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## SOME THESES FOR SOCIAL HISTORY OF CULTURE DURING ITALIAN RENAISSANCE. CULTURE AS "GIFT EXCHANGE"

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### ABSTRACT

*The authoress demonstrates the existence of parallel social exchanges in Italian proto-capitalist city-states – commodity exchange and gift-exchange. At that time cultural goods were vitally involved in the first exchange as "commodity" and the second as "gift". In the circles of gift exchange money travelled from the poor social strata to the rich, while art and culture were offered in "exchange"; money therefore went one way, art and culture the other, forming a circle of social "gift exchange". But the article shows too that art patronage was a deformed gift, a gift to be finally kept by the donor: the artwork was offered to the public but the donor retained the cultural goods for her/his private purpose after the donation.*

**Key words:** social history of culture, history of Italian Renaissance, market of cultural goods, conspicuous consumption, art patronage, gift-exchange

## ALCUNE TESI PER LA STORIA SOCIALE DELLA CULTURA ALL'EPOCA DEL RINASCIMENTO ITALIANO. LA CULTURA COME "SCAMBIO DI DONI"

### SINTESI

*L'autrice illustra la contemporanea esistenza di due tipi di "scambio sociale" all'epoca delle città – stato precapitalistiche: lo scambio di merci e lo scambio di doni. All'epoca i beni culturali erano profondamente connessi al primo sotto forma di "merce" e al secondo in veste di "dono". Il cerchio dello scambio sociale si completava con il passaggio del denaro dai gruppi sociali poveri a quelli ricchi, che in cambio offrivano arte e cultura; il denaro, dunque, faceva un percorso, l'arte e la cultura quelli inverso. Il contributo dimostra inoltre che il mecenatismo nell'arte era un falso dono; infatti, restava comunque nelle mani del donatore: egli offriva l'opera artistica all'ammirazione del pubblico, ma dopo averla "donata" essa rimaneva di sua proprietà.*

**Parole chiave:** storia sociale della cultura, storia del Rinascimento italiano, mercato delle merci culturali, consumo dei beni lusso, committenza artistica, scambio di doni

## INTRODUCTION

The production of cultural goods through the system of "gift exchange" is meant as a complementary system to the commodity exchange of the early modern European societies. Contrary to the conclusion of Richard Goldthwaite, the introduction of conspicuous consumption did not require relatively equal demand of art objects but rather effected the prodigal investments into art by the scarce richest strata of merchants or nobility while the more populous poorer strata of society was ousted from the patronage of art. The constitution of art object as commodity has therefore the specific social effect of preserving the patronage of art for the most privileged social groups – as the researches completed by Cohn and Bec demonstrate (Cohn, 1996; Bec, 1981).

Besides abstract commodity exchange, the same societies discovered art patronage and the philanthropy, which found great favour with Renaissance merchants and princes. So I became interested in what kind of social exchange patronage and philanthropy contributed to the formation of the whole social-economic system. The thesis was therefore that besides the abstract money mediated exchange, which permeated all veins of early modern societies to become 'generalised', some other type of social exchange existed, which I named, after Marcel Mauss, the "gift exchange". From the beginning I was liberated from the illusion that "gift exchange" was maybe opposed to commodity exchange by social effects it brought to being: that it produced the effect of inclusion instead of exclusion, or solidarity instead of rivalry. It is quite obvious that the system of "gift exchange" made things – religious objects, cultural goods, philanthropic activities or simply money as treasure – circulate all over the society, creating, simultaneously, social relations. What form of relations this social exchange created and what they have to do with 'ordinary' commodity exchange we intend to discover by looking

behind the mystery of Renaissance art patronage and philanthropy.

Since I am not interested in analysing the problem of gift exchange in its phenomenal aspects, I will actually speak little about patronage or the act of giving-receiving-and-giving-back itself. I will speak little about the practices of gift giving; instead I will try to determine the domain of gift exchange, of which art patronage and philanthropy probably were a part.

## STATISM OF RICH CITIZENS

To support the idea that an economic depression prevailed during the high Renaissance<sup>1</sup> Robert Lopez gives the example of the prosperous thirteenth century when economic opportunities for advantageous merchants were promising and profits were high in the trade between the eastern Mediterranean and western Europe; in addition, the textile industry was flourishing. At the same time political egalitarianism in the city-states of northern Italy reached its peak. The *Popolo* partly or wholly, temporarily or permanently, imposed its political power in the northern Italian city-states, articulated through guilds (*arti*), which primarily assumed their political role in resistance to the *nobilità*. Rich merchants and bankers were their allies but soon, as the power of the *popolo* became a bit more established, they found more secure partners in the *nobilità*. Speaking of the *popolo* actually means that political rights were reserved for the members of the *arti* and excluded, besides the nobility, also the wage labour force.<sup>2</sup> Popular governments were therefore squeezed between wage labour force and nobility, on one hand, and entertained an insecure partnership with the rich strata of citizens, on the other.<sup>3</sup>

Lauro Martines, in *Power and Imagination*, argues against those historians who are inclined to see the city-states under popular governments in crisis, because they supposedly did not 'respect' law and institutions, and

1 Robert S. Lopez and Harry A. Miskimin developed the theory about economic depression during the high Renaissance in which they combat the general belief in the interdependence among economic growth and the blossoming of art. *Investment in culture*, supposed to be at its peak at the time of the Italian Renaissance in the Quattrocento and beyond – approximately since Brunelleschi's cupola of Santa Maria del Fiore till Michelangelo's chapel for the Medici family – was not accompanied, as Lopez and Miskimin firmly insisted, by prosperous economic growth. Their thesis is nowadays questioned by a series of historians like Carlo M. Cipolla, Fernand Braudel, David Herlihy and others; nonetheless, the critique is still provocative.

2 See *Ordinamenti di giustizia* from Florence, 1293.

3 Two well-known rebellions of the labour force, or *sottoposti*, found a way out of this situation, first in Florence in 1378 with the rebellion of the *ciompi*, who demanded a part in the political decision-making process for themselves. To safeguard their political power, they established three additional guilds – *tintori*, *farseggiatori* and *ciompi* – through which they participated in the political sphere, but these guilds were abolished one year later when the old system was reinstated. The argument against the assumption that there was an economic depression was the economic position of the working class at the time of the revolt, which was supposed to be higher in the second half of Quattrocento than in any period before or after. The revolt supposedly aimed at keeping the high economic standard by political means because the labour force feared losing economic benefits if they would give up the right to participate in the political decision-making. (Cf. Brown, 1989).

