

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI

THE
PRINCE

Translated, with
Introduction and Notes, by

JAMES B. ATKINSON

*The
Prince*

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MACHIAVELLI

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TO
My Mother and Father
AND TO
Starr

*Pigli questo piccolo dono
con quello animo
che io lo mando*

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Preface

As I studied, then taught, *The Prince* I became convinced that an adequately annotated edition is necessary for a more complete understanding of Machiavelli's mind and art. But what is "adequate" is not easy to settle upon. I long admired the edition of L. Arthur Burd, published by the Clarendon Press in 1891. More recent scholarship has advanced our knowledge of many particulars and made more convincing cases for interpreting specific points, but Burd's historical information is basic to any reading of the text in a proper perspective. When I began work on the present edition, however, Burd's edition was out of print (it has subsequently been reprinted by the Oxford University Press in 1968). Another edition in English that attempts to set *The Prince* in a historical context is that done by Allan H. Gilbert, now reprinted by Hendricks House. Two editions in Italian were also potential models. In 1931 Luigi Russo published an annotated edition which has been reprinted at least thirteen times. Given my own predilections, his comments—about Machiavelli's place in the history of philosophy, his use of language, and his effective combination of style and method—are particularly helpful. By far the most balanced edition of *The Prince*, however, is that of Gennaro Sasso, published first in 1963 and reprinted several times. In innumerable acknowledged and unacknowledged ways, Sasso's edition has influenced mine. Sometimes my notes refer explicitly to specific interpretive points that are his. But this device is an extremely insufficient index of my dependence on his judgment, knowledge, and discrimination; even the most casual comparison of our editions will uncover numerous silent borrowings. Although in some cases I have decided to modify or to disagree with his positions, I can but heartily recommend his edition, supplemented by his solid study of Machiavelli's political thought (Naples, 1958). One feature I have adopted from the above editions, plus the one by Chabod upon which I have based my text, is the incorporation of quotations from Machiavelli's contemporaries, such as Guicciardini, Comynes, Giovio, and Nerli. The value of these citations seems to me to lie in the sense

of historical immediacy and concern they add to Machiavelli's discussions of similar situations and topics. Yet the best commentator on Machiavelli is Machiavelli, and I have also included extracts from his other works that are relevant to statements in *The Prince*. A rather cumbersome feature of these quotations from Machiavelli and Guicciardini, the lengthier of which are in Appendix B, is the abbreviated documentation that follows them. I believe the desirability of enabling the reader to compare these sentences and read them in context outweighs their unaesthetic appearance and the probability that they will soon be outdated by as yet unpublished editions.

The ultimate test of the adequacy of any particular note is the extent to which it helps the reader to understand the multiple facets of an author's achievement. Ideally this edition should foster the proper study of *The Prince*; the information assembled should enable students to pursue their studies more intelligently and scholars to consider to select items that may enhance their appreciation of the work. The risk of submerging a text as short as *The Prince* to the disadvantage of everyone is great: the student may be exposed to more than he cares to know, the scholar may regret the absence of what he considers relevant material, and any reader may chafe at the bias of the annotation which is primarily—and frankly—literary. But to investigate the imaginative leaps of so agile and incisive a mind as Machiavelli's one needs as much commentary about history, political theory, sources, and language as possible. I have gradually come to realize that readers who remain unaware of these topics frequently finish reading *The Prince*, put down their copies, and wonder what the shouting was all about.

The text I decided to use as the basis for the translation is that of Federico Chabod, reprinted in 1966 by Einaudi. For a discussion of the potential pitfalls of this decision, see Appendix A. Because the actual text of what Machiavelli wrote is so problematical, Appendix A is designed to provide an opportunity to consult those variant readings that would substantially alter any English translation.

The translation itself also represents a series of decisions and calculated risks. Machiavelli's sentences are usually long and complicated; they are often finely wrought periods that are arranged to expose subtle interrelationships of ideas and structure. Furthermore, the first printed edition is unparaphrased. The currently available translations into English offer a wide spectrum of attempts to meet the challenge of the original. My aim has been to make *The Prince* as readable as possible.

The liberties I have taken are generally in the direction of trying to tighten and make specific Machiavelli's prose. The shorter, coordinated sentences, however, necessarily alter the quality of his style. In the annotations I have pointed out the crueller betrayals this attempt involves, but the reader should remember that the Italian language permits a greater freedom than is allowable in proper English prose style.

At the end of a project as long as this one I take great pleasure in publicly acknowledging the assistance and encouragement I have received from friends and colleagues. They should know, however, that they are by no means responsible for any errors of judgment or fact that may exist in the finished work. In quite particular—and sometimes unwitting—ways, Gordon Campbell, Barbara Cunningham, Laurence and Geraldine Davies, Michael Groden, and Aina Taylor have made this edition possible and better than it might have been. The librarians and the Research Committee of Dartmouth College have been cooperative and generous with their time and money. My interest in Machiavelli, and in Machiavelli's Italy, came to life during my graduate years at Columbia University, sparked by Maurice Valency's gift for teaching not only literature, but delight. While at Earlham College, I have seen the manuscript through the press. I am grateful for the support of my colleagues, especially Edward G. Bastian and Evan Farber. But I especially thank Starr, who had *virtù*.

Jim Atkinson

Etna-Lyme Center,
New Hampshire
Fall, 1972
Richmond, Indiana
Fall, 1974

Abbreviations Used in This Work*

A. Machiavelli

1. EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

AG.I	Allan Gilbert. <i>Machiavelli: The Chief Works and Others</i> . Vol. I. Durham: Duke University Press, 1965.
AG.II	Vol. II of above.
AG.III	Vol. III of above.
B	Niccolò Machiavelli. <i>Il Principe e Discorsi Sopra la Prima Deca di Tito Livio</i> . Edited by Giuliano Procacci and Sergio Bertelli. Milan: Feltrinelli, 1968.
Burd	Niccolò Machiavelli. <i>Il Principe</i> . Edited by L. Arthur Burd. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1891.
Chiappelli (1971)	Niccolò Machiavelli. <i>Legazioni, Commissarie, Scritti di Governo</i> . Edited by Fredi Chiappelli. Bari: Laterza, 1971.
Evans	Nicholas Machiavelli. <i>Clizia</i> . Translated by Oliver Evans. Great Neck, New York: Barrons, 1962.
G ¹	Niccolò Machiavelli. <i>Lettere</i> . Edited by Franco Gaeta. Milan: Feltrinelli, 1961.
G ²	Niccolò Machiavelli. <i>Istorie Fiorentine</i> . Edited by Franco Gaeta. Milan: Feltrinelli, 1962.
G ³	Niccolò Machiavelli. <i>Il Teatro et Tutti Gli Scritti Litterari</i> . Milan: Feltrinelli, 1965.
Gpb	Allan Gilbert, ed. <i>The Letters of Machiavelli: A Selection of His Letters</i> . New York: Capricorn, 1961.
Guerra	Niccolò Machiavelli. <i>Dell'Arte Della Guerra e Scritti Politici Minori</i> . Edited by Sergio Bertelli. Milan: Feltrinelli, 1961.
Hale	J. R. Hale. <i>The Literary Works of Machiavelli</i> . London: Oxford University Press, 1961.

*In the notes to the introduction and text, and in the attributions given in Appendix A, the references have been followed by abbreviations of the various editions in which the passage of the work in question may be found; e.g., “(D., III, 41 [B, p. 495; ML, p. 528, W.I, p. 572, Pen., p. 515, AG.I, p. 119])” locates a given section of the *Discourses* in the editions of Procacci and Bertelli, Max Lerner, Leslie Walker, Bernard Crick, and Allan Gilbert.

Htb	Niccolò Machiavelli. <i>History of Florence and of the Affairs of Italy</i> . Edited by Felix Gilbert. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960. Translation unreliable.
Leg.	Niccolò Machiavelli. <i>Legazioni et Commissarie</i> . Edited by Sergio Bertelli. 3 vols. Milan: Feltrinelli, 1964.
LLA	Niccolò Machiavelli. <i>The Art of War</i> . Edited by Neal Wood. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1965. A revised edition of the Ellis Farnsworth translation (1775); translation quite untrustworthy.
LLA ¹	Niccolò Machiavelli. <i>Mandragola</i> . Edited by Anne Paolucci and Henry Paolucci. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1957.
ML	Niccolò Machiavelli. <i>The Prince and The Discourses</i> . Edited by Max Lerner. New York: The Modern Library, 1950. Translation sporadic.
Musa	Niccolò Machiavelli. <i>The Prince</i> . Edited and translated by Mark Musa. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1964.
Pen.	Niccolò Machiavelli. <i>The Discourses</i> . Revised translation of the Walker edition. Edited by Bernard Crick. Harmondsworth and Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970.
Russo	Niccolò Machiavelli. <i>Il Principe e Pagine dei Discorsi e Delle Istorie</i> . Edited by Luigi Russo. 13th edition. Florence: Sansoni, 1968.
Sasso	Niccolò Machiavelli. <i>Il Principe e Altri Scritti</i> . Edited by Gennaro Sasso. 3rd edition. Florence: "La Nuova Italia," 1967.
Tusiani	Joseph Tusiani. <i>Lust and Liberty: The Poems of Machiavelli</i> . New York: Obolensky, 1963.
W.I	Leslie J. Walker, S.J., ed. <i>The Discourses of Niccolò Machiavelli</i> . 2 vols. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950.

