paintings were recorded. Although the research for the present study attempted to duplicate Sorokin's methods, it is clear that the categories used in the estimations of genre could be misinterpreted. As a check upon this possibility the added categories for Activity may be used. Table 10.1 indicates the results in this category.

Table 10.1

FLUCTUATION OF TYPES OF ACTIVITY IN PAINTING

	Florence	Venice	France	Flanders
1400 - 1500				
Percentages				
Farming	3.8	-	-	-
Trading	1.9	-	-	-
Manual labor	6.4	-	-	-
Crafts, special skills	7.0	-	2.2	8.6
Religious activity	72.4	89.6	97.8	85.6
Political activity, diplomacy	8.5	10.4	-	-
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	94.2

In the above table, the results for Florence would indicate a more Sensate cultural type in that the paintings are concerned with all types of activity, including manual labour. Despite the representation of all the categories in Florentine painting, the religious activity depicted

remains the predominant type. Venice, as might have been expected from the former research and from the emphasis the Republic placed upon loyalty and service to the city, shows a good proportion of paintings concerned with political and diplomatic activity. The results for France and Flanders also substantiate the hypotheses for this study. The activities characteristic of French painting are basically religious with some depiction of crafts and special skills. The latter forms of activity are to be found mainly in the illustrations in manuscripts and Books of Hours. French painting, in terms of the activities it portrayed, would appear to have remained Ideational. Flemish painting may be considered Idealistic in relation to the types of activities portrayed. That is, the trading and craft and special skills category are represented in Flemish painting, which would have been expected given the emphasis upon such activities amongst the Flemish bourgeoisie. Although the percentage is not as significant as might have been expected from the documentary data for Flanders.

Despite the breakdown by Activity, the results do not clarify the great differences found between Sorokin's results in Table 9.2 and the results of the present study in Table 9.1. The results in Table 10.1 tend to confirm the hypotheses of this study and negate the conclusions that Sorokin reaches for fifteenth century art. The results from the comparison between Sorokin's work and the present study are summarized below.

Summary and Conclusions

To a large extent the attempt to duplicate Sorokin's empirical work was unsuccessful due to several factors; first, the lack of materials or paintings available for study; secondly, the lack of independent researchers

for the material; and third the fact that Sorokin does not give any results for fifteenth century France or Flanders as separate entities.

Using the category, Ancient and Medieval Christian, to compare to the results from this study for France, was less than satisfactory. Sorokin's category obviously includes art works in many more countries than France, and as such the contributions that France made to this category may be distorted by the inclusion of results from other areas. At the same time, it could also be assumed that Flanders, as part of France for part of the fifteenth century, may also have been included in Sorokin's Ancient and Medieval category as opposed to the Dutch. The only basis for assuming that the Flemish paintings may be compared to Sorokin's results for Dutch art is the references Sorokin makes to "Netherlands" art work in relation to the Dutch category. The Netherlands included most of Flanders in the sixteenth century, and it is assumed that the results for Dutch fifteenth century art also included Flemish art. A further problem in relation to the comparison of Sorokin's results with this study relates to the fact that Sorokin's figures include sculpture as well as paintings. The combination of paintings and sculptures in Sorokin's results was not regarded as an important problem in that it was assumed that the trends affecting one art form would, most likely, be reflected in any other form. As such, slight deviations might be expected as a consequence of the concentration upon only one art form. However, as part of the general cultural activity, it was assumed that any similarities to be found would be reflected in the results.

As a consequence of the above problems encountered in this study, the results from the empirical part of the study are inconclusive. In terms of the first hypothesis; France was more likely to be Ideational during

the fifteenth century, it was found that only the results for the category "Activities" (Table 10.1) tended to support this hypothesis. The rest of the results from this study would seem to indicate an Idealistic cultural types rather than Ideational. The results for Flanders, however, do tend to confirm the hypothesis that an Idealistic culture was more likely to predominate during the fifteenth century. Sorokin's results for Holland also tend to support the hypothesis that Flemish painting was likely to be Idealistic. For example, in terms of the social classes portrayed, Dutch art includes only the "top" social classes (Table 5.2); the aristocracy, the clergy, and the bourgeoisie. In the religious-secular category (Table 2.1), in both Sorokin's results and the results from this study, Flemish art remained largely religious.

For Italy, the hypothesis stated the expectation that both Florence and Venice would approximate the Sensate type during the fifteenth century. The results from the present study indicate that Florence meets the expectation, but Venice tends to exhibit more Idealistic characteristics. For example, as was the case for Flemish painting, only the aristocracy, the clergy and the bourgeoisie are represented in Venetian portraits (Table 4.3). In terms of Genre for Venice (Table 8.2), the majority of the paintings are concerned with "dramatic events," and from the results in the Activity category, most of the dramatic events may be assumed to have religious significance, rather than being portrayals of secular events.