The second important revolt was *repubblica ambrosiana* between 1447 and 1449, which broke out in Milano after the death of Duke Filippo Maria Visconti. *Repubblica* fell apart itself a little later because of inherited financial difficulties and internal treachery.

hence increased violence and instability.<sup>4</sup> Historians subsequently represent citizens as willing to accept even dictatorship in return for peace and stability. Martines disagrees with this view, arguing that popular governments contributed significantly: 1. to the development of general educational institutions, which provided general qualification for commercial skills; 2. to the development of taxation systems with the abolition of old privileges of the nobility; and 3. to the improvement of governmental institutions. Later on, when an oligarchy or tyrant took over the government, they simply inherited these institutions along with their benefits.

Nicolai Rubinstein very suggestively described a minor episode in this common political transformation from popular government to oligarchy (Rubinstein, 1971). He wrote about Florentine 'parliamentary' politics since 1433, when Cosimo de' Medici was exiled briefly to Padua, to 1494, when the Medici were expelled once again and the republic was restored. By detailed reconstruction of electoral and decision-making processes he actually rewrote Karl Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* for the fifteenth century. As Marx before him, Rubinstein impressively exposed the economic and political elite at that time, which usurped political power without having but once transgressed the frame of 'law', while yet entertaining the fiction that the transfer of power from the *popolo* into the hands of one family was voluntary.

To achieve this goal the Medici family used the *accoppiatori*, an institution used already at the time of urgent 'political crisis': the *accoppiatori* appeared after the suppression of the *ciompi* rebellion in 1382, and again in 1433 when Albizzi, his rival, expelled Cosimo de' Medici from Florence; but finally the institution he introduced expelled *him* and recalled Cosimo to Florence. The Medici family, then, did not invent the institution of *accoppiatori* but rather managed to use it most wisely.

The amazing effect of this political institution was that it struck at the foundations of the old communal electoral system, but at the same time left the electoral system untouched on the surface. As before, inhabitants of Florence still voted in every town district and kept the bags of votes with the names of candidates at the sacristy of Santa Croce church. When they needed new candidates for state functions they brought bags into

Palazzo della Signoria as before, where the *podestà* drew names out of bags randomly. The candidates were subjected to many restrictions under which they could execute public office, and only after having been scrutinized, they were nominated as public officials.

The *Accoppiatori* had to do their job in between these two phases: before the *podestà* drew lots, they made a preliminary selection of appropriate candidates and removed all eventual political rivals. The institution of *accoppiatori* made possible direct control over the selection of candidates for the most important offices: it paved the way to *election control* by the Medici. Rubinstein demonstrates the effects of the *election control* system by its circulation of the same names through most important political positions. A complementary institution to the *accoppiatori* was the *balia*, an emergency committee of a sort, a political institution gathered *ad hoc* in extreme political conditions. In fact, it became quite an established institution after 1434 with a wide range of authority. It partly overtook the authority from the old popular institutions such as the *Consiglio del Popolo* and the *Consiglio del Comune*, with which it continued to be in constant conflict and not always in control of. In 1452, the two *consigli* succeeded to ban the *balia* until 1458 when it was restored by force: Cosimo de' Medici arrived with an armed suite to the square in front of Palazzo della Signoria, and with the ambassador from Milan at his side symbolically representing the military support of Francesco Sforza and the Milanese army, the greatest fear of Florentines.

So they restored the *balia* in 1458 and, additionally, established the *Consiglio del Cento* to further weaken the *Consiglio del Popolo* and the *Consiglio del Comune*. The political oligarchy continued to expand its immediate power into new domains: in 1458, they more or less controlled the *Ufficiali del Monte*, the public financial institution, the *Ufficiali del Catasto*, the taxation system, the *Otto di Guardia*, the police forces, and so on. Consequently, they had very strong means with which to enforce their authority. They could not evade new upheavals of republicans who wanted to reintroduce the system of elections *per sorteggio*, but with constant improvements of electoral and decision-making processes it became easy for them to pacify new rebellions such as those in 1460 and in 1466.<sup>5</sup>

4 Cf. Martines, 1981, 86: "Tutta l'età comunale fu, nella prospettiva di storici autorevoli, un'età di crisi: le istituzioni erano profondamente instabili, la violenza e l'instabilità proliferavano e la legge era flagrantemente rifiutata."

5 Among such improvements we find the system of *polizze*, votes with names of candidates, which were kept in bags [*borse*] for election by lot for important state offices. Candidates who had already served in office could have more *polizze* and so they were more likely to be drawn again. In this way the circulation of the same group of people was guaranteed. Another such intervention was to change rules for voting from two-thirds majority to simple majority, when the *balia* could not obtain a decision favoured by the oligarchic strata. Later on they introduced even more direct provisions: in 1471, they proclaimed 40 members of the *Consiglio del Cento* for permanent members, in 1476 they established a new *Consiglio dei Settanta* when the oligarchy was going to lose its supremacy in the *Consiglio del Cento*. Rubinstein quotes Pope Pius II, who said that political decisions about Florentine state matters were made in Cosimo's palace. The *accoppiatori* actually held their meetings in his palace in via Larga at least twice, in 1459 and in 1463. We can take as a response to this a provision of *Signoria* in 1466 that all political activity had to be executed in Palazzo dei Signori.

The Medici's politics were otherwise cautiously based on the respect of 'civil ideology', passionately modelled in the Florentine conflict with Milanese dukes of Visconti in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Rubenstein provides an excellent description of Cosimo's method of conducting political matters when he recounts an episode from the debate in Palazzo dei Signori in 1446: on that occasion deputies debated whether they should follow the 'exceptional' political system of the *balia* or return to the old system. Facing a difficult problem, they addressed themselves to Cosimo de' Medici, as they held him to be a bright and tolerant man, for his opinion. His response was a pathetic defence of the elections *per sorteggio* that "principes civitatis in hoc concordēs essent" (cf. Rubenstein, 1971, 172) and was approved by applause, so he was appointed a member of the special committee whose task was to develop the arguments for one or the other solution. Ten days later the committee, while presenting its report, defended the opposite solution, arguing for elections *a mano* and for the *accoppiatori*, because the political situation was supposedly not stable enough to return to the old elections *per sorteggio*. When Florence was not involved in wars that would justify such arguments – the Peace of Lodi was concluded on 11<sup>th</sup> April, 1454<sup>6</sup> – they used as an argument illustrating an 'unstable situation' the deficit of public finances, over which, as we will see, only the economical and political elite had control.