2. MACHIAVELLI'S LITERARY, HISTORICAL, AND POLITICAL WORKS ARRANGED CHRONOLOGICALLY (BRACKETED DATES ARE QUESTIONABLE)

"Pisan War" 1499	<i>Discorso sopra le cose di Pisa.</i>
"Description" 1503	<i>Descrizione del modo tenuto dal duca Valentino nello ammazzare Vitellozzo Vitelli, Oliverotto da Fermo, il signor Pagolo e il duca di Gravina Orsini.</i>

"Remarks" 1503	<i>Parole da dirle sopra la provisione del danaio.</i> See Appendix B, 13, 1.
"Method" 1503	<i>Del modo di trattare i popoli della Valdichiana ribellati.</i>
<i>Dec. I</i> 1504	<i>Decennale Primo.</i>
"Florentine Arms" 1506	<i>Discorso dell'ordinare lo state di Firenze alle armi.</i>
"Provision" 1506	<i>Provisione prima per le fanterie, del 6 dicembre 1506.</i>
"German Report" 1508	<i>Rapporto delle cose della Magna</i>
"German Discourse" 1509	<i>Discorso sopra le cose della Magna e sopra l'Imperatore.</i>
<i>Dec. II</i> [1509]	<i>Decennale Secondo.</i>
"German Affairs" [after April, 1512]	<i>Ritratto delle cose della Magna.</i>
"French Affairs" [between April, 1512 and August, 1513]	<i>Ritratto di cose di Francia.</i>
<i>P.</i> [1513]	<i>Il Principe.</i> For dating, see Introduction, pp. 22–24.
<i>D.</i> [1516]	<i>Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio.</i> For dating, see Introduction, pp. 24–25.
"Dialogue" [1525]	<i>Discorso o dialogo intorno alla nostra lingua.</i>
"Ass" [1517–1518]	<i>Dell' asino [d'oro].</i>
"Mandragola" 1518	<i>La Mandragola.</i>
"Belfagor" [1515–1520]	<i>Favola [Belfagor arcidiavolo].</i>

War 1521	<i>Dell'Arte della Guerra.</i>
"Castruccio" 1520	<i>La vita di Castruccio Castracani da Lucca.</i>
"Summary" 1520	<i>Sommario delle cose della città di Lucca.</i>
"Florentine Affairs" 1519–1520	<i>Discorso sopra il riformare lo stato di Firenze ad istanza di Leone X.</i>
<i>History</i> 1520–1525	<i>Istorie Fiorentine.</i>
<i>Clizia</i> 1524–1525	<i>Clizia.</i>
"Florentine Fortifica- tions" 1526	<i>Relazione di una visita fatta per fortificare Firenze.</i>

B. Guicciardini

1. EDITIONS AND TRANSLATIONS

Alexander	<i>Francesco Guicciardini: The History of Italy.</i> Edited and translated by Sidney Alexander. New York: Macmillan; London: Collier–Macmillan, 1969.
<i>Dialogo e discorsi</i>	Francesco Guicciardini. <i>Dialogo e discorsi del reggimento di Firenze.</i> Edited by Roberto Palmarocchi. Bari: Laterza, 1932.
Domandi ¹	Francesco Guicciardini. <i>Maxims and Reflections of a Renaissance Statesman (Ricordi).</i> Translated by Mario Domandi. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1965.
Domandi ²	Francesco Guicciardini. <i>The History of Florence.</i> Translated by Mario Domandi. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1970.
Grayson	Francesco Guicciardini. <i>Selected Writings.</i> Edited by Cecil Grayson, translated by Margaret Grayson. London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1965.
Grayson–Hale	Francesco Guicciardini. <i>History of Italy [Books I–III] and History of Florence [Books IX–XVI].</i> Edited by John R. Hale, translated by Cecil Grayson. New York: Washington Square Press, 1965.

- P. Francesco Guicciardini. *Storie Fiorentine*. Edited by Roberto Palmarocchi. Bari: Laterza, 1931.
- Pal. Francesco Guicciardini. *Scritti Politici e Ricordi*. Edited by Roberto Palmarocchi. Bari: Laterza, 1933.
- Pan. Francesco Guicciardini. *Storia d'Italia*. Edited by Costantino Panigada. 4 vols. Bari: Laterza, 1929.

2. WORKS MENTIONED

- Considerations* *Considerazioni intorno ai discorsi del Machiavelli sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio*.
- D.P.* *Discorsi Politici*. 16 discourses on contemporary Italian history.
- Florence* *Storie Fiorentine*.
- Italy* *Storia d'Italia*.
- Ricordi* *Ricordi*. Cited in the following order: Series C, Series B, Series Q².

C. General Scholarship and Criticism

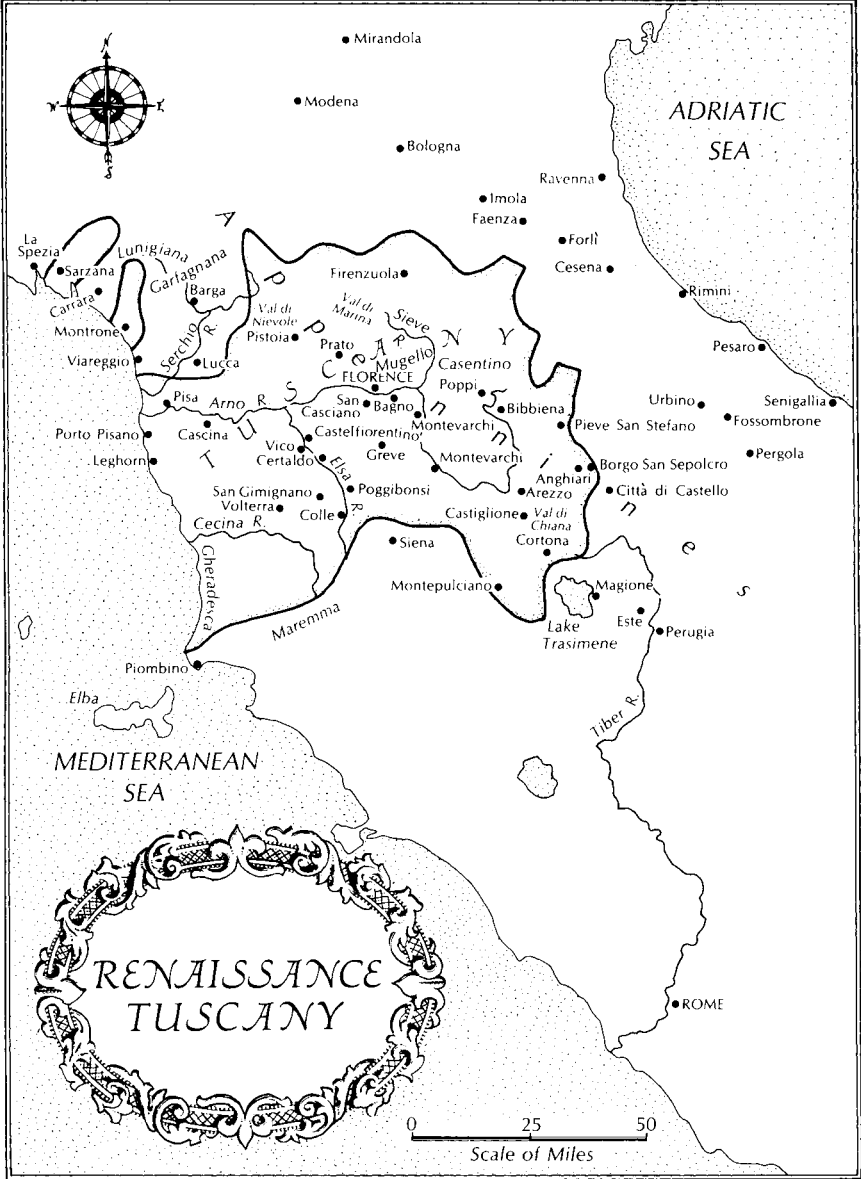
- Ady* Cecilia M. Ady. "The Invasions of Italy." In *The New Cambridge Modern History*, edited by G. R. Potter, vol. I. Cambridge: University Press, 1967. Pp. 343–347.
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- Bonadeo, "Grandi"* Alfredo Bonadeo. "The Role of the 'Grandi' in the Political World of Machiavelli." *Studies in the Renaissance*, 16 (1969), 9–30.
- Cassirer* Ernst Cassirer. *The Myth of the State*. New York: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1955.

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- Jones, *Vettori* Rosemary Devonshire Jones. *Francesco Vettori: Florentine Citizen and Medici Servant*. London: Athlone Press, 1972.
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Introduction

In the dedicatory letters to his two most important works, *The Prince* and *The Discourses*, Machiavelli carefully indicates the source of his ideas and materials.