In Chapter Two the characteristics that Sorokin outlines for Ideational and Visual or Sensate art were elaborated. On the basis of these characteristics and the empirical information from the present study, it was con-

cluded that with the exception of Florence which fits the sensate type, the other areas were idealistic in type during the fifteenth century. In the paintings of France, Flanders and Venice, the following characteristics may be observed;

- a) Tables 1.2 and 2.2, the beginnings of secular painting, but a predominance of religious topics.
- b) Tables 3.2 and 3.3, a minor amount of paysage.
- c) Tables 4.3 and 5.3, a concentration upon the high ranking social classes in portraiture.
- d) Tables 8.2 and 9.1, a minor amount of genre.

The characteristics listed above that were found in the study of the paintings for the three areas constitute a more Idealistic than Visual or Sensate type. A comparison of the four points with Sorokin's contrast of the Idealistic and Visual styles indicates their similarity to the Idealistic.

Sorokin points out that one of the characteristics of Idealistic art is "...an ideal or value (which) is always the value of a genuine collectivity."²⁷ In the paintings studied, with the exception of Florence, the preponderance of religious subjects and themes suggests that the ideals or values expressed in the paintings remains largely superempirical. The religious content of the paintings for both Flanders and France was nearly 90%, and for Venice, 73.3%.

The concentration upon ideals or values in Idealistic art means that only those objects, events or individuals related to the ideal are the subjects of such art.

Hence, the rationalistic, abstract, "typifying" nature of Idealistic art. Under such circumstances, the individual portrait, the empirical genre, the landscape, the historical scene, and anything concrete, not related to the ideal, are rare in such an art.²⁸

The results obtained for the depiction of social classes in portraiture and the type of genre evident in the paintings studied, support the contention that French, Flemish and Venetian painting was Idealistic during the fifteenth century. For Venice the category for "dramatic events" in the depiction of genre was 61.1%, and it was noticed that the "dramatic events" depicted usually had some religious or "political" implication; the political implication usually related to the glorification of the Republic. Similarly the 77.5% of the paintings for Flanders that fell into the "dramatic events" category, was usually associated with some religious theme. Although the paintings for France indicated only 57.9% in the "dramatic events" category, and 42.1% in the "everyday life" category, the latter figure was largely the result of the types of genre depicted in the illustrated manuscripts and books. Consequently, although the paintings depicted "ordinary, everyday" activities, these were linked with the religious theme that constituted the major point of the manuscripts and books.

The results obtained in the estimations of activities depicted also indicates a concern with ideals, in this case religious ideals, as opposed to the depiction of prosaic, everyday activities, for the areas other than Florence. However, even for Florence, religious activities constituted 72.4% of the activities depicted in the paintings.

Despite the problems encountered in comparing Sorokin's work directly with the empirical work for the areas studied, the conclusion reached as a consequence of the above analysis, is that Sorokin's general estimation regarding the fluctuation of the types in art is misleading when his method and assumptions are applied on a more particular level.

Although the results obtained from the present study do not lend support to Sorokin's conclusions, with the possible exception of Florentine painting, it cannot be stated with any degree of accuracy that the other areas were definitely Idealistic in their art forms. The tentative nature of the conclusion that French, Flemish and Venetian painting was Idealistic is related to one major characteristic of the Idealistic mentality. As Sorokin points out, the Idealistic mentality is a mixture of "fusion" of the Ideational and the Sensate types.

...the Idealistic style usually occurs when the Ideational begins to decline, but without breaking entirely free from its "super-empirical" moorings; and when the Visual style begins to grow, without becoming, as yet, completely materialistic, mechanistic, hedonistic, and anti-religious. When the descending line of Ideationalism and the ascending line of Visualism (Empirical Sensatism) cross each other at some theoretically "optimum" point, the result is Idealism and Idealistic art, ... The more these lines deviate from this marvelously balanced "optimum" point, the more the style becomes either Ideational or Visual, according to which of these styles becomes more and more dominant.²⁹

When a particular culture has reached the balanced, "optimum" point, that constitutes the Idealistic phase according to Sorokin, is largely a matter of personal judgement. The empirical studies conducted by Sorokin are not objective enough to allow duplication in all areas, as was discovered in the present study in the attempts to duplicate the categories used for art work. An examination of Sorokin's discussion of thirteenth century European art, which is seen to be the Idealistic period for Europe, does little to clarify the reasons for, or the manner in which an Idealistic period may be estimated.³⁰

Already at the end of the thirteenth century the "optimum" point was left behind, and the art of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries already represents the period of transition from a waning Idealism toward a full-blooded Visualism.³¹

Although the three areas designated may not be Idealistic according to Sorokin, they cannot be considered Sensate in their general socio-cultural type, or Visual in their paintings. From the results obtained from the analysis of the paintings, and on the basis of the examination of the documents and historical research, the conclusion that Sorokin reaches regarding the Sensate nature of the fifteenth century in Europe is questionable. The concluding chapter in this study will discuss Sorokin's position in the light of the evidence, both empirical and socio-historical, that has been presented in this study.

FOOTNOTES

¹ See, Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics (4 vols.; (New York: American Book Company, 1937), 1, 243 - 506.