While the Trecento and the early Quattrocento, the "golden age" of the first Italian economic expansion, was a classical age of Italian early republicanism, the political pressures upon lower classes were obstinate during the "silver age".<sup>7</sup> The political "decline" of republicanism cannot be ascribed only to economic weakening, nonetheless the hypothesis that there was an economic depression during the high Renaissance has been significantly revised lately as well (Cf. Brown, 1989). The "economic weakening" of the Italian economy was the consequence of the awakening of European rivals; so, logically, it could not enjoy such absolute advantage in European trade and production as before. The internal political consolidation of oligarchies had to have the deepest roots and causes, which we intend to analyse now.

### Enterprise as feudal tenancy

The "golden age" is supposed to end with the fall of the three strongest Florentine banks, Peruzzi in 1343,

Bardi in 1346, and a bit later the bank of Acciaiuoli. The banks of Peruzzi and Bardi collapsed because they could not compensate the lost loan of 1.5 millions florins to the British king Edward III – perhaps they were victims of overextension, but in fact they were forced to make risky deals with European sovereigns, since actually a good deal of financial and commercial operations were then based on feudal tenancy. As compensation for loans, sovereigns extended to merchants and bankers the right to tax farming, exploit mines, and gather income from colonies, and so on. Bankers had to give loans to sovereigns although they were well aware that sovereigns were mostly unable to repay their debts; yet they could expand new capitalist enterprises only in the frame of the feudal mode of production. Feudal tenancy was still a dominant mode of commercial and financial operations in the sixteenth century when Genoese merchants gave loans to Spanish kings in exchange for American gold and silver, and the Fugger family gave loans to Charles V in exchange for exploitation of mines. And like Peruzzi and Bardi in Trecento, the Genoese and Fuggers in the Cinquecento disappeared from the world economy together with their protectors.

Feudal tenancy as a dominant mode of executing commercial and financial operations put the main capitalist protagonists into the hands of capricious sovereigns; from this 'dependence' bankers and merchants could benefit enormously or be sunk at the first reversal of fortune. They were fortune-hunters like their ancestors who were seeking their fortunes on trips to the near East – but, in general, it was less difficult for merchants and bankers to raise a fortune than to keep it, because they were tied to old feudal bonds and dependence on sovereigns. To keep the situation at least partly under control, they used their branches spread through Europe and the near East as informants from local courts; but this improvised strategy did not defend them properly against feudal ties and dependencies.

From this it may be much easier to understand why republican communities such as Florence, Lucca, and Siena, if we put aside Venice and Genoa as particular cases because of their patrician republicanism, tended to change their republics into oligarchies. Beyond the class conflict between different social strata, between rich merchants and bankers, the so called *arti maggiori*, on one side, and *arti minori* and wage labourers, on the other, this political turn was possibly rooted in a transformation from the communitarian *modus vivendi* into the more complex form which Marvin Becker called the

6 The Peace of Lodi did not completely eliminate war from the Apennine Peninsula (wars after the conspiracy of Pazzi in 1478, for example, or the atrocious revenge of Montefeltro's soldiers upon the inhabitants of Volterra after their surrender, for which Lorenzo de' Medici himself was blamed), but the relative equilibrium among the powers helped to consolidate the internal stability of "sovereigns" and oligarchies, with their mutual support as Medici and Sforza, for example.

7 "Golden age" and "silver age" are expressions invented by Harry A. Miskimin, which meant to describe the economic prospect of particular epoch (cf. Miskimin, 1969, 151).

"territorial state" (Becker, 1968; cf. Arrighi, 1996). It is possible that the rise of oligarchies went hand in hand with the constitution of the "territorial state".

But Becker's term "territorial state" is deceptive because the distinctive feature of such a state is not so much that it is outward-oriented and keen upon territorial expansion, as the term might suggest, as subordinating statecraft to the needs of economical enterprises. The state actually became the largest enterprise. By subordinating the state to the domination of the economy, merchants and bankers freed themselves from customary feudal bonds and took control over their own conditions. Oligarchies used statecraft: 1. to control labour force by jurisdictional and police institutions, 2. to enforce redistribution of wealth through fiscal policy, which resulted in accumulating capital from the small taxpayers into the hands of the wealthiest social strata, 3. to introduce mercantilist provisions in order to protect domestic industry and commerce, and so on. Accordingly, we have more reason to call this a "proto-capitalist state" than a "territorial state".

In the first volume of *The Modern World-System*, Immanuel Wallerstein analyses the European economy in the sixteenth century,<sup>8</sup> when, based on the capitalist mode of production, it grew to global proportions. He perspicaciously notices the contradiction that the frame in which the capitalist world-economy was developed, was the ideological frame of *statism*, not of *liberalism*:

"The reigning ideology was not that of free enterprise, or even individualism or science or naturalism or nationalism. These would all take until the eighteenth or nineteenth century to mature as worldviews. To the extent that an ideology seemed to prevail, it was that of statism, the *raison d'état*. Why should capitalism, a phenomenon that knew no frontiers, have been sustained by the development of strong states? This is a question, which has no single answer. But it is *not* a paradox; quite the contrary." (Wallerstein, 1974, 67)

We certainly have to be careful here with such expressions, because the "reigning ideology" in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was quite certainly Catholicism. The "reigning ideology" enabled the Medici to

threaten with excommunication clients who did not repay their debts. They wielded this instrument because the pope himself was one of their major clients<sup>9</sup> – but Venetian doges, too, often used the threat of excommunication to compel their debtors to reimburse them, even though they probably did not have such firm financial ties with the church as the Medici. This demonstrates that the "reigning ideology" and the "ideology of reigning classes" were interwoven; it is often impossible to separate one from the other, but the "ideology of reigning classes" – that is to say, the ideology of merchants and bankers<sup>10</sup> – was certainly "statism", as Wallerstein claims. "Statism" is unfortunately too often seen as flat ideological propaganda against foreign enemies, like the famous Florentine campaign against Milanese conquerors; yet though "statism" was above all intended against native inhabitants, and also as ideological combat. First of all it was about to impose one mode of exchange to the members of the community or, to put it more resolutely, it regarded the subjugation of its members to the community's economy as essential. This "struggle" is perfectly articulated in the frescoes of Brancacci chapel in Santa Maria del Carmine in Florence, where the dispute about "statism" and the obligatory participation in state financial institutions is actually presented. Two frescoes, *Tribute* and *Distribuzione dei beni*, persuasively display a defence of Florentine taxation and their redistribution system, comparing it to narratives from the Old Testament: *Tribute* shows God's command to pay taxes with Jesus commanding St. Peter to pay taxes to a toll man and *Distribuzione dei beni* shows God's condemnation of tax avoidance, representing Ananias and Sapphira struck by God's rage because they incorrectly declared their income. Over the bodies of Ananias and Sapphira we see St. Peter distributing the wealth among poor men. St. Peter was probably paralleled by the Florentine republic that used this right to redistribute the collected wealth among their citizens. The iconographic set in Brancacci chapel interprets and justifies the right of the Florentine republic to collect and redistribute the taxes – and it also presents the Florentine community as an ideal Christian society.