I have found nothing among my resources that I cherish or value as much as my knowledge of the deeds of great men, learned from wide experience of recent events and a constant reading of classical authors.¹

I know and have learned from long experience and constant reading in worldly affairs.²

These passages, in themselves introductory, are convenient points of entry into Machiavelli's universe of discourse—a curious, complex blend of biography, experience, study, personal taste, and interpretation. What we are most concerned with here is the correlation between the history of the Florentine Republic and the life of Machiavelli. As will become apparent, the historical facts were determining factors in shaping his political and intellectual life. Yet, as even he indicates, his "experience" embraces a sphere broader than that defined by the immediate incidents in Florence. The "recent events" he rather neutrally mentions open up the wide range of cataclysmic upheavals that shook the entire Italian peninsula at the turn of the sixteenth century. Therefore, at the risk of some repetition and the arbitrary isolation of facts, it is expedient to proceed by examining Machiavelli first in terms of a series of concentric circles: those of Florence, the ancient world, and the Italian experience. With this groundwork in mind, his conceptual frame of reference can then be considered with a surer awareness of why he thought as he did, how he conformed to traditional patterns of thinking, and where

¹Dedicatory Letter, lines 7–10.

²*Discourses*, Dedicatory Letter (B, p. 121; ML, p. 101; W.I., p. 201; Pen., p. 93; AG.I, p. 188). The contrast also exists in the Dedicatory Letter to *War*: Machiavelli speaks of *antichi ordini* ("ancient institutions") and *antichi modi* ("ancient methods"): "Judging by what I have seen and read, it is not impossible to restore ancient methods to the art of war" (*Guerra*, p. 326; LLA, p. 5; AG.II, p. 567). For the abbreviations used see pp. xii–xx above.

his own originality modified those patterns. Finally, we shall see how he transmits his "resources" with a verbal acuity that skillfully adjusts a special style to a particular method. Rather than attempting a comprehensive survey of Machiavelli's life and thought, then, what follows is mainly governed by the information necessary to comprehend the allusions in both *The Prince* and the accompanying explanatory notes.

1

MACHIAVELLI'S LIFE AND THE HISTORY OF FLORENCE

The Florence into which Machiavelli was born on May 3, 1469, was an active commercial and industrial community; in December of that year, when Piero de' Medici died, his son—Lorenzo the Magnificent—took over the Medici regime and led it through one of Florence's most glorious epochs. The city was governed by a fairly complicated set of institutions. The deliberative body and the main executive branch was the Signoria—a municipal council of *signori*, "gentlemen." It was advised by the Council of the People and the Council of the Commune, in which members of the nobility could sit. The approval by a two-thirds majority of these two councils was required before any new legislation became law. Only the Signoria could initiate legislation. The other two highest bodies in the state, together, were called the Colleges. These were composed of two distinct groups: the Twelve Good Men and the Sixteen Gonfaloniers of the Companies. Before the priors of the Signoria could pass any significant legislation, they had to consult the Colleges too. The Colleges, along with the Signoria, controlled elections to many offices. There also was a *gonfaloniere di giustizia* or "standard-bearer of justice"; as the presiding officer of the Signoria, he was the highest officer in the government. Political office was the province of an enfranchised adult male population, all of whom were members of the various guilds in the city. The great merchant families, the *popolo grasso* or "fat people," were members of the seven greater trade guilds, the *arti maggiori*; they were a reasonably comfortable middle-class segment engaged in import and export businesses. The men of ordinary or moderate means, the *popolo minuto*, on the other hand, were members of the fourteen lesser guilds, the *arti minori*, who occupied themselves

with the city's internal commerce. Relative freedom was allowed the populace, but the Medici in fact headed an oligarchy.

In 1494, however, the Medici were expelled from Florence for eighteen years. The city then devised new institutions so that the people could be more directly responsible for their affairs and remove the taint of oligarchy. It must be remembered that the newly enfranchised citizenry accounted for about four per cent of the total Florentine population; but even so, the revisions were such a stride forward that contemporary accounts actually refer to the "free government" during these years to distinguish it from the nominal republic it was under the Medici. The major innovation was the Great Council, really an amalgam of the Council of the People and the Council of the Commune, which elected all the magistrates of the city, particularly the officers to head the several main executive committees or boards: the Ten of Liberty and Peace, responsible for foreign policy and military matters; the Eight of Ward (*Otto di Guardia*), responsible for administering justice; and the officers who directed the *Monte*, responsible for municipal taxation and financial concerns. The Great Council confirmed all laws after those laws had traveled through the Signoria, the Twelve Good Men, and the Sixteen Gonfaloniers of the Companies. Simultaneously the new governing arrangements provided for a Council of Eighty, or a senate, empowered to appoint ambassadors and settle financial arrangements pertaining to military affairs; it was unable, however, to bypass the authority of the Ten of Liberty and Peace. The Eighty also had the last word on any new legislation before it was remitted to the Grand Council. The new system did not alter the hallowed Florentine principle of keeping men in office for a short duration—two to six months in the major offices. Yet in its broad outlines this system remained in effect throughout Machiavelli's active political career. The primary shift in political emphasis was the more direct representation of the middle classes in Florentine government, although this increase produced great social dissension—particularly in the Great Council.

Machiavelli's family, then, was part of the *popolo grasso*: his father Bernardo was a member of the powerful *Arte di Guidici e Notari*. Although Bernardo was a respected lawyer, he rarely could afford to give his family the amenities he would have wanted for them. Only recently, in 1954, was his diary, the *Libro di Ricordi*, discovered; it gives us some idea of the family's life from 1474 to 1487. We find that Bernardo was concerned in detail with the financial vagaries of his

properties. Machiavelli virtually inherited financial worries, and they were to plague him throughout his life. The earliest letter we have written by him concerns the disputed rights to a living from a church in the countryside around Florence.³ Later, at a particularly difficult point in his life, he wrote, "I was born poor and learned how to be poor before I learned how to be happy."⁴ But his father's diary indicates more than merely a preoccupation with monetary problems: we see there too a concern with his son's tutors and their reading. Bernardo was keenly involved in Florentine humanist activities. He saw to it that his son read Livy and Justin as well as more recent history in Biondo's *Decadi*, which covered events from the fall of Rome to the mid-fifteenth century.

The last entry concerning Niccolò in the *Ricordi* is late in 1481. If we know little about Machiavelli's early life, we know even less about his activities before June of 1498, when he became the Second Chancellor of the Republic of Florence.⁵ The chanceries were responsible for executing decisions concerning domestic and foreign affairs and were managed by six secretaries (thus contemporary documents refer to Machiavelli both as "second chancellor" and as "secretary": the titles were interchangeable in casual use). Hence he was a civil servant in a position of relative power. Although a secretary was privy to state secrets, his job involved no policy formulation, only the implementation of policy decisions. Within a month he also became the Secretary to the Ten of War (alternately known as the *Dieci di Ballià* or *Dieci di Libertà e Pace*), a department responsible for diplomatic and military affairs. But his appointments were intimately related to the domestic and foreign problems then confronting Florence.⁶

At home Savonarola, the Dominican reformer and preacher, had embroiled the populace in a severe test of loyalties.⁷ Machiavelli was never a supporter of Savonarola's ethical and religious principles,

³That of Pieve di Fagna in Val di Sieve; G¹, pp. 28–29.

⁴Letter to Francesco Vettori, March 18, 1513 (G¹, p. 235; Gpb, p. 102; AG.II, p. 899).

⁵While this book was in press I became aware of, but have not been able to consult, a new book by Domenico Maffei, *Il giovane Machiavelli banchiere con Berto Berti a Roma* (Florence: Barbera, 1973). On the basis of the documents Maffei has discovered, he argues that Machiavelli worked in a Roman bank run by Berti between 1489 and 1497.

⁶The single most valuable source for facts about the life of Machiavelli is Ridolfi, *Life*, which I have drawn on extensively for my own summary. I have also consulted Clough, *Researches*; Felix Gilbert, *M. and C.*; Hale, *Machiavelli*; and Rubinstein, "Beginnings"; "World of Florentine Politics."

⁷For the fifteenth-century consolidation of Florentine power and Savonarola, see pp. 42–43 below.

though he admired his political acumen and the institutional changes Savonarola had recommended for Florence. Machiavelli also saw in the cries for religious reform support for his own conviction that a corrupt and worldly church diluted the exemplary character of an institution that, ideally, should foster virtues the state could rely on to bind society closer. About ten weeks before Savonarola was burned at the stake, Machiavelli heard two sermons delivered by the friar when he had retired from the Cathedral to the safety of the convent of San Marco. Machiavelli judged him to be a man who "proceeds by favoring circumstances and whitewashing his lies."⁸ Nevertheless, Machiavelli owed his appointment as much to his own ability as to the Signoria's fear of Savonarola's followers: the middle of June 1498 was marked by a series of riots protesting against these followers, and the former Second Secretary was ousted prematurely because of his pro-Savonarola sympathies. Thus Machiavelli originally got into office to complete his predecessor's two-year term. But he fulfilled his duties so conscientiously that he continued to be nominated and re-elected annually by his superiors for fourteen years.