² Don Martindale, Community, Character and Civilization (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1963), p.362.

³ Karl Mannheim, Essays on the Sociology of Culture, ed. and trans., E. Mannheim and P. Kecskemeti (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 62.

⁴ Ibid., p.74.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., p.77.

⁷ See Chapter Four of this study for a further discussion at this point.

⁸ Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, pp.369 - 506.

⁹ Jean Porcher, Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry (Paris: Les Editions Nomis, n.d.), p.27.

¹⁰ An attempt to obtain the information required from various independent respondents by questionnaire was unsuccessful. To the ten questionnaires sent out, the return was nil even after follow-up letters. This discouraging factor may be partly accounted for in terms of the difficulty artists and art historians appear to have regarding agreement amongst themselves about various periods, styles, and characteristics of painter's works. It is therefore possible that the categories used in this study had little meaning to the individuals who were requested to participate, despite the preliminary explanation of their origin in Sorokin's work and the meaning they had for the present study.

¹¹ Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, 504.

¹² Ibid., 1, 376.

¹³ Ibid.,

¹⁴ Ibid., 1, 377

15 Ibid., 1, 461.

16 Ibid., 1, 450.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., 1, 259.

19 Ibid., 1, 470.

20 Ibid., 1, 488.

21 Ibid. (It should be pointed out that, in Western European painting, it has only been during the last century that the "lower classes" have been a consistent feature in painting. Consequently Sorokin's conclusion regarding the "value" of the various classes in terms of their representation in painting seems to be a rather obvious point and does not advance the analysis of the various types in any significant manner.)

22 Ernest H. Short, The Painter in History (London: Hollis & Carter, 1948), p.289.

23 Pitirim A. Sorokin, Social and Cultural Dynamics, 1, 490.

24 Ibid., 1, 491.

25 Ibid., 1, 492..

26 Ibid., 1, 494.

27 Ibid., 1, 258.

28 Ibid., 1, 259.

29 Ibid., 1, 263.

30 Ibid., 1, 320 - 326.

31 Ibid., 1, 326.

CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION

This study has been conducted with two objectives in mind, first to examine the role of the painter in the fifteenth century in certain specified areas; and secondly, to see to what extent Sorokin's analysis of cultural types provides a useful framework for the examination of this type of socio-historical data.¹ Briefly restated, Sorokin contends that the fifteenth century in Europe may be characterised as Sensate in nature. The Sensate, or Visual aspects in art, during this period are applied to the areas examined in this study, that is, France, Flanders, Venice and Florence.

From the documentary investigation and the investigation of the content of the paintings for the fifteenth century in the areas mentioned above, some doubt was raised regarding the applicability of the Sensate concept. Of the areas examined, Florence, and to a lesser extent Venice, appears to approximate most closely the Sensate type. However, even for these two areas, certain important discrepancies were found. In Chapter Nine of this study the content of the paintings for the period does not show a preponderance of Sensate or Visual characteristics. In fact, even Sorokin's empirical work in the same area shows a discrepancy with his theoretical illustration of Sensate characteristics.

The major problem with the findings from the present study relates to the level of analysis used. It was indicated in Chapter One that the three cultural types elaborated by Sorokin may usefully be seen as "ideal

types". Although Sorokin does not use such a description of the Sensate, Ideational, or Idealistic sociocultural entities, an examination of their characteristics and the manner in which Sorokin himself uses them in his empirical studies, indicates that the three categories are "ideal". The ideal or abstract nature of the types means that any analysis of the empirical or historical data is bound to reveal discrepancies with the theoretical construct.

Any ideal type represents the accentuation of a point of view in which the "typical" or characteristic aspects of the phenomena are stressed. In Sorokin's analysis, the types are applied to a variety of social systems, and it is this application that the author feels is responsible for the "poor fit" that the areas examined in this study exhibit. The abstraction of "typical" aspects on such a general basis cannot take into account adequately the variations within particular, concrete, systems. In the attempt to fit the various data into the conceptualized and highly abstract types, the possibilities of variation within particular social systems are ignored. This situation leaves Sorokin open to the criticism of historicism. That is, his study is concerned with the revelation of certain universal laws that explain the whole progress of sociocultural change, but only in the broadest terms, and at the expense of losing touch with many local, historical and unique cases.

A solution to Sorokin's problem may be found by considering the systems of meaning for each of the types in terms of the component parts, both action and values. The differing emphases upon the component parts for each social system would possibly result in a description of

the society that has a more obvious relationship to its reality. Although there may only be three general ontological classifications, nevertheless, the possible institutional forms for any society based on any of these three types may vary. The institutional forms will represent the particular interpretation of the basic ontological viewpoint. The selection of an ontological basis for the types is not at issue. Some definition of reality may be presumed to provide guidelines for behaviour. But to presume that a general ontology applicable in a cross-cultural manner will provide a valid explanatory basis for large-scale socio-cultural changes appears to be mistaken. It is the variations upon the basic ontological premise that gives each society its particular character.²

In Chapter Five of this study, the social conditions in Florence and Venice were examined. Although certain changes are apparent in the nature of the political, economic and social life, the changes do not constitute either a radical break with medieval traditions, nor a uniform Sensate character. For example, the Florentine reaction to Savonarola is more Ideational in nature, and, as Huizinga points out, illustrates the retention of certain medieval attitudes.³ The republican ideal professed by both Florentine and Venetian statesmen in conjunction with the humanists, was contradicted by the actual oligarchic control and subordination of the individual in the practice of politics. The assumption of increasing urbanization and development of a capitalist economy which would be factors promoting the Sensate nature of the period were not typical of either republic during the fifteenth century.