8 The Braudel's so called prolonged "sixteenth century" from 1450 to 1620/1640.

9 In the most prosperous times of the Medici bank, the revenue from the branch of the pope's curia, as it was called, presented one half of the whole revenue of all Medici branches, including the home bank in Florence. Cf. Rubinstein, 1971.

10 Sometimes merchants and bankers also behaved as an 'aristocracy', sometimes the aristocracy acted as merchants and bankers. Landowners, i.e., mostly aristocrats, were in the sixteenth century "a key intermediary in the accumulation of capital" (Wallerstein, 1974, 83). The demand for grain increased in the sixteenth century in the biggest economic centres, such as Spain, Holland, and Italy, so the prices of grain and other agricultural products was augmented (cf. Miskimin, 1977). This impelled the creation of a process called "re-feudalisation" in eastern Europe, especially in Poland, where landowners tied men to land by new feudal bonds to increase the production of grain for western Europe. At the same time, the process of expropriation of smaller farmers began with the notorious "ships eating men" due to production of wool (England, Spain); and nonetheless slave labour was used in America. Wallerstein derived from this the important conclusion that all these different modes of production belong to the same capitalist world mode of production, because core economies over determine the mode of production in semi peripheral and peripheral zones. Even the "re-feudalism" was not a residue of the old economy, since it was no longer production for local markets only, not a self-sustained economy, but a new one, producing large quantities of agricultural harvest (grain) for the world market.

## RENAISSANCE SOCIETIES "GIFT-EXCHANGE"

Because the oligarchy tried to avoid the open conflict, the representation of this political combat, as in the Brancacci chapel, is rare. While popular governments used political means for opposing the aristocracy,<sup>11</sup> they established the realm of politics as a potent social sphere. The advent of oligarchies undermined the realm of politics: empty rhetoric replaced political action and oligarchies substituted hidden politics for the former open realm of politics. Oligarchies tried, in one word, to realize their political and economical goals by non-political means, mostly through the realm of economy. We were speaking about the generalisation of commodity exchange and the introduction of abstract money mediated exchange at the time of Renaissance, but now we have entered into the domain of some other mode of social exchange, which I named, after Marcel Mauss, the gift-exchange. My hypothesis is that commodity exchange and gift-exchange were parallel social exchanges, which the early states used for 'locomotion' similarly to the way humans use their legs.<sup>12</sup> I impute such crucial importance to gift-exchange because my presumption as to where we should search for gift-exchange surpasses the classical approaches.<sup>13</sup> Gift-exchange is not only found in the non-contractual exchanges among sovereigns and subjects, or among the family members or within the social group with the same interests, although such mutual exchanges were important in establishing social nets of client-ships. Gift-exchange during the Renaissance was more than that, since the important counterpoint to abstract money mediated exchange was the public fiscal and financial policy. I dare to regard the tax as a "gift", because it is truly "contractual" like money mediated exchange, yet many gift-exchanges are contractual since they are in fact repayments with delay or, in other words, the alienation of goods by credit. In this case the gift-exchange is in fact conceived as commodity exchange, except that repayment is delayed. The subjection to taxation is contractual as well, although not as evidently as maybe it seems

today. All participants take part in the communal financial policy freely under certain rules until they decide to change the rules. Taxes are taken by force to certain extent, it is true, but in the conditions of 'perfect' gift-exchange the 'gift' is exacted too, since in native ideologies – like the Maori informant relates in Mauss – sickness or madness strikes persons who 'forget' to return the gift – these societies also encounter the phenomenon of communal violence against the individual. If we take the instances of Renaissance states or "primitive societies", the gift (like the tax) is always "taken" by force. Money mediated exchange is an act of free will by which those involved make the mutual contract without outside enforcement, while the system of gift-exchange is a social contract and consequently is enforced socially. So the contractual or non-contractual condition cannot be the distinctive feature between money mediated exchange and gift exchange – since in truth they are both contractual.

But the "tax payment" has a feature very pertinent for "gift-exchange". What we are going to talk about is an important finding by Maurice Godelier related in his book *L'énigme du don* (cf. Godelier, 1996, 64ss). He disputed Mauss and Lévi-Strauss at the point where they both claim that the gift is pushed into social circulation because it sustains the secret force *hau* (an expression taken from Maori theology), which compels the receiver to return the gift since otherwise *hau* threatens the disrespectful receiver with sickness or madness. Godelier, on the contrary, refused to generalise the local Maori belief-system to the universal level: the gift, he said, is given to the receiver only to be used and not to be 'alienated' as in the case of commodity exchange. By commodity exchange the purchaser receives the goods for use and for definite 'alienation'; with 'gift-exchange' the receiver gets the goods (a wife, for example) only for use but not to enjoy her unconditionally as property. With the gift, the use of goods and property rights are separate: while the receiver has the right to use the goods, the donor retains the property rights even after the donation. The donor retaining the rights over 'the gift', she or he com-

11 In the book *Power and Imagination* by Lauro Martines we find the history of various political regimes in northern Italian city-states from the tenth century on. First town administrations were run by bishops or *consuli*, which both actually represented the supremacy of an aristocracy. Everyday town life was then controlled by *consorterie*, aristocratic clans, who had a part of the city under their dominion. They defended themselves against other *consorterie* by houses built as fortresses with towers and further protected themselves via a rigid system controlling the members of their own clan. The symbolic action made by popular governments was the destruction (or at least suspension) of such private military constructions inside the city and co-opting the monopoly of violence (into the hands of city-state government). Popular governments of *arti* in the thirteenth century therefore replaced aristocratic administrations. Later either popular leaders took power over the city and neighbourhood, such as Este in Ferrara, Gonzaga in Mantua, the Carrara in Padua, the Bentivoglio in Bologna, Malatesta in Rimini, and Montefeltro in Urbino, or the oligarchy or plutocracy of high bourgeoisie took over the government and sometimes turned it into a principate, the Medici in Florence.