The international situation was so perilous that Machiavelli soon got out from behind his desk in the Chancery to perform numerous delicate diplomatic missions. His entire diplomatic career can be epitomized in the following sentence written by the Venetian ambassador to Rome in the 1490's:

"The first duty of an ambassador is exactly the same as that of any other servant of a government, that is, to do, say, advise, and think whatever may best serve the preservation and aggrandizement of his own state."⁹

When Machiavelli began his career as a public servant, his efforts were swiftly directed to retaining the consolidation of power in Tuscany that Florence had attained under the Medici. However, the Medici had been driven out of the city in 1494 when Piero de' Medici had acceded to what Florentines regarded as the humiliating demands of the invading French king, Charles VIII. In his campaign to assert his shadowy claim to the throne of the Kingdom of Naples, Charles wreaked havoc on

⁸Letter to Ricciardo Becchi, March 9, 1498 (G¹, p. 33; Gpb, p. 88; AG.II, p. 889).

⁹Ermolao Barbaro, "De officio legati," as quoted by Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1964), p. 95. Mattingly's comment on this passage is that "this is the voice of the new age." Indeed, one of the best approaches to understanding the novelty of *The Prince* and its place in Machiavelli's development would be to read the work with this statement in mind.

Italian politics, which hitherto had been directed primarily to domestic concerns. Indeed, Mattingly argues that the origins of modern diplomacy can be traced to Italy's emergence into European affairs in the mid-fifteenth century.

But, as so often is the case, domestic and foreign relations were soon to intertwine. Savonarola was influential, but not decisive, in the political reforms of 1494 and the institution of the Great Council. It is true that he invested the French invasion with almost messianic import since it fulfilled his prophecies that Italy and Florence were to be severely punished for their moral laxity by an angry God whose avenging vicar was Charles VIII. But in urging an alliance with France Savonarola was only reasserting a traditionally close tie dating from the Medici supremacy and symbolized by the incorporation of the *fleur-de-lis* into one of the *palle* ("balls") on the Medici coat of arms—a patent granted by King Louis XI in 1465. Consequently relations with France were vitally important to Florence and remained so throughout Machiavelli's public career. But in the mid-1490's they were especially crucial, for the city was to sway back and forth among several factions, each with its own clamors and beliefs: those who preferred to retain the popular government but denounced Savonarola (the *Bianchi*); those who sought to make a more aristocratically oriented republic, but who hated Savonarola (the *Arrabati*); pro-Medici forces (the *Bigi*); and Savonarola's own party (the *Frateschi* or the *Piagnoni*). Affairs and loyalties seesawed back and forth between these parties until the death of Charles VIII, whereupon his cousin Louis XII was crowned the new king of France on May 27, 1498. Savonarola had been executed four days earlier and Machiavelli became the Second Chancellor, the "Florentine Secretary," almost a month later. Consequently Louis's intention for Italy, and especially Florence, led to a flurry of negotiations among the major Italian powers. During the year 1499 Florence was trying to regain her hold on Pisa. Charles VIII had guaranteed the latter's freedom in a move to force Florence to be more dependent on him. So, since Pisa was vital because of her port as an outlet for Florentine trade, she was the immediate object of Florentine policy; secondarily, Florence was seeking to keep the major cities of Tuscany in her orbit. During 1499 Machiavelli wrote his earliest known work, "A Discourse on the Pisan War," and negotiated with both Jacopo d'Appiano in Piombino and Caterina Sforza in Forlì over disputes about the conduct of military affairs.

Military problems were also at issue when the Signoria sent Machiavelli to France in 1500. In June Louis XII had dispatched a contingent of Swiss and Gascon troops to help Florence with her war against Pisa in return for Florentine troops and financial aid for his campaign against Naples. These troops, assumed by everyone to be the most ferocious available, bombarded Pisa—but they refused to enter and take it; instead, they mutinied against their leaders and returned to Milan. The Florentines were furious with both the troops and Louis XII. Machiavelli's task was solving the problem of who was going to pay for these mercenaries.¹⁰ The Florentine treasury could not afford the expense of either maintaining the war against Pisa or paying for the departed mercenaries. At the end of the tedious, recalcitrant negotiations, Machiavelli was instrumental in convincing the Signoria to pay for part of the mercenaries' wages: he felt that Florence needed the support of the powerful Louis XII, and he also realized that the link between Cesare Borgia and Louis was so strong that the former's plans to overrun the Romagna might require that support very soon. His dispatches were much admired at home,¹¹ and they offer an interesting sidelight upon the relations of Cesare Borgia and Pope Alexander VI with the king of France. In late 1500 and early 1501 two rival families in Pistoia—the Cancellieri and the Panciatichi, both Medici sympathizers—started fighting, and the city was ripped apart by riots. Machiavelli was sent to help settle matters in February, in July, and twice in October of 1501.¹²

The machinations of Cesare Borgia, with the significant backing of his father Pope Alexander VI (Rodrigo Borgia), form the backdrop for much of Machiavelli's political and literary activity from 1501 to 1503. In 1502 Arezzo, a powerful Tuscan city in the Val di Chiana near the border of the Romagna, rebelled against Florentine rule; the insurrection was led by one of Borgia's partisans, Vitellozzo Vitelli. Borgia, meanwhile, was extending his power in the Romagna, and Machiavelli was delegated to negotiate with him at Urbino in June of 1502. A very important event in Machiavelli's life occurred in September: Piero

¹⁰He was in France from July to January of 1501 (see *Legations*, I, 69–212; Chiappelli [1971], pp. 335–465).

¹¹Letter from Biagio Buonaccorsi and Andrea di Romolo to Machiavelli, August 23, 1500 (G¹, pp. 53–54).

¹²Of the riots in 1500, Guicciardini comments that the Florentine Signoria "was greatly blamed since, aware of matters deteriorating there, it did not provide the necessary measures; it permitted matters to glide along and take their natural effect that amounted to . . . the rebellion of Pistoia" (*Florence*, XX, P., p. 204; Domandi², p. 187).

Soderini was elected as the permanent *gonfaloniere* of Florence, a position that he held until he was overthrown by the Medici in 1512. Making the nominal head of the republic an office for life was the only major alteration in the political reforms of 1494. In part it was a move toward stability conceded by the middle-class majority to the agitated aristocrats who felt they were steadily losing their influence in ruling Florence. In a sense Soderini was Machiavelli's political patron: he had great respect for Machiavelli's statesmanly acumen and saw to it that Florence benefited from it. Soderini, however, was not of the aristocratic party and relied on Machiavelli, whose financial position and political sympathies were definitely not aristocratic. From October, 1502, to January, 1503, Machiavelli was in the Romagna and had almost daily contact with Cesare Borgia. In December Cesare "eliminated" the rival elements among his *condottieri* at Senigallia. The events of 1502–1503 come down to us in two treatises Machiavelli wrote in 1503; both of them have a more literary cast to them than do the dispatches. The "Description of the Method Adopted by Duke Valentino when Murdering Vitellozzo Vitelli, Oliverotto da Fermo, and the Orsini—the Lord Paolo and the Duke of Gravina" is a literary narrative, with political overtones deftly alluded to, describing Borgia's murder of his rivals. Machiavelli's account of that December evening is too perfect to summarize; it should be read. "On the Method for Dealing with the Rebels in the Val di Chiana" is an analytical essay that, for many commentators, hints at several propositions basic to Machiavelli's subsequent ruminations about politics.¹³ A remark made at this time in a letter from one of his assistants in the Chancery, Agostino Vespucci, characterizes Machiavelli's activity for the next ten years: he is said to be extremely "eager for riding, rambling, and dashing about."¹⁴

Pope Alexander VI's desire to aggrandize his power made it necessary for him to check Louis XII's aggressive policies aimed at increasing French power in Italy. The pope and his son were anxious to get Tuscany into their camp; therefore they proposed an alliance. In the spring of 1503 Ma-

¹³In particular the phrase "the world has always been, and is still, populated by men who have always had the same desires"; *Guerra*, p. 73; Ridolfi, *Life*, p. 52. As for the dating, I accept Ridolfi's date of 1503 (*Life*, p. 269, n. 25), but Allan Gilbert argues that it was written in the 1520's (AG.I, p. 161).

¹⁴October 14, 1502; G¹, p. 74.

chivelli briefly discussed these proposals in nearby Siena with Pandolfo Petrucci, Siena's influential ruler. But his most important commission that year was his mission to the papal court in Rome after the death of Alexander in August. He was scheduled to leave Florence early in September to observe the election of the future Pius III, but his appointment was canceled. When the new pope promptly died on October 18, Florence considered it extremely important to have a trusted representative there for the next papal election because Cesare Borgia stood either to rise higher or to fall to oblivion if the new pope were against him. Machiavelli's dispatches from October to December of 1503 contain a fascinating chronicle of the behind-the-scenes shuffling for the papacy which eventually culminated in the election early in November of Giuliano della Rovere, Julius II, and the early stages of Cesare Borgia's downfall.