Not only does the documentary evidence point to certain discrepancies

with the Sensate type, but the empirical investigation of the paintings for the two areas indicates some further doubts. The content of the paintings examined does not indicate any significant movement towards Visualism.

Regarding the role of the painter in Florence and Venice, again there appears to have been little change for the majority of painters during the fifteenth century from their medieval status as craftsmen. A few of the Florentine painters obtained recognition of their talents and raised their status as a consequence of the patronage of the aristocracy. However, even in Florence, such changes for a few painters were only characteristic of the late fifteenth century and were not so much a consequence of the recognition of the painter's talents as it was related to the status of the patron. That is, recognition of and support of a painter reflected upon the intellectual status of the patron. There is even less evidence that a few of the Venetian painters were as lucky as some of the Florentines with their patrons. From the accounts that exist about the fifteenth century Venetian painter, the status of craftsman appears to have been unchanged.

Some of the commentators upon the arts and upon the role of the painter seem to indicate that some changes did occur in Italy during the fifteenth century. For example, Leonardo devotes a large part of his writings to the illustration of the equality if not superiority of painting with the traditional Fine Arts. However, it should be noted that the reality for many of the painters, including the reality of those who indulged in speculations regarding their superior status, was often very different from the theory. In fact Leonardo's comments take on the

appearance of "special pleading" and suggest that by the very fact he considered the point important and worth a great deal of emphasis, the reality was far from the facts he presents. As a consequence, the documentary evidence does not support the assumption that, given the presumed Sensate nature of the period, the fifteenth century witnessed the increasing independence and individuality of the painter, and a corresponding change in the definition of his role. Any role changes that occurred during this period for the two areas examined appear to have revolved around the increased mobility of the bourgeoisie and the consolidation of their position in the later part of the period. The effects of this transition on the role of the painter, in conjunction with the influence of the humanists, appear to have been confined to a small number of painters able to obtain patronage. And even in this position the painter was subservient to the wishes of the patron.

Our examination of the social conditions in France and Flanders during the fifteenth century indicates still another discrepancy with Sorokin's assumption of the prevalence of Sensate characteristics. The general conclusion reached in Chapter Seven, after our examination, was that France retained many of the medieval and traditional forms, and in some areas attempts were made to consolidate the traditions. In fact, given the war conditions in which France was involved for most of the fifteenth century, it is surprising that any art at all existed or survived. The potential for change is apparent in both French and Flemish society during the fifteenth century. For example, partly as a consequence of the political and economic effects of the prolonged warfare, the bourgeoisie became an increasingly important class. The decline in

agriculture prompted an easing of feudal restrictions in an effort to attract more people to land. By the end of the fifteenth century the monarchy had considerably strengthened its position at the expense of the feudal nobility. However, these changes appear to have taken place within the medieval framework, such that the general social situation presents a traditional, medieval picture that would be more appropriately characterised as Idealistic rather than Sensate, in Sorokin's terminology.

With respect to the role of the painter in France and Flanders, from the limited amount of information available, Chapter Eight found no evidence of any change from the craft status. Two factors, in particular, appear to support this finding. First, the scarcity of commentaries or writings by painters or about painters for France and Flanders during this period seems to indicate that they retained the craft status. Secondly, there is evidence that the guild organizations to which painters belonged, rather than losing any control, strengthened its position during the fifteenth century. The guild organization, or membership in the guild, constitutes the institutional definition of the status of the painter. Unlike some of his Italian counterparts, some of whom in the later part of the fifteenth century are beginning to free themselves from the restrictions of the guild organization, the French or Flemish painter appears to have been bound by stricter regulations. The conclusion reached regarding the role of the painter in these two areas during the fifteenth century is that the Sensate type cannot be usefully applied. Rather, the painter's role appears to be almost identical to the role that might be expected in an Ideational-culture type. In terms of the content of the paintings produced in these areas, again no definitive evidence was found that would indicate a Sensate or Visual approach to painting.