12 Contractual exchange and non-contractual exchange were supposedly the double foundation of very early human societies (cf. Godelier, 1996, 53).

13 An example in which the "gift" is taken seriously in its phenomenal aspect and the numerous ways of giving gifts are described one after the other is the work *Il dono: vita familiare e relazioni pubbliche nella Francia del Cinquecento* [The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France] by Natalie Zemon Davis.

pels the receiver to give him or her something back, but what the receiver gives back, after Godelier, is not a 'giving back', but a new donation, a re-donation. The gifts are put into circulation because donors retain the 'property rights' after the donation. The taxpayer and the tax receiver are in a quite similar situation: although the tax receiver extracts certain contributions from the taxpayers, the taxpayers retain their rights over their contributions long after their 'donations'. For these reasons public fiscal policy is probably the largest system of gift-exchange known even up to today.<sup>14</sup>

The Italian oligarchies of republican city-states abused this system expertly and exploited the resources of public finances for their benefit. As we will see, they soon managed to instrumentalise it by the very early invention of public debt, which was also used to accumulate wealth in their own hands and weakened the opposition of the *arti minori* and *sottoposti*.<sup>15</sup>

Florentines exhibited the anxiety about the policy of public debt frankly in 1470, fully aware of the concentration of power in the *Monte*, the state financial institution. When the reputation of *Monte* officials was in decline, the state took the initiative to protect them: "The *Monte* is the heart of this body which we call city... every limb, large and small, must contribute to preserving this heart as the guardian fortress, immovable rock and enduring certainty of the salvation of the whole body and government of your State."<sup>16</sup> Statism was therefore the rhetoric, while the state was organising itself as an enterprise.<sup>17</sup> Among the enterprises, states were definitely the largest, not in competition with pri-

vate enterprises, but in providing the main protagonists of the capitalist economy protection, 'respect' and a share in the state enterprise.<sup>18</sup> Merchants and bankers went even further in implementing "state enterprise" by forcing European sovereigns to follow their example and to style their states as enterprises: if they wanted to receive loans, sovereigns had to offer as insurance their fiscal policy, which should be strong enough to sustain loans. At that time merchants and bankers demanded and found protection, which Bardi and Peruzzi could not receive – and so the interesting paradox arose that the state became the base upon which trade and industry grew to extend into a world economy.

The internal instrument, which guaranteed the domination of the plutocracy, was the policy of public debt. It was mainly practiced in the three most important Italian republics of Venice, Genoa and Florence. The invention of public debt goes back to 1167, to the first notice of a loan, received by the republic in Venice. Since that early practice of public debt the indebtedness grew constantly: in Genoa in 1274 it was 304,691 lire, in 1407 it was already 3,000,000 lire; in Florence in 1303 the public debt was 50,000 gold florins, in 1343 it was already 600,000 florins, in 1364 1,500,000 florins and in 1400 approximately 3,000,000 florins (Cipolla, 1988a, 61).

In Genoa in 1407 the public debt was consolidated in an institution of private loan-givers to the state, called the *Casa di San Giorgio*, which obtained the right to administer a great part of tax revenue in exchange for continuous credits to the state. The bank offered to private investors *luoghi*, the titles (*titoli di debito pubblico*)

14 When we linked the examples from anthropological literature with the proto-modern societies, the expression "gift" turned out to be unsuitable since it masks the compulsory nature of the phenomenon. Behind the expression "the gift" is the irony that since it is literally used in the sense of "free will of giving under constraint".

15 *Repubblica ambrosiana* found itself faced with the unfortunate problem of financial deficit, which it could deal with but ineffectually (cf. Lauro Martines, 1981, 182-193). Like half a century later *Repubblica fiorentina* after 1494 (cf. Marks, 1954).

16 "... il cuore di questo nostro corpo, che si chiama città... ogni membro piccholo et grande contribuischa quanto commodamento ciascuno può alla conservazione di tutto il corpo: come presidi et rocca firmissima et stabilimento certo della salvazione di tutto il corpo et governo di stato nostro." Italian text from *Registri delle provvisioni*, quoted after Marvin B. Becker (1968, 135); English quotation from Marks, 1960. About the role of a particular *Monte* in the Istrian town Koper/Capodistria see: Darovec, 1999.

17 Marvin B. Becker in the article "The Florentine Territorial State and Civic Humanism in the Early Renaissance" exposes some main features in the process of creating the Florentine "territorial state", i.e., what we have found to be an entrepreneurial state. As a first feature of this process he gives the restriction of privileges of nobility, which made aristocratic families resort to abolition of their status in the first half of fourteenth century. Aristocrats could renounce their aristocratic origin: it was done in communal court in a ritual manner and thereafter they were proclaimed to be *populares et non magnates*; they changed their names and gained taxation benefits as citizens. Secondly, he gives as an example proto-mercantilist provisions for the protection of domestic manufacture and commerce, which made the import of foreign textiles more difficult in early October, 1393. Thirdly, growing number of officials, in charge of collecting many different taxes, supervising the maintenance of public buildings, executing administration of public debt consolidated in the *Monte*, immensely enlarged the bureaucracy. Fourthly, imposition of immense tax obligations on the countryside (*contado*), which in the first half of the fourteenth century represented one tenth of the whole city revenues, in the second half of the same century already one fifth, and in 1402 one half of the whole city revenues. The *Contado* thus had to support in great part the financial needs of the new oligarchy. Fifthly, the territorial expansion by military conquests of Volterra, Arezzo, Pisa, Cortona, and the most praised purchase of Livorno in 1421 from Genoa with which they gained access to the sea. The *Contado* and defeated cities had to bear enormous financial burdens imposed by their conquerors, but a great part of taxation went back to the conquered cities as military bases, largely pointed towards its own citizens.