The fate of French interests in Italy, and especially in Naples, was of particular importance to Florence. Early in 1504 the situation looked extremely bad: Venice was widening her sphere of influence in the Romagna, and France had lost Naples to the Spanish general Gonzalo de Córdoba. The Signoria asked Machiavelli to join the Florentine ambassador at the court of France. While he was there, an accord was reached between France and Spain over Naples. Florence was given her sought-after reassurances of friendship and protection. Busy as he was with further questions of strengthening local alliances,¹⁵ Machiavelli still found time, in the fall of 1504, to write his *Decennale Primo*, a 550-line chronicle in *terza rima* describing Florentine historical events from the descent of Charles VIII into Italy in 1494 to the end of 1504. It was not printed until 1506, but two ideas crop up in it that Machiavelli develops in *The Prince*: the need for Italy to be united and the need for Florence to abandon the use of mercenary troops.

The Florentine military situation continued to be serious in 1505, especially in view of potential attacks from Gonzalo de Córdoba and from Venice. It is almost as if the gravity forced Piero Soderini into a firmer respect for Machiavelli, one of whose pet projects was to form an army conscripted from the people. Originally opposed to any such

¹⁵One expensive, and unsuccessful, effort in the war against Pisa during 1504 was the project, the inspiration for which is credited to Leonardo da Vinci, to divert the Arno River around Pisa and hence deprive the city of her access to the sea. Soderini officially sponsored the plan; commentators disagree about the extent of Machiavelli's involvement and approval. For a discussion of Leonardo's project, see Carlo Pedretti's forthcoming *Commentary on the Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, the notes for sections 1001–1008.

idea, Soderini was eventually won over to Machiavelli's way of thinking in 1506.¹⁶ In the spring of 1505, though, Soderini failed to persuade the Dieci to send Machiavelli on a mission, but Guicciardini remarks that Soderini, "in order to have one of his intimate friends there, wanted to send Niccolò Machiavelli, Chancellor of the Dieci, in whom he had great trust."¹⁷ Nevertheless Machiavelli did go to Siena to talk again with Pandolfo Petrucci; this time they discussed possible aid for Florence's unremitting attempts to retake Pisa. In September Florence attempted the capture, but her mercenary forces were disappointingly inadequate for the job. Machiavelli's awareness of the military failures the Florentines experienced in their protracted war against Pisa, plus his belief in the effectiveness of Greek and Roman republican citizen armies, convinced him that Florence had to disband her mercenary troops. Early in January, 1506, he was authorized to conscript the citizen army he had envisioned: from the outlying rural areas in the territory held by Florence, all men over fifteen who could bear arms were to fight. But the law specified that the list of men should be restricted as closely as possible to those between eighteen and forty; the planners assiduously avoided men from areas near large towns for fear of arousing loyalty to individual cities in the men whom they drafted. Machiavelli went north and east into Mugello and Casentino, recruited men, and began to train them. Luca Landucci, who owned a pharmacy opposite the Strozzi palace, has left us a diary. Commenting on the militia, he writes:

" . . . there was a muster in the Piazza of 400 recruits whom the *Gonfaloniere* had assembled, Florentine peasants, and he gave them each a white waistcoat, a pair of stockings half red and half white, a white cap, shoes, and an iron breastplate, and lances, and to some of them muskets. . . . They were soldiers, but stopped at their own houses, being obliged to appear when needed; and it was ordered that many thousand should be made in this way all through the country, so that we should not need to have any foreigners. This was thought the finest thing that had ever been arranged for Florence."¹⁸

¹⁶Until recently commentators generally followed Guicciardini, who believed that Machiavelli actually convinced Soderini of the importance of a citizen army. But now evidence suggests that a high chancery official and Piero's brother Cardinal Francesco Soderini effected the persuasion; see Rubenstein, "World of Florentine Politics," pp. 13–16.

¹⁷*Florence*, XXVI (P., p. 277; Domandi², p. 253). Cf. XXVIII (P., p. 297; Domandi², p. 271), where Machiavelli is described as "someone in whom [Soderini] would have faith."

¹⁸*Diary*, p. 218.

He was momentarily distracted from his schemes later in 1506 when Pope Julius II, hoping to force the hand of the French into sending him aid, announced his plans to regain control of Perugia and Bologna. Since the pope asked Florence to send him a contingent of mercenaries and Florence wanted to procrastinate, Machiavelli was sent to negotiate with the pope late in August, returning to Florence in November. It was during this legation that Machiavelli wrote one of the more important documents we have for understanding the special way he thought. From the tenth to the twenty-first of September he was in Perugia; he wrote a letter that has become known as the "*Ghiribizzi*" ("Fantasies"). It is highly personal, and ranges over a variety of subjects: his own reflections and comments as well as a discussion of ancient and contemporary history. The letter is important because from it we can deduce that ideas eventually embodied in *The Prince* were germinating seven years earlier.¹⁹

Later that year Florence established a magistracy solely devoted to overseeing military affairs. The order, the "First Provision for Infantry of December 6, 1506," was written by Machiavelli, and in January of 1507 he became the first secretary of the Nove della Milizia, the customary abbreviation of "The Nine Officers of the Florentine Ordinance and Militia," thus burdening himself with a third important job. For the next twenty years Machiavelli continued to write avidly about military affairs and acrimoniously about mercenaries.²⁰

Tradition credits Machiavelli with also composing a preamble to the "Provision" which established the Nine. The preamble is known as the "Discourse on the Organization of the Florentine State for Arms," but there is strong evidence that what was assumed to be a preamble is actually a letter written earlier in 1506 in support of the law enacted later that year.²¹ It is clear, however, that the propositions of the "Discourse" were a matter of pride to Machiavelli. Cardinal Francesco Soderini, an enthusiastic supporter of Machiavelli's military projects,

¹⁹Not until 1970 was it discovered that the "*Ghiribizzi*" (or "Fantasies," as it will be referred to throughout this work) was written during this period in his life. Formerly scholars believed that it was written sometime after Piero Soderini's flight from Florence when the Medici returned to rule in 1512. The detective work for this radical readjustment exists in Ridolfi and Chiglieri. Their appendix with the revised text is the basis for all subsequent allusions and quotations from this key document. That the letter is not even written to Piero Soderini but to his nephew Giovan Battista Soderini is argued by Mario Martelli, "I 'Ghiribizzi' a Giovan Battista Soderini," *Rinascimento*, 9 (1969), 147-180.

²⁰The most significant treatise is *The Art of War* (1521), but there are many others collected in *Guerra*, pp. 93-130; 295-305.

²¹Rubenstein, "World of Florentine Politics," p. 14.

saw a copy and in acknowledgement wrote an apt, almost prophetic reply:

The matters you have written about are of a nature that they may be read by everybody of pure discernment. And if you have not put all your skill into this work, as you say and as we believe, consider of what eminence will be the subjects to which you devote all the power of your genius and knowledge.²²

In the spring of 1507 the Holy Roman Emperor, Maximilian I, who was prone to rather grandiose projects, convoked the Diet of Constance with the hope of convincing the German princes that it was an auspicious moment to exacerbate his unfriendly relations with France by descending into Italy, driving Louis XII out of Lombardy, asserting his rights as emperor throughout Italy, and persuading Julius II to present him with the imperial crown in Rome. The princes assented and promised him money and men for the invasion. Soderini put forth Machiavelli as the best candidate to be an envoy to the emperor to observe the situation and send back reports, but the Signoria decided instead upon Machiavelli's close friend Francesco Vettori. Since any overtures to Maximilian would alienate Louis XII, the emperor's not planning an invasion would mean that the Florentines could continue to pursue their customary strategy of maintaining friendly relations with France. Then, in December, when Vettori's reports seemed increasingly urgent, Machiavelli was delegated to aid Vettori. Machiavelli's view of Germany was restricted to Switzerland and the Tyrol, but he did not hesitate to generalize about all of Germany. His trip produced several works: "Report on German Affairs," written immediately upon his return in June of 1508; "Discourse on German Affairs and on the Emperor" (1503); and "Analysis of German Affairs," probably written in 1512, a more literary and polished redaction of the first study. Soon after writing his reports in the summer of 1508, Machiavelli was pressed into service in the war against Pisa. Naturally the fate of his militia was uppermost in his mind. It was not until the spring of 1509 that the tide turned for Florence. We can deduce from the brevity of his correspondence at this point that Machiavelli was extremely busy with tactical stratagems and deeply committed to his troops. Ridolfi quotes from a contemporary account that Machiavelli "'hovered everywhere throughout the armies'" and adds that "the soldiers recognized his authority more than

²²March 4, 1507 (G¹, p. 178). See Rubenstein, art. cit., p. 15, for his argument that the true date of this letter is exactly one year earlier, March 4, 1506.

that of the [regular Florentine] commissioners."²³ It is an index of his intelligence and potential for power that some of those commissioners resented that authority. The same resentment motivated their trying to block Soderini, when the latter attempted to increase Machiavelli's diplomatic responsibility. Despite this opposition, Machiavelli was directly involved in the negotiations that effected the recovery of Pisa in late May and early June of 1509. Two of his friends sent him extremely complimentary and laudatory letters for his part in the reconquest. Agostino Vespucci writes,

I should venture to say that you and your battalions have rendered such fine assistance that you have restored the Florentine state not slowly but swiftly. . . . I swear to God that our rejoicing is so great that I could compose an oration for you worthy of Cicero.²⁴

And Filippo da Casavecchia, after congratulating him for his role in the recovery "because truly it may be said that you have been the reason for the greatest part of it," goes on to discuss the quality of his friend's mind in a curiously oracular appraisal:

Niccolò, if ever there were a time when one needs to be wise, this is it. I do not believe that your ideas can ever be grasped by foolish people and there are not enough wise ones—you understand me. . . . Daily I discover that you are the greatest prophet the Jews or any other race might ever have. Niccolò, Niccolò, I truly declare that I am unable to tell you what I should like to.²⁵

(The "prophetic" nature of Machiavelli has been assessed for centuries; it is still being done.) Late in that year Machiavelli was dispatched to Mantua with some money, in a Florentine attempt to appease Maximilian I. We do not know the actual date his uncompleted *Decennale Secondo* was composed; but it picks up with historical events in 1504 and stops abruptly with the Venetian recovery of Vicenza from Maximilian in 1509, shortly after Machiavelli arrived in the north. The verse chronicle is again in *terza rima*, but it is less satisfactory than his earlier *Decennale*.