It has been indicated earlier in this chapter that the differences between this study and Sorokin's analysis may be a consequence of the level of analysis. Sorokin points out that no culture or society can represent the perfect "type". In fact, the premises for change negate any possibility of a one-to-one relationship, quite apart from the "ideal" nature of the types. That is, systems are seen to change not only as a consequence of external pressures, but also as a result of internal factors. The principle of immanent change in conjunction with the principle of limits means that each cultural type has within it the potential for change, but that such change can only be of a limited nature given the five major ontological premises.⁴

Sorokin goes further in his discussion of the relationship of the various components of the cultural types when he points out that the human agents and the vehicles of meaning may have varying degrees of dependence upon the major system of meanings. In fact, he says that, "It is probable that ordinarily, as we pass from the smallest subsystem to the largest, the integration decreases, while the part of the congeries in them increases..."⁵ As the system level increases, then it may be supposed that the integration of the social units, or the parts of any type, will decrease. That is, at the level of a cultural system the integration may not be as great as, for example, at the system level of a particular social group in that culture. It may be presumed then, that the few Sensate characteristics found by the present study for the areas examined represent significant indications of the Sensate cultural mentality, despite the seeming discrepancy with the rest of the data. When such a conclusion appears to be appropriate, then the usefulness and the

applicability of the types may be questioned. On what basis does the investigator judge the "typical" nature of the component parts in terms of the ideal types?

The basis for any judgement regarding the relationship of the component parts to the presumed cultural type is further complicated by the fact, as Sorokin points out, all three types may exist in any one system.

...practically, in any culture of any period, none of these three systems exists monopolistically without the coexistence, as a minor or equal stream, of the other systems. ...The preceding volumes have shown this explicitly and almost every table and chart given there makes it clear; with the exception of a few periods, all the variables of Ideational, Sensate, and Idealistic supersystems coexist side by side in almost all tables. This means that any culture of a comparatively large area is not always entirely united, and besides the numerous congeries of small systems and single traits, almost always gives us coexisting congeries of these three vast supersystems.⁶

Consequently, the data from this study may have resulted in the ambiguous conclusions regarding the applicability of the types partly because the other two types inevitably coexist with the Sensate type. If this is the case, then the question raised is "how" it is possible to "know" that any one of the three types is the dominant characteristic type? Judgement on the basis of the more integrated parts of the systems are not viable because the whole is greater than the parts, according to Sorokin. At the same time by changing the level of analysis to include more extensive systems, there is presented the problem of a decreased integration and consequently the enhanced possibility of misjudging the nature of the system.

For Sorokin, the evidence for the particular types is validated by the "shared agreements" about the empirical data he examines. Thus for the art forms, the study of all the paintings in Western Europe on the

part of a team of investigators, and their categorization of these forms, indicate a similarity of views regarding the nature of the periods and consequently the appropriateness of the types. However, as the comparative empirical investigation undertaken by the author points out, judgements of this nature are not necessarily fool-proof. An attempt was made to duplicate Sorokin's method and within the limitations illustrated in Chapter Nine, it was found that only rarely did the two findings correspond to any significant degree.

Given the variation in the existence of the types, not only between social system levels but also in terms of the integration of the parts, any judgement regarding the existence of any of the three supersystems must be made on the basis of collective agreements or shared judgements. Sorokin's own emphasis upon the primacy of the ontological factor makes this procedure the most logical one. However, agreements with respect to historical data, in particular, are difficult to obtain as the discussions in Chapters Two and Three illustrate. According to the Burkhardtian interpretation, the Renaissance exists as a distinct Italian experience, with many parallels to Sorokin's Sensate type. Similarly, Sorokin's evaluation of the Ideational type for medieval Europe is almost a replica of the Church's view of reality at that time. Some historians have pointed out that the two interpretations of reality illustrated above tend to obscure rather than explain the historical reality. Consequently, it is possible to analyse the historical data in such a way that contradictions and viewpoints, all of them based upon some value premise that can be considered "part of the age," change the nature of the period or its applicability to one ideal type.

It is suggested that Sorokin's types may be meaningfully applied in an investigation of single areas rather than on a cross-cultural level. That is, to the extent that there are some shared agreements and values regarding the perception and knowledge of any society, the abstraction of the ontological factor on this level may provide a useful tool for the analysis of the particular social system. In terms of its usefulness for research, perhaps only through the use of such an ideal-typical characterisation can historical data be adequately investigated. However, to assume that the ontological basis for any particular social system is duplicated on a cross-cultural level appears to lead to problems of interpretation and applicability. For example, both France and Flanders were seen to participate to a minimal extent in some of the Sensate factors, but the existence of such minimal factors did not indicate any general commitment to the Sensate type. Similarly, Florence, which indicated the closest approximation to the Sensate type, retained other type features. To place both Florence and France in the same type category, however, results in confusion rather than clarification.

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that no absolute rejection of Sorokin's types is to be understood from the above criticism. Rather, what is required is a reformulation of the types in terms of a more viable level of analysis. Large-scale or "macroscopic" theories of change are convincing precisely because of the generality of their analyses. Sorokin does attempt to substantiate his theories with more detailed evidence and care than many other theorists of this type. But it would appear that the generality of the basic assumptions leads to problems when the theories are tested at a more particular or local level.