18 "Under the sway of this new economic system affluent citizens had become the major shareholders of a giant corporation that might be termed the 'Renaissance state'." (cf. Becker, 1968, 135)

in the public debt fund, each estimated to be worth 100 lire. The interests of *luoghi* were variable, because the source of dividends came from collection of taxes and so they were closely connected to the good health of the state: in wartime they were low, in peacetime they were higher.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly to the Genoese debt, the Florentine state debt too was consolidated between 1343 and 1345 as the *Monte Comune*, and similarly the titles in public debt (*luoghi*) could be bought and sold freely on the market, which independently determined the price. The credits were collected by *prestati forzosi* or *volontari*, but in general they were attractive investments, because of considerably high and secure interest coming from the titles.<sup>20</sup> But all the citizens did not have sufficient means to participate in their benefit, so in 1390 citizens had a chance to decide whether to pay off all forced loans or only a half; in the latter case, credit did not enter into the *Monte comune*. As a consequence the richer citizens augmented their share of titles from the *Monte comune*.<sup>21</sup>

Following the politics of constant indebtedness for vertiginous sums of money, the state barely supported the burden of rapidly growing public debts. To deal with the problem, *Monte delle doti* was established in 1425, mainly to alleviate the financial pressures of the old debts: parents could change the titles from *Monte comune* to the new *Monte delle doti* to the benefit of their daughters. The principle was that titles multiply themselves gradually, since interests were used for the acquisition of new titles. Titles in *Monte delle doti* were paid off when marriage was consummated and took the form of the usual dowry (Cf. Marks, 1960). This service was much requested, so it was a successful attempt to decrease the stock of the ordinary *Monte*; however, the state took over a delicate responsibility for marriageable girls and placed their futures into dependence on the

vagaries of state financial oscillations.<sup>22</sup>

The practices of public indebtedness are described by Frederic C. Lane, a scholar of Venice Renaissance history, in his article "Public Debt and Private Wealth: Particularly in Sixteenth Century Venice" (Lane, 1973, 317-325). He concludes that: "For many decades the well-to-do paid less in taxes than they were paid in interest and redemption of principal." The system was advantageous to the Venetian rich who contributed little to the Venetian state budget; instead, taxpayers from Venetian colonies and the Terraferma had to suffer higher tax obligations. In the middle of the sixteenth century, Venice paid to bondholders of various *Monte* 300,000 ducats, twice as much as what Venetian residents paid in the form of direct taxation to the state budget – they thus received much more back in the form of interests than what they paid in the form of taxes. For illustration: they paid 150,000 ducats of taxes, while 550,000 ducats came from indirect taxes on consumption; thus, Venice itself together contributed 700,000 ducats, while overseas colonies contributed 500,000 ducats and the Terraferma 800,000 ducats to the state budget. Deposits in various *monte* (*Monte vecchio*, *Monte nuovo*, *Monte novissimo*, *Monte di sussidio*...) offered not only interests which were higher than any other investments, but since bonds were negotiable, rich strata better supplied with liquid money could buy bonds on markets at a low price and receive interests and benefits for par value. In such a financial system war was highly profitable for creditors, especially when it offered the opportunity for favourable short-term loans at high interest rates. The Florentine fiscal system was full of artful and ingenious solutions, but the Venetian system was more solid, since it did not defer the financial burden on future generations, which seemed to be a constant problem in Florence. Basically it was a system of accumulation of wealth in the hands of an economic and

19 Besides *luoghi*, the bank also practiced *moltiplichi*, also a kind of *luoghi*, though the incomes from titles went directly into acquisition of new titles, *luoghi* (cf. Cipolla, 1988, chapter "Note sulla storia del saggio d'interesse").

20 When Cosimo de' Medici was organising his escape from Florence on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May, 1433, he deposited 3000 ducats in San Miniato al Monte to be safeguarded by Benedictine monks; he entrusted another 5877 ducats to the Dominican monastery of San Marco. The same day "tavola" from Florence transferred 15,000 florins to the account of the Medici's branch in Venice. Cosimo and his brother Lorenzo sold to the branch of Rome their titles in the *Monte comune*, 10,000 florins. The high value of the titles in the *Monte comune* shows the importance of such investment (cf. Raymond de Roover, 1988, 79).

21 Giovanni Cavalcanti criticizes in *Istorie fiorentine* this attitude: "These newcomers were too coarse for the great questions of state. They were avaricious men who made money on the unpaid salaries of soldiers and who bought up the debts of the Commune." (Quoted after Martines, 1963, 28).

22 *Monte delle doti* too served for the accumulation of capital of the rich families since one of every two rich girls had a credit in the *monte delle doti*, while only one of every seven poor girls had benefited from this kind of public service. On the list of *monte delle doti* were, for example, 113 girls of the Strozzi family, 104 girls of Medici, 94 girls of Rucellai, and 51 girls of Adimari. The fact that 1% of Florentine families had 43% of all credits in *monte delle doti* shows that the services of *monte delle doti* was prevalently exploited by rich families. The practice was also that rich families kept an account in *monte delle doti* in the name of girl orphans from *Ospedale degli innocenti* instead of paying directly for their services. Additionally, it was generally prohibited to foreigners to be inscribed into *monte delle doti*, but 68 girls were excepted from 1425 until 1565, among them the girls of the Bentivoglio family from Bologna, the ally of Florence at that time (cf. Molho, 1968, 147-170).



political elite, wealth that was taken away from agrarian domains and conquered countries.

In all the three city-states we have seen that the state financial policy was subordinated to the credit system and that it made the state budget a fertile field for financiers.<sup>23</sup> Since all three republics founded their financial policy on the credit system and entrusted great power to the *Monte* officials, they became more and more dependent on the credits of rich men and consequentially let plutocracy overtake the political sphere. Marks significantly emphasises the final effects of this policy on Florentine economics: "The impact on the economic life must have been a continual draining of the capital from the lower orders of citizens and a rapid accumulation in the higher ranks."<sup>24</sup>

We were speaking about statism as the ideology of the reigning class, which through a certain brand of statecraft created the conditions of its own existence, or, truly, dominance. A famous description of a concurrent artistic and intellectual movement is "civic humanism", coined by Hans Baron in his book *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* and by Eugenio Garin in his various works (cf., for example, Garin, 1993). The main presupposition of "civic humanism" is that "out of the struggle [political conflict and war between republicans and Italian unionists during the transition from the fourteenth century to the fifteenth century, i.e., conflict between "Milan" and "Florence"] had come the decision that the road was to remain open to civic freedom and the system of independent states became a part of the culture of the Italian Renaissance" (Baron, 1966, 45). Arnold Hauser, Lauro Martines and Marvin Becker, among others, in their various works contributed a sharp critique of Baron's and Garin's comprehension of "civic human-

ism", by accurately merging it with the term "statism". Hauser, Martines and Becker judge the new intellectual class (*humanists*) as strongly dependent on the political and economic elite, who used them for their pragmatic contributions as state officials or for their scientific endeavours.<sup>25</sup> Their task was supposedly to bring *statism* as a "popular ideology" into the veins of social life, veiling its actual nature as the ideology of the reigning class. Intellectuals and the economic elite were part of the same venture, for which Arnold Hauser coined the saying that humanists, aristocratic in spirit, had joined the old aristocracy in blood as well as fortune.<sup>26</sup>