Machiavelli spent the early months of 1510 attending to problems related to his militia projects, and to several minor diplomatic negotiations with local Italian princes. His most delicate job that year was to represent Florence at the French court. Everyone was convinced that

²³*Life*, p. 107.

²⁴June 8, 1509 (G¹, p. 194).

²⁵June 15, 1509 (G¹, p. 196).

Pope Julius II and King Louis XII were on a collision path. Florence feared she would be caught in the middle: would she be obliged to break her alliance with France and risk being attacked on all frontiers by an avenging pope? As part of his temporizing strategy, Soderini sent Machiavelli to Louis after the king had demanded an open statement of the Florentine position. The thrust of Machiavelli's reports was that Florence would inevitably be dragged into the affair. After his return he immediately set about trying to organize some cavalry units to supplement and bolster his militia in the fall of 1510. In the spring of 1511 he was again at the same task; he ran a series of diplomatic errands aimed at buttressing internal security by checking out the fortresses scattered through Tuscany.

Since his army was unable to defeat the pope, Louis XII decided to muster his own spiritual weapons to combat Julius II, and sought to convene a general council of the church to depose the pope. Because Florence acquiesced and permitted the call for a council to be announced as taking place in her territory at Pisa in September of 1511, Julius II thought Florence favored the king; because the Florentines wavered, Louis thought they might reverse their allegiances and back the pope. Once Florence realized the danger of her position, Machiavelli was actively engaged in trying to persuade the French cardinals, who were slow to arrive at Pisa, to halt their journey; then he went to Milan and tried to convince the French either to hold the council in another town or to call it off altogether. Unsuccessful in dissuading the four dissident cardinals from proceeding to Pisa, Machiavelli was equally unsuccessful in negotiating with Louis XII. He returned to Florence early in November, but left the next day for Pisa; eventually he got the cardinals to hold the council in Milan.

The year 1512 was the bitterest one in his life. It was almost as if he deliberately involved himself in "riding, rambling, and dashing about," occupying his time with the infantry, cavalry, and defense preparations in the outlying areas, in order to divert himself from the calamities besetting him on all sides. Although the French were victorious at the Battle of Ravenna in April, 1512, their situation steadily deteriorated after that. Julius II made the conquest of Florence one of his chief concerns. Spanish troops moved into Tuscany from the north, and toward the end of August sacked Prato, about twelve miles northwest of Florence, and threatened Florence. Approximately thirty to forty per cent of the troops at Prato were from Machiavelli's militia; their defeat

was a severe blow to the pride he took in them.²⁶ Since Florence was next on the list, Soderini resigned and fled for his life; Florence subsequently joined the papal forces and permitted the Medici to return—only, however, as private citizens. But the pro-Medici forces within the walls were so powerful that they staged a riot in mid-September, got the citizens of Florence to agree to reform the government, and soon destroyed all the republican machinery that Florence had erected and that Soderini and Machiavelli had tried to protect. The new government first disbanded the militia and then the *Nove della Milizia*, but still retained Machiavelli as the Second Secretary—for two and a half weeks. Because of his close alliance with Soderini and the non-aristocratic bloc, he was the only official in the chancery who was ousted. Early in November he was dismissed as Second Chancellor, relieved of his duties as Secretary to the Dieci, confined within the territorial boundaries of Florence for one year, asked to put up a bond of a thousand gold florins, and forbidden entrance to the Palazzo della Signoria for one year. But since he had to account for his financial distributions during the time he had been in office, he was periodically allowed to break this last provision. When he ever had the time or leisure to write is difficult to understand, but it is assumed, since he needed access to official state papers, that sometime between the Battle of Ravenna in April of 1512 and the winter of 1513 he set down his detailed, informative “Analysis of French Affairs.” It was also probably during the closing months of 1512 that he inscribed on the cover of his own copy of “Discourse on the Organization of the Florentine State for Arms” the poignantly eloquent and concise remark *post res perditas*, “after the wretched affairs.”

Because his name was included in a list written by Pietropaolo Boscoli, a leader of a conspiracy against the Medici in February–March, 1513, he was imprisoned briefly, tortured, freed, and retired to his estate at Sant’ Andrea in Percussina near San Casciano. Since Machiavelli was trying to curry favor with the Medici at this time so that they would employ him, it is in fact unlikely that he was involved in the

²⁶Machiavelli speaks of “the cowardice which was seen in our soldiers at Prato” (letter to an unidentified woman, written after September 16, 1512 [G¹, p. 226; Gpb, p. 94; AG.II, p. 893]). And Guicciardini, who was opposed to the idea of a citizen army, alludes slightly to some of the troops at Prato, “hastily levied from all the crafts and lower-class trades, very few of whom were experienced in warfare. . . . The Spaniards were astonished that such cowardice and lack of experience could flourish among unskilled men of low birth” (*Italy*, 11, 3–4 [Pan., III, 228, 230; Alexander, pp. 261–262]).

Boscoli conspiracy. There is no evidence to indicate that he was, and he always maintained that he was innocent.²⁷ The results of this bad “fortune” are set down in three tailed sonnets, creating the fiction that they are to be sent to Giuliano de’ Medici, soon to be made governor of Florence and a likely patron who might have helped to procure his release. They describe—with varying degrees of emotion—Machiavelli’s state of mind while in prison.²⁸ Significantly Machiavelli regards himself as a conscious artist: in the first two, he assumes the persona of a poet: “I wear, Giuliano, a set of fetters on my legs” and “Last night, while beseeching the Muses. . . .” It might also have been more expedient that the urbane Giuliano, who admired learned men and poets, think of Machiavelli more as a man of letters than as a man of politics. In the final sonnet, written after he was granted amnesty, “I’m sending you, Giuliano, several thrushes,” Machiavelli typically combines his bitter wit about his “fortune” with his pointed self-assertiveness about “Fortune” in general. The thrushes he sends Giuliano are admittedly neither a good nor a beautiful gift (unlike the “gift” of his own intellect—embodied in *The Prince*, which we know he was writing eight months later in December of 1513), but they will serve to remind Giuliano of Machiavelli’s existence. Symbolically identifying himself with these thrushes, he continues with a pun on *mordere* which means both “to chew” and “to bite” as well as “to backbite”: if there are those in Giuliano’s retinue who want something to chew on, and who might be backbiters of Machiavelli, then give them these thrushes—so they will not want to sink their teeth into him. If the thrushes are not fat and good enough for backbiters, remember that Machiavelli too is thin, yet there may be some healthy morsels in him. The sonnet closes by asking Giuliano to feel and touch the thrushes with his own hands so that he can base his opinion of them—and of Machiavelli—on personal judgment.²⁹

The Medici family, from this point on, became critical to Machiavelli’s life. None of his sonnets won him his release, but the amnesty to all prisoners issued by Cardinal Giovanni de’ Medici, upon succeeding Julius II and becoming Pope Leo X in March of 1513, did. Florence was wild with joy at the succession. For the occasion Machiavelli wrote his

²⁷See the letter to his nephew Giovanni Vernacci, June 26, 1513 (G¹, p. 262–263).

²⁸C³, pp. 362–364, Tusiani, pp. 44–46; AG.II, pp. 1013–1015.

²⁹The language of the sonnet is reminiscent of a passage in *The Prince*; see note to Chapter 18, lines 85–87.

poem “Canto degli Spiriti Beati.” Although arranged among his *Canti Carnascialeschi*, it is hardly a carnival song: it is a fervent religious poem, yet it was written with a practical aim. As long as he could keep his name before the Medici, Machiavelli could still hope for employment by them. But since the possibilities were dim and there were worries about the property at Sant’ Andrea, he retired to the country. In order to exercise his mind about political subjects, and always with the object of a political appointment, he intensified his correspondence with Francesco Vettori, who originally was the ambassador of Florence to Julius II, and who was subsequently retained as her ambassador to the new Medici pope. It is tempting to think that this virtually forced seclusion produced a series of memories and reflections that inspired Machiavelli to begin work on *The Prince* and *The Discourses*. The letter to Vettori written on December 10 substantiates this idea, and is important if we are to understand the genesis of *The Prince*.³⁰

Magnificent Ambassador:

“Divine favors were never late.”³¹ I say this because it seemed I lost—no, rather mislaid—your favor; it has been a long time since you wrote me and I was uncertain about what the reason might be. And to all those reasons that entered my mind I paid little notice apart from the reason that I suspected you had shrunk from writing me because someone had written you that I was not a good steward for your letters.³² I knew that except for Filippo and Paolo³³ no one else had seen them through my doing. I am reassured by your recent letter of the 23rd of last month in which I am extremely pleased to see how methodically and tranquilly you fulfill your public duties. I exhort you to pursue them that way because whoever forgoes his advantages for that of others loses his own and knows no gratitude from the latter. And since Fortune³⁴ is eager to create everything, she wants people to let her do it, to be still, not to trouble her, and to await the moment when she will permit men to act in some fashion. That will be the moment for you to persevere more unflinchingly, to be more alert

³⁰December 10, 1513 (G¹, pp. 301–306; Hale, p. 136–141; Gpb, pp. 139–144; AG.II, pp. 927–931).