Summary of the Findings

1. From the documentary investigation it was concluded that the closest approximation to Sorokin's Sensate type was to be found in Florence. The assumption that Florence and Venice would approximate the Sensate type is only partially indicated.
2. In terms of the role of the painter in relation an assumed Sensate type for Florence and Venice, the documentary evidence does not indicate any significant Sensate characteristics for the role. Again, Florence represents a closer approximation than Venice. But even for the Florentine painter in great demand, retention of the traditional forms and the reliance upon work of a craft nature would indicate that any changes in his role as a painter were minimal.
3. Our own investigation of the content of 231 paintings for Florence and Venice does not indicate any significant Sensate characteristics.
4. Both France and Flanders were found to be the least representative of the Sensate type. The extent to which the assumption of Ideational culture for France and Idealistic for Flanders was indicated by the documentary evidence is debatable. The conclusion reached in the present study was that both areas, in their mixture of Ideational and Sensate characteristics, approximated Sorokin's Idealistic type.
5. For both France and Flanders, no change was evidenced in the role of the painter. During the fifteenth century in both areas the painter appears to have retained his craft status.
6. The investigation of 131 paintings for the two areas indicated contradictory trends, and in so far as the characteristics of the Idealistic type may be ascertained, it was concluded that the content of the paintings was Idealistic.

From the conclusions of this study, it is apparent that a great deal of work remains for investigating both the Sorokin types and the role of the painter. As a consequence of the tentative nature of the conclusions to be drawn from this study, it is contended that a more useful approach to the study of the role of the painter may be undertaken in terms of a limited investigation of the relationship between the painter, his public, and the symbolic framework. Such a study would possibly clarify the relationship of the Sorokin types to particular social systems.

It should be remembered that the conclusions reached by the present study require further qualification in the light of the nature of Sorokin's own work. Sorokin investigated many other cultural fields as well as painting the sculpture, and his conclusions regarding the nature of his supersystems are based upon a very broad investigation. The extent of Sorokin's investigations should be kept in mind in the evaluation of the results from this very small-scale study of only one area of concern to Sorokin.

Among the implications of this study, it is suggested that the analysis points the way to a useful method of testing the validity of the Sorokin supersystems. However, perhaps more importantly, the study indicates that an investigation of aspects of artistic behavior, such as the painter's role, may prove to be an important part of such areas of concentration as the sociology of knowledge. The artist, more than any other individual in the society, is likely to be more aware of and to indicate in his work, the values, interests, or meanings characteristic of the particular society. An analysis of the artist's role and of his symbolic communication is likely to indicate the status of the

ontological basis that Sorokin regards as the most important ordering principle for any socio-cultural behavior or institutional form.

Of the questions remaining as a consequence of the present study, many of these relate to the painter's role during the period investigated. For example, why did certain works survive? This question is related to the values placed upon the works during the period and the attitudes of the patrons towards their "collections." This question raises the point regarding the "intelligence" of the patrons during this period. To what extent was the collection of various works and the commissions prompted by any real understanding of the value of various painters? In the light of this last question, the point may also be raised regarding the evaluation of various paintings that have become detached from their original purpose. For example, those paintings that have become detached from their original altar-pieces, or those paintings detached from the particular setting, either a room in a house or in some State building. An evaluation of such works in their original setting may alter the significance of the particular work for categories such as those proposed by Sorokin. A closer investigation of questions such as those indicated above, in conjunction with further work on Sorokin's theory and method may lead to more positive conclusions regarding the nature of the fifteenth century and the role of the painter during this period.

APPENDIX A

ART AS A SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATION

I was pointing out the difference between a human society and a society of invertebrates. The principle of organization is not that of physiological plasticity, not that of holding the form itself physiologically to its particular function; it is rather the principle of organization as found in the form of human inter-communication and participation. It is what the human individual puts into the form of significant symbols through the use of gestures.¹

Communication is characteristic of any form of social interaction. The manner in which the communication occurs may differ, but the essential component of any communication is the use of symbols. The symbols may be of different types, for example, language, expression, or activity. However, each symbol is the conception or expression of some object, idea, or meaning.

If the communication is to be meaningful the idea expressed and the way in which it is expressed, that is, the symbol used, must be understandable to the person(s) receiving the communication. According to Mead, meaning exists within the field of human experience insofar as symbolization is the product of social relationships.

Two main points are being made here: (1) that the social process, through communication which makes it possible among the individuals implicated in it, is responsible for the appearance of a whole set of new objects in nature which exist in relation to it (objects, namely, of "common sense"); and (2) that the gesture of one organism and the adjustive response of another organism to that gesture within any given social act bring out the relationship that exists between the gesture as the beginning of the given act and the completion or resultant of the given act, to which the gesture refers. These are the two basic and complementary logical aspects of the social process.²

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in 'reality' as perceived by the recipient. The meaning of the symbol is dependent upon its ability to communicate some form of knowledge about the society, or the individuals who make up that society. According to Cassirer, the progress of human culture is to be understood in terms of historically diverse modes of symbolism. Symbols have both an objective and subjective reference essential for human communication.