But the position of intellectuals among the circles of aristocracies was not unassailable; certain inconveniences could not be overcome, so the new class of intellectuals unavoidably ended up "uprooted", a "destructive element" in the eyes of the economic class, as Arnold Hauser underlined (Hauser, 1969, 412). Interestingly, we find this problem already in the oft-criticized book, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance*, by Hans Baron. The passionate defence of the republic and the contribution to 'civic humanism' of Coluccio Salutati are proverbial, but not completely consistent nor without controversy. While Coluccio Salutati was passionately defending republicanism in his correspondence as state secretary, he was privately writing *De Tyranno*, a sort of defence of monarchy; and as an active politician defending *vita activa civilis* he wrote *De Seculo et Religione*, a panegyric to the solitary monastic life. Baron tried to solve the contradiction, describing Salutati as an early humanist, forerunner of the real fifteenth century humanism; and because he was not a complete humanist himself, Salutati (after Baron) mistakenly allowed the remains of medieval thought some

23 Republics themselves were afraid of consequential trickling out of the capital, so they developed many obstacles to the acquisition of titles by strangers in order to keep the capital at home; however, these prohibitions did not really prevent foreigners from buying titles. Although Florentine citizens were prohibited from selling titles to strangers, special exemptions often allowed strangers to purchase titles from the Florentine *Monte comune*. The exceptions were made either because of financial or political reasons, or both. In 1409 a concession was made with John I of Portugal, in 1427 with the brothers Colonna, nephews of pope Martin V., in 1432 pope Eugenio IV with the permission of the Florentine government assumed possession of the Colonnas' titles.

Florentine law also prescribed interests and nobody was allowed to receive higher rates. But in the case of these two examples we meet a practice "in duplo crediti" by which they ignore the prohibition: it means that both actually received the prescribed interests, but the real sum of money invested was inscribed in the *Monte* as double. For 50 florins they got title worth 100 florins and so they actually receive double interest (cf. Kirshner, 1969).

24 The new Florentine republic was not able to question this financial system in 1494, but confronted state financial difficulties by reducing the interest rate to 1%, while in the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century it was 5%. Instead Savonarolians directed their rage against landowners, *rentiers*, whom they thought produced nothing yet received incomes from possessions; meanwhile merchants contributed to the development of economics and consequentially to the well-being of the republic. By tax *decima* they put under higher taxation landed properties and excluded from taxation financial capital (cf. Marks, 1954).

25 Cf. Martines, 1981, 274: "La filologia, il sapere classico e la metodologia storica nacquero nell'ideologia: alla luce dei valori, dei desideri e delle amplificazioni prodotte dal potere e dagli interessi sociali. Il movimento verso l'obiettività era filtrato dai valori della classe superiore, ma era *dentro* le discipline che si andavano sviluppando, nei nuovi modi di fare un certo tipo di lavoro intellettuale."

26 "Merchants are the cream of our citizenry, the foundation of our power. Without them the Republic would be nothing", was declared in December 1404. Society founded on merchandise ideology, as were more or less all-northern Italian cities, nevertheless if they were republics or principates, personal wealth was considered as a contribution to the glory of the state as, for example, the facades of private palaces, because they provide a better look for the city (quoted after Martines, 1963, 33); Commissioni di Rinaldo degli Albizzi.

times to emerge in his own writings.<sup>27</sup> When Baron distinguishes in Salutati's work medieval thought from humanistic, "authentic elements" from the old, he, firstly, adapts historical data to the interpretation which he would like to demonstrate, but, secondly, he also refuses to see Salutati's work as a whole. A strong desire to enforce a concept of "civic humanism" in its purity disables Baron; he therefore fails to see subtle details and the inconvenience of the protagonists of "civic humanism". Salutati in *De Tyranno* introduced the important jurisdictional distinction between tyrant "by the practice of his rule" /*tyrannus ex parte exercitii*/ and tyrant "for the lack of a title to his position" /*tyrannus ex defectu tituli*/, by which he opened the way to Machiavelli's *Il principe* a century later, which announced the rise of a man from anonymity. This man shall, after Salutati and Machiavelli, bring back peace, the necessary base upon which civil republican institutions should be built or restored. From this point of view, a tyrant was a pragmatic tool aiming to reach concord among citizens and civil institutions. He was therefore not an expression of political 'convertism', but rather a critic of the Florentine republic from, we can say, an orthodox republican point of view. And if he was a child of his own epoch, we could not blame him for that.

#### CONCLUSION: ART PATRONAGE IN THE FRAME OF THE "GIFT-EXCHANGE"

"Rational exchange", money mediated exchange, is paralleled by what we describe as gift-exchange, after Marcel Mauss, from his *Essai sur le don* (Mauss, 1996). But we could not interpret the two modes as absolutely opposed to each other, as maybe it could be wrongly understood from Marcel Mauss. Through our exposition of arguments, we certainly cannot derive the impression that they form an opposition between, on one hand, the "rational exchange" of alienated society and, on the other, "gift exchange" as a social sphere of cohesiveness and solidarity. We can, quite to the contrary, conclude from our exposition that the "gift exchange" of proto-modern societies actually included both types of exchanges: it was initiated as a "gift exchange" (either as forced or voluntary loans to the state or "loans without reimbursement") and it ended up as "rational exchange" because of the "citizen's right" to receive interests on

state loans, which Florentines, for example, defended as the essence of a republic. "Gift exchange" was transmogrified because it was initiated as "gift exchange" but ended up as "rational exchange" because the obligation to give was in the process (when most of population was already excluded) transformed into the right to profit.