³¹Petrarch, “Trionfo dell’ Eternità,” v. 13; an elegant acknowledgment for receiving a letter.

³²I.e., that Machiavelli had been indiscreet and passed Vettori’s letters around.

³³Filippo da Casavecchia had been active in Soderini’s government as a commissioner; see p. 13 above. Paolo Vettori was Francesco’s brother; he was also active in Florentine politics. Given Machiavelli’s lingering hopes that Francesco would obtain some patronage for him, it is ironic that all Vettori could do for Paolo was to see to it that he got a job as a registrar for the tithes extracted from the Florentine clergy.

³⁴See below, pp. 71–72, for the distinction between “Fortune” and “fortune.”

about matters, and for me to leave my farm and announce, "Here I am."³⁵ Since I want to pay you in the same coin, therefore, I can tell you nothing else in this letter but what my life is like. If you decide you would like to exchange this letter for one of yours, it will make me happy.

I am living in the country, and since my latest disasters happened, I have not spent a total of twenty days in Florence. Until recently I have been catching thrushes with my own hands. I got up before daybreak, prepared the birdlime, and went out with a bundle of bird-cages on my back. . . . In the long run this hobby, although contemptible and foreign to my tastes, waned—to my regret. I shall tell you about my life.

I get up in the morning with the sun and enter one of my woods that I am having cut down where I spend a couple of hours overseeing the work of the previous day and kill time with the woodsmen who always have some dispute on their hands either among themselves or with their neighbors. . . . Upon leaving the woods I go to a spring; from there to one of the places where I hang my birdnets. I have a book under my arm: Dante, Petrarch, one of the minor poets like Tibullus, Ovid, or some such poet. I read about their amorous passions and their loves, remember my own, and these thoughts make me happy for a while. Then I go out to the road and into the inn, chatting with passersby, asking news of their regions, learning about various matters, noticing the variety of tastes and various whims of mankind. By then it is the hour to eat; with my household³⁶ I eat what food this poor farm and my minuscule patrimony yield. When I have finished eating I return to the inn where there usually are the innkeeper, a butcher, a miller, and a couple of bakers. With these men I act the bumpkin for the rest of the day playing *cricca*³⁷ and backgammon: these games lead to thousands of quarrels, and endless abuses and vituperations. More often than not we are squabbling over a penny; nevertheless they can hear us yelling in San Casciano. Thus, having been cooped up among these lice I return to my studies³⁸ and soothe the malice of my fate, content to be ridden over roughshod in this fashion so as to discover whether or not it is ashamed of treating me so.

When evening comes I return home and enter my study; on the

³⁵Translates *eccomi*, a perfectly normal phrase with no overtones. Whether or not Machiavelli intended an allusion to John the Baptist's *ecce homo*, the use of *eccomi* at this point in the letter is striking.

³⁶Or "brood"; his Villa dell' Albergaccio was supporting his wife, daughter, and three sons—another son was born in September of 1514.

³⁷A card game in which the object is to get three face cards or three aces.

³⁸With the "lice," the literal meaning of the idiom is appropriate: "I scrape the mould off my brain" (*traggo el cervello di muffa*).

threshold I take off my everyday garments covered with mud and dirt and put on regal and courtly robes. Fitted out appropriately I step inside the venerable courts of the Ancients where, solicitously received by them, I nourish myself on that food which is mine alone and for which I was born; where I am unashamed to converse with them and ask them the motives for their actions, and they, out of their human kindness, answer me. And for over four hours at a time I feel no boredom, I forget all my trouble, I do not dread poverty; and I am not terrified by death. I give myself over to them totally.

And since Dante says that no one understands anything unless he retains what he has heard,³⁹ I have jotted down what I have profited from in their conversation and composed a short study, *De principatibus*, in which I delve as deeply as I can into the ideas concerning this topic, discussing the definition of a principedom, descriptions of principedoms, how they are acquired, how they are retained, and why they are lost. And if ever any of my caprices has given you pleasure, this one should not displease you. It ought to be welcomed by a prince, and especially by a new prince: therefore I am dedicating it to His Magnificence Giuliano.⁴⁰ Filippo da Casavecchia has seen it. He will be able to inform you about the context and the work itself as well as the discussions I have had with him about it, although I am continually expanding and revising it.

You would like, Magnificent Ambassador, for me to renounce this life and come to enjoy yours with you. I shall do so in any case, but I am now engaged in certain commitments that I shall attend to within six weeks. What causes me to hesitate is that the Soderini⁴¹ are in Rome and were I to come there, I should be obliged to visit and talk with them. I should fear that upon my return I might not trust in dismounting at home, but rather at the Bargello.⁴² For although this regime has extremely strong foundations and great security, still it is new and consequently suspicious. . . . I beg you to lift this fear for me and then, come what may, I shall arrive and find you within the time mentioned.

I have discussed this little study of mine with Filippo and whether or not it would be a good idea to present it to Giuliano, and if it were a good idea, whether I should take it myself or

³⁹*Paradiso V*, 41–42.

⁴⁰Giuliano de' Medici, the Duke of Nemours; he was the son of Lorenzo the Magnificent and one of the interlocuters in Castiglione's *Courtier*.

⁴¹Cardinal Francesco Soderini and Piero Soderini, whom Pope Leo X had recently permitted to visit Rome.

⁴²Now a national museum, but then a prison where Machiavelli had been tortured during the aftermath of the Boscoli conspiracy.

should send it to you.⁴³ Against presenting it would be my doubt that it might not even be read by Giuliano and that that person Ardinghelli might take the credit for this most recent of my endeavors.⁴⁴ In favor of presenting it would be the necessity that drives me, because I am being worn away and cannot stay as I am for long without becoming contemptible because of my poverty. Besides, there is my desire that these Medici princes should begin to engage my services, even if they should start by having me push around a stone.⁴⁵ For then, if I could not win them over, I would have only myself to blame. And through this study of mine, were it to be read, it would be evident that during the fifteen years I have been studying the art of the state I have neither slept nor played; and anybody should wish to utilize someone who has had so much experience at the expense of others. There should be no doubt about my word; for since I have always kept it, I should not now learn how to break it. Whoever has been honest and faithful for forty-three years, as I have, is unable to change his nature; my poverty is a witness to my honesty and goodness.

Therefore I should like you too to write me what seems best concerning this subject. I commend myself to you. Be happy.

This letter contains several important points of contrast and explanation for our understanding of *The Prince*. It is difficult to measure the degree of privacy that correspondents could assume during the Renaissance. Machiavelli immediately alludes to the common practice of letter sharing. Obviously he expected—perhaps even hoped—that his letters to Vettori would be read by others. Machiavelli’s letters to Vettori and others were neither implicitly nor explicitly letters to posterity, as was the common Renaissance practice—especially in the case of Petrarch’s correspondence. Consequently, it is delightful, but a bit fanciful, to think of Machiavelli deliberately dressing for the Ancients, consciously making himself more decorous to “converse” with them.⁴⁶

⁴³Giuliano de’ Medici had been in Rome since September of 1513. Since Vettori was already there, Machiavelli seems to be suggesting that he present *The Prince* to Giuliano. In Vettori’s reply to this letter, which was not until December 24, he says, “when I have seen it I shall give you my opinion about whether or not to present it to the Magnificent Giuliano” (G¹, p. 311).

⁴⁴Piero Ardinghelli, one of Giuliano’s secretaries and chancellors. Later, in a letter dated February 14, 1515, he advised Giuliano to avoid all contact with Machiavelli (Ridolfi, *Life*, p. 162; text, Clough, *Researches*, p. 39).

⁴⁵An allusion to Dante, *Inferno* VII, 16–66—a description of the fourth circle of Hell, where the avaricious and the wasteful are condemned—rather like Sisyphus—to an endless, fruitless task of pushing weights around because both types are guilty of too great an interest in worldly goods. Significantly enough for this context, Dante continues by having Virgil give his famous description of Fortune as the handmaiden of God’s providence, turning and ruling the earth’s sphere as the angels turn and rule the planets’ spheres.