... words are said to be symbols in the sense that they refer to universal, objective meanings which the intellect and the imagination intuit immediately. ... It is because of this capacity for symbolic intuition that man may be said to be a symbol-making or symbolizing animal. On the other hand, symbols have a subjective function in the sense that they are expressions of human life and spirit and of basic psychological motivation. ... In this sense man is said to be an "animal symbolicum" or a symbolized animal, since man does not know himself directly but only through the cultural symbols which humanity has created historically.³

Cassirer's position is closely related to that of G.H. Mead.

Our symbols are all universal. You cannot say anything that is absolutely particular; anything you say that has any meaning at all is universal. You are saying something that calls out a specific response in any body else provided that the symbol exists for him in his experience as it does for you. ... Thinking always implies a symbol which will call out the same response in another that it calls out in the thinker. Such a symbol is a universal of discourse; it is universal in its character.⁴

Artistic communication, as a symbolic form, is therefore an important part of the process of interaction in any society. Changes in the on-going process of social life are likely to produce changes in the symbolic framework. As such, the art symbol is also likely to change, if only to retain the referent nature of the symbol. The latter point is not meant to imply that all symbols are discarded when their relationship to the immediate social situation is no longer applicable. On the contrary, symbols are often maintained, particularly by those with a stake in their preservation, long after the social utility of the symbol has become obsolete.⁵

Using the idea of art forms as communicative symbols, either explicitly or implicitly, several authors have discussed various movements in the arts that were related to particular social situations. The increasing non-conformity of the artist, and the gradual use of art symbols removed from the general public's experience, is discussed by Herbert.⁶

The origins of the conception of the romantic genius, removed from the dictates of ordinary social interaction, are to be found, according to Herbert in the artist's attitude in France and Belgium between 1885-1898.

The public tried to reassure itself by laughing at new styles, but often there was a genuine fear of the social implications of artistic non-conformity. ... Whatever challenged the accepted canons of society was potentially a challenge to the whole edifice. The art of the romantics had been viewed as a threat to the moral and social status quo.⁷

The artist's attitude during this period was, initially, prompted by a desire for social reform. The romantic movement was an attempt to alter the exclusively elite nature of art. The aims of the artists were to rebel against the conventionalism that pervaded the art of the academics in particular, but also against conventionalism in social life. They wished to broaden the basis of art appreciation to include the proletariat. These ideals proved to be a disadvantage in the long run. Lack of response to their aims on the part of the class they were most concerned about, and their emphasis upon originality at all costs, resulted in a movement shut up in an ivory tower where the principle of "l'art pour l'art" became the dominant motivation. As a consequence of the latter principle, they further removed their art and the symbols used from the general public.⁸

From the above discussion of the communicative nature of art forms and symbols, it would appear that the question of "how" the artist interprets reality for a society is closely related to the function that art performs for the society. The question of the function of art is closely related to the position that artists are likely to hold in a society. In general, three functions may be isolated for the artist:

- (i) Art may contribute to the solidarity of the society through its representation of certain basic social or moral values.
- (ii) Art may function as the ideological communication of an elite group in a society.
- (iii) Art may contribute to the development of new modes of symbolism.

The first two functions are related to problems of social control in a society, and art may be utilized as one of the means to effect such control. The Christian art of Europe during the medieval period may be cited as one example of social control through the symbolization of certain basic social and religious values.

Art functioning as an ideological communication of some elite group in a society is essentially didactic art. Its purpose is ultimately the preservation of the groups position in the society and one method of achieving this aim is to attempt to communicate the groups superiority over others and consequently its "right" to its position. The extent to which any group has been successful in its utilization of art forms in this regard is debatable; however, this particular function is regarded by Marxist art historians as definitive in the history of art.⁹

In discussion of the relationship of art and artists to some socio-cultural background, the general "Marxian" framework has been

widely used.

From a sociological point of view, the most provocative writings to stem from a belief in immanent development in history are those based on the theory of historical materialism, since they purport to be the most attentive to social realities. According to this theory, ... works of art are reactions to social conditions and art styles are vehicles of the ideology of certain classes in society. It is assumed that certain emotional and ideological characteristics are attached to certain social classes at particular times; and the style corresponding to a social class is said to partake of the emotional and ideological characteristics that are supposed to be intrinsic to that class. Thus such terms as "bourgeois sentimentality" and "aristocratic frivolity" are used in describing aspects of a class or an art style. The terminology and conceptual framework of politics are also used in speaking about art because of the intimate connection art is said to have with the class struggle in the economic and political changes and revolutions: "The prevailing power relationships are expressed in the world of art." Changes in styles are said to correspond to changes in the social situation occurring in terms of the class struggle: we read of an "historically inevitable style" which "accurately reflected its social background."¹⁰

The artist and the work he produces must be seen in terms of the total socio-cultural situation, which is not to deny that in certain cases the relationship between social-economic classes and the art style has been an observable phenomena. For example, in the medieval period the art forms may be seen as perpetuating the power of a particular group and ideology. At the same time, the values expressed in the art forms were also general, in their religious connotation, to the whole society.