A known expression for "gift exchange" is also "potlatch", the practice of Northwest Indians in winter, in which they spend, during continued feasting and sharing, the goods collected during the summer time. The word "potlatch", interestingly, signifies at the same time a "place of being satiated", on one hand, and "destroying of wealth", on the other. The "gift exchange" therefore goes from 1. destroying of goods (I make a feast to satiate you) to 2. feasting on "someone else's account" (and I oblige you to return me the same, or more, later). Mauss explains the same process also in three steps: 1. to give a gift, 2. to receive a gift, 3. the obligation to render a gift. "Gift exchange" is therefore based on "postponing of repayment" or on "consumption with delay"; for the giver the gift is an insurance that the receiver will return it in the future, particularly when the giver will need help (Mauss, 1996).<sup>28</sup>

If we look at "gift exchange" through its all-embracing effects, we find an amazing mechanism of reconciliation and separation at the same time: it unites its participants since they all contribute to it with a share, and deepens the differences between them since most of them receive small recompense, while a few receive enormous returns. Mauss proceeds too quickly through various societies because he wants to prove that "gift exchange" is "total social fact" in most primitive societies, so he underestimates the fact that "gift exchange" is capable of uniting and dividing their members, at least in societies which divided the giving and the receiving into two separate actions.<sup>29</sup> Mauss sees that it sometimes acquires an antagonistic character, but is unable to explain this antagonism because he always reduces it to the same act of giving.

Our question is of course whether art and culture are also part of the social "gift-exchange" and, if so, how. It is tempting to conclude that money accumulated as wealth in the hands of a few rich, while cultural, intellectual and religious products went in the opposite direction from rich sponsors to more unlucky citizens. But it was not that simple: like in the case of public finances,

27 Baron describes a "medieval tradition", coming from Petrarca, for example, who was an admirer of Cola di Rienzo and the author of "Africa", but he later joined the defenders of monarchy by writing the biography of Caesar. Baron then mentions Vergerius from Padua, born in Koper/Capodistria, who made the same conversion as Petrarca before him, from republicanism to monarchism (the author of *Petri Pauli Vergerii de principibus Carrariensibus et gestis eorum liber*), and also his teacher Giovanni Conversino.

28 On pages 67-68, note 130, we find a good example of "potlatch", described by Boas: Indian organises the "potlatch" where he distributes most goods collected in long years. He does so to repay abundantly old debts and/or simply delivers important gifts to his relatives, friends or neighbours. This ritual is a kind of insurance for him and his family that they will receive help when needed.

29 Actually he finds explanation for it in domestic thought, which do not divide "selling" and "buying"; both operations are for indigenes one and the same thing.

where we noticed the break of the "gift-exchange" at some point to be overruled by "money mediated exchange" – at that moment the taxpayers disguised themselves as creditors and public finances as ordinary banks – similarly, we noticed deformity of gift-exchange in the art arena. Art patronage is mysterious since it has a capacity to retain all benefits of the creation of works of art, while creating the impression of being a gift for the public: the mystery of art patronage is in its retaining the goods while 'giving them away'. The family chapels, which encircled the church, were part of the public space, but they were at the same time private, clearly separated from the public, from the anonymity of the religious communion and meant to honour the private family. Nonetheless, private chapels in the church represented the usurpation of public space for private purposes. If we take another example, Giotto's painting cycle from the Scrovegni chapel in Padua was commissioned as an indulgence by Enrico Scrovegni for his father's practice of usury, but the conspicuous investment into art and religion was again vague in terms of the public and private spheres. What I mean by public and private I can illustrate by the two entrances to the chapel: the first was for the 'public', and the second for the Scrovegni family – the entrance that linked the chapel with the family palace. Another example is the list of 'gifts' which, after Lorenzo de' Medici, the Medici family contributed to Florence: among the enumerated objects we find the façade of their private palace, since

it supposedly contributed to a more beautiful panorama of the city and to the glory of the city-state. Here the indistinctiveness between private and public is even more evident and illustrates the use of 'patronage' as euphemism for personal empowerment. The mysterious effect of patronage is similar to the paradox of gift-exchange from the anthropological studies by Annette Weiner, who labelled it "keeping-while-giving" (Quoted after Godelier, 1996). The mysterious act by which the patron gets to keep artistic and cultural objects for her or himself even after the 'donation' is actually an essential characteristic of Renaissance patronage.

Was it really the love for art and science itself that drove the rich to invest in art or science? We find a clear correlation with Walter Benjamin's formula that cultural monuments are monuments of barbarism (Benjamin, 1974, 82). Since we have thrown some light upon the complexity of this "social exchange", we can conclude that "love" for art and science itself was perverse even when "love" really existed.

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## NEKAJ TEZ O DRUŽBENI ZGODOVINI KULTURE V ITALIJANSKI RENESANSI. KULTURA KOT "MENJAVA DARU"

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#### POVZETEK

Avtorica razpravlja o družbenem mestu kulturne in umetniške produkcije v času italijanske renesanse 15. in 16. stoletja in skuša opisati družbeno vpetost kulturne in umetniške produkcije v ekonomijo in politiko. Kot izhodišče je vzela provokativno tezo iz zgodovine ekonomije, da se je obdobje vrhunca renesanse dogajalo hkrati z ekonomsko recesijo. Znana teza je doslej spodbudila že mnoge poskuse iz raznih disciplin, da pojasnijo "protislovje"; tako so nastale številne študije, kakor, denimo, ideja o razkazovalni porabi (Arrighi), civilnem humanizmu (Baron), trgu kulturnih dobrin (Goldthwaite) in teritorialni državi (Becker). Avtorica je pazljivo proučila teoretske okvire teh odgovorov, iz česar izpelje sklep, da so bile kulturne dobrine v tistem času povezane z dvema oblikama družbene menjave. Prva menjava je 'racionalna' denarna menjava, v kateri so kulturne dobrine ki obravnava kot vsa druga blaga. Drugo družbeno menjavo pa imenuje "menjava daru". V renesančnih mestnih državah je "menjava daru" potekala tako, da je denar prehajal od revnejših družbenih skupin k bogatejšim, ki so v nadomestilo nudile umetnost in kulturo: denar je potoval torej v eni smeri, umetnost in kultura pa v drugi, vse skupaj pa se je sklenilo v krog družbene menjave

daru. Navkljub navidezni nedolžnosti te družbene igre, pa kultura in umetnost živo stopata v procese, ki so v ekonomski teoriji znane kot primarna akumulacija kapitala in v politični teoriji kot oblikovanje modernih držav. Podpiranje umetnosti v renesansi pa je še toliko bolj dvoumno, saj je dar le vzbujal videz daru, v resnici pa je darovalec zadržal kulturna blaga zase in za svoje zasebne namene.

**Ključne besede:** socialna zgodovina kulture, zgodovina italijanske renesanse, trg kulturnih dobrin, razkazovalna poraba, podpiranje umetnosti, menjava

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