⁴⁶It is also interesting that the image he chooses to describe his communication with the ancients

That he changed his clothes in the evening is quite believable. But his statement that he donned “regal and courtly robes” is perhaps written with an eye to its effect, as is the list of poets casually tucked under his arm when he went to see to his birdnets. The context of friendly correspondence, however, is another element in determining the nature of this letter. Vettori’s letter of November 23, to which Machiavelli was replying, describes the rather dilatory, relaxed, ineffective, quotidian life Vettori was leading in Rome. Thus Machiavelli’s ironical remark, “how methodically and tranquilly you fulfill your public duties,” and his pointed contrast of his life with that of his friend.

One of the most striking characteristics of Machiavelli’s style is its use of homespun, down-to-earth images and diction. In his diplomatic, creative, and historical writings, this manner has its own point: the writer is using carefully considered rhetorical strategies to reinforce his unique message,⁴⁷ strategies that are basic to his analysis of “the actual truth of matters.”⁴⁸ Hence Machiavelli’s ability and desire to chat with woodsmen, innkeepers, butchers, millers, and bakers is as essential a component of his experience of “recent events” as his “constant reading of classical authors.” Machiavelli’s day alternates between gossiping and story-telling, and jotting down what he has profited from in those conversations with the Ancients. These variations help to keep his intelligence sharp.

Thus Machiavelli’s letter not only details his everyday experience, but—and on this level there is no desire to create an effort or an impression—also epitomizes a theme basic to his activities as a writer: the fusion of ancient practice and contemporary experience into a viable model for confronting actual political problems. He also treats Vettori to another one of his basic themes: the power of Fortune. Here it is mentioned in terms of her apparent omnipotence. But, as we shall see later,⁴⁹ there are occasions when she can be overcome; one of the most potent weapons is the *virtù* of knowing “the moment when she will permit men to act in some fashion.” Given so powerful an adversary, such knowledge—the adjustment of one’s tactics to “the conditions of

is that customarily used to denote non-slavish imitation. Cf. Du Bellay’s imagery of nourishment in his advice for proper imitation: “imitating the best Greek authors, transfiguring yourselves into them, devouring them, and—after digesting them fully—converting them into blood and nourishment”; *Deffence et Illustration de la langue françoise*, I, vii (ed. Chamard, 1904, p. 99).

⁴⁷See the discussion of style, pp. 81–87 below.

⁴⁸See note to Chapter 15, lines 9–11.

⁴⁹See pp. 69–74 for the concepts of Fortune and *virtù*.

the times"—is no mean weapon.⁵⁰ Biographical realities are constantly relevant to similar themes in *The Prince*. Machiavelli persists in alluding to his diplomatic experience; his reference to Vettori about "the malice of my fate" becomes, in the Dedicatory Letter to *The Prince*, "Fortune's considerable and continuous malice." And Vettori is privy to several painful allusions to Machiavelli's "minuscule patrimony," to his being "contemptible because of . . . poverty"—although communion with the Ancients dispels concern about it—and to his "latest disasters" in the Boscoli conspiracy that have kept him removed from Florence. Indeed, he seems to refer to forgoing "advantages," and thereby losing his own and incurring the ingratitude of others, with but mild forbearance.⁵¹ Although here his very poverty is a "witness to his honesty and goodness," Machiavelli's concern with the importance of a prince keeping his word occupies all of Chapter 18. Another notion that comes up in that chapter is the need for a prince to rely on appearances, to create a persona, as Machiavelli does when he "acts the bumpkin."⁵²

Since his own predicament is so grave, he can afford a gentle blast at those "Medici princes." His relations with the Medici are hardly peripheral to the argument of *The Prince*. The entire letter is governed, as is much of *The Prince*, by his need for a job, and he tactfully takes this opportunity to affirm his loyalty to the Medici. To Vettori he can be self-deprecatory about the capricious character of his "short study." But he is outspoken in reminding Vettori, whose Medici connections may be put to some advantage, of how welcome and useful the work could be to a new prince who has recently come into power in a realm new to him, and who has none of the theological, ideological, or even mythological trappings of traditional rule. This is a situation of which Giovanni de' Medici, now Leo X, and Lorenzo II de' Medici, the Duke of Urbino, were acutely conscious. Perhaps Machiavelli is somewhat ironic, given that "suspicion," about the "extremely strong foundations and great security" of Medici power, but the necessity for such foundations is constantly argued for in *The Prince*—and even elaborated through architectural metaphors.⁵³ Of course, what Machiavelli is really telling Vettori—and anyone else who might read the letter—is that his "short study" embodies the intelligence of a loyal and highly trained

⁵⁰See Chapter 25, lines 52–53 below.

⁵¹His *capitolo* on "ingratitude" is usually dated shortly before this period in his life.

⁵²See Chapter 18 and notes.

⁵³See pp. 82–83.

observer and thinker. A man would be foolish not to utilize that inestimable gift of his intelligence which Machiavelli incorporated into *The Prince*. Indeed, the gift of his intelligence is perhaps the ultimate "theme" of *The Prince*.

The letter to Vettori also raises two problems beyond the immediate concern of *The Prince*'s text. Who was the recipient of its Dedicatory Letter? And when was the other principal work, the *Discourses*, begun? As a result of the recent return of the Medici to power in 1512, after eighteen years of exile, and of the fact that Giuliano both led his troops against Florence and deposed the government, Giuliano could be considered a "new prince." Furthermore it was bruited about that his brother Pope Leo X would use him to consolidate papal power in the Romagna, the region where Cesare Borgia had been briefly effective in a similar aim for his father Pope Alexander VI. Hence Machiavelli originally intended to dedicate *The Prince* to Giuliano, with the apt example of Cesare Borgia occupying a prominent place in it. But as the youngest son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, Giuliano never seemed to be very favorably inclined either to Machiavelli or to military service. Furthermore, he died on March 17, 1516. Therefore Machiavelli decided to dedicate *The Prince* to Lorenzo II, grandson of Lorenzo the Magnificent, who became the Duke of Urbino on October 8, 1516.⁵⁴ Since he refers to him in the Dedicatory Letter as "Your Magnificence," Ridolfi argues that the dedication precedes his investiture as duke, after which he would more appropriately have been addressed as "Your Excellence."⁵⁵ It is assumed that this letter could have been written as early as 1515 because Lorenzo was in Florence then, was made the virtual ruler of the city in May, and was given the title Gonfaloniere di Santa Chiesa by his uncle, Pope Leo X, in August. But because Giuliano was still alive, sometime between March and September of 1516 seems a more likely period to date the Dedication. We have no evidence, however, that Lorenzo was ever officially presented with a copy of *The Prince*; but we do know that he did not repay Machiavelli in any way for his "gift." Those who would read the dedication as ironic point to the fact that both Medici proved to be ineffective military and civic leaders; but this contention ignores the fact that their contemporaries thought highly of both men's potential, primarily because Giovanni de'

⁵⁴For Machiavelli's overall impressions of Lorenzo II, see his letter to Vettori, February-March 1514 (G¹, p. 331; Gpb, pp. 138-139; AG.II, pp. 926-927).

⁵⁵*Life*, pp. 164, 299, n. 39.

Medici, Giuliano's older brother and Lorenzo's uncle, was the current pope. Leo sought to consolidate his power by putting his relatives at the head of various regimes; he tried to carve out a "new principedom" for Giuliano in northern Italy—the cities of Parma, Piacenza, Modena, and Reggio.⁵⁶ In 1516 Leo X excommunicated Francesco della Rovere, the Duke of Urbino, so that Lorenzo could help to secure the northern Italian states for the papacy. Contemporary accounts praise the capacity for accomplishment possessed by both: with Giuliano in mind Machiavelli notes that "new princes" should imitate the "deeds" of Cesare Borgia;⁵⁷ the Venetian ambassador thought Lorenzo capable of attainments only slightly less great than those of Cesare. Despite our knowledge and hunches about the writing and dedicating of *The Prince*, we do not know to what extent Machiavelli altered the text after he, presumably, completed it early in 1514. Did he attempt to make his argument more germane to the actual circumstances confronting Lorenzo II once Giuliano died? The answer seems to be negative since, except for a few allusions, the evidence Machiavelli adduces from contemporary history includes nothing after 1513.⁵⁸

But a statement in *The Prince* has led many⁵⁹ to believe that *The Discourses* were begun before *The Prince* was finished. The opening sentence of Chapter 2 states, "I shall refrain from discussing republics because I have discussed them at length elsewhere." *The Discourses* are a series of reflections and comments, based on Livy's *First Decade*, which in turn concerns the history of republican Rome. But, despite the controversy and the reciprocal quotations of isolated passages by scholars, it seems quite clear that this sentence is a later interpolation.⁶⁰ How late, unfortunately, depends in large measure upon our knowing when Machiavelli began frequenting the learned, humanistic circle of

⁵⁶See Machiavelli's letter to Vettori, January 31, 1515 (G¹, pp. 374–375; Hale, pp. 155–156; Gpb, pp. 185–186; AG.II, p. 962); cf. Vettori's letter to Machiavelli, July 12, 1513 (G¹, pp. 267–268).

⁵⁷Letter to Vettori, January 31, 1515; loc. cit. For more on the implications of the analogous situation between Cesare and Giuliano, see p. 75, n. 156 below.

⁵⁸See