Whatever the individual social-economic affiliation of the artist, it is the case that certain artists have contributed directly, as a matter of economic policy, or indirectly, to the tastes of a small elite group. That is, a small group with different values and styles of life to that of the general population, and one which is in some position of power or influence in the society. The role of the artist in this context will be different from that of an artist whose work has a more or less 'universal' significance for the society. The distinction between

the two types may be related to Merton's distinction of locals and cosmopolitans.¹¹

The third function of art, the development of new modes of symbolization, contradicts any strict one-to-one correlation between actual socio-economic classes and art forms and styles. What is implied here is that the relationship between the symbolic content of a society and its material basis is a two-way relationship. The general question this latter statement raises is one that has been discussed at length in the work of the sociologists of knowledge.

According to Mukerjee the relationship of art forms to economic production is an indirect relationship.

Art is not only based on the religious and moral foundations of the epoch or the community but also on its economic structure. The nature of the economy, agricultural-communal and mechanical-capitalistic, the distribution of surplus wealth and leisure, and the relations of the social classes to each other largely define both the form and emotional contents of art. The influence of the economic factor is, again, indirect rather than direct, since the art form and emphasis are almost as frequently as otherwise compensations for, rather than the expression of, the prevalent economic milieu. ... The taste, the art-form and the style that are socially created and approved become associated with the cultural manifestations of a particular nation and race and become powerful factors in social control.¹²

A viable solution to the debate is to regard the relationship between the symbolic content and material basis of social life as a two-way relationship. Thus, for example, one explanation for the disregard by the general public of the work of certain artists during their lifetimes, as compared to the fame that they achieve posthumously, may be that their symbolic innovations only become meaningful for the society at a later date. In other words, the artist fails to communicate with the wider society, until social changes occur in tune with the artist's symbolic references.

Part of the problems that the romantics and the bohemians of the nineteenth century experienced related to their symbolic innovations. The movement was an attempt to alter what they felt was the exclusively elite nature of art. Apart from their rebellion against conventional norms in their way of life, they also introduced certain innovations in style and content in their work. The culmination of the movement was a complete estrangement of the artist from society. The estrangement was consolidated not only by the artist's manner and permanent and general style of life, but also by his artistic innovations.

The bohème had become a company of vagabonds and outlaws, a class in which demoralization, anarchy and misery dwelt, a group of desperados, who not only break with bourgeois society, but with the whole of European civilization. ... Verlaine and Rimbaud die in hospital, Van Gogh and Toulouse-Lautrec live for some time in a lunatic asylum, and most of them spend their lives in cafes, music-halls, brothels, hospitals or on the streets.¹³

The artist, during the period discussed above, was utilizing symbols that had no reflection in reality for the general public or for the elite groups who were consumers of art production. Their style of life tended to further alienate the artist from wider society. Their experimentation with new modes of symbolization, however, laid the foundation for many of the future movements in art and led, eventually, to the belated recognition of their talents.

Art as a form of symbolic communication is related to the social context in which it is found. This is not to suggest that all art forms of any particular period may be analyzed only in terms of their symbolic context and therefore be explained. To do so would be to make the same mistake made by the Marxist analyses of art forms. It is suggested rather, that art in its use of symbols expresses at least the attitudes and values of the artist. To the extent that the artist

is a member of his society, the expression will contain, in varying degrees, some aspect of the prevailing culture, whether of the total group or some class or strata within the society.

The purpose of this Appendix is to suggest one possible avenue that the sociologist may utilize in an examination of art forms. To the extent that any artist communicates, the manner in which this function is performed and the reception the communication receives from various publics can provide a useful framework for analysis of, either the role of the artist, or the status of the symbolic framework the artist utilizes.

FOOTNOTES

¹ George Herbert Mead, On Social Psychology: Selected Papers, ed. with intro. by Amselm Strauss (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 34.

² Ibid., p. 166.

³ D. Bidney, "On the Philosophical Anthropology of Ernst Cassirer and its Relation to the History of Anthropological Thought," in, The Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer, P.A. Schilpp ed. (Evanston, Ill.: The Library of Living Philosophers, 1949), p. 505.

⁴ George Herbert Mead, On Social Psychology, p. 211.

⁵ See, for example, Mannheim's discussion on ideology in, Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960).

⁶ E.W. Herbert, The Artist and Social Reform: France and Belgium 1885 - 1898 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961).

⁷ Ibid., p. 54.

⁸ See the discussion in, Geraldine Pelles, Art, Artists and Society: Painting in England and France, 1750 - 1850 (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963).

⁹ See, for example, George Plekhanov, Art and Social Life (London: Lawrence & Wishart, Ltd., 1953).

¹⁰ Geraldine Pelles, Art, Artists and Society, p. 5.

¹¹ See the discussion in, Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1963).

¹² R. Mukerjee, The Social Function of Art (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954).

¹³ Arnold Hauser, The Social History of Art (4 vols.; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., and Random House, Inc., 1951), 1, 191-192.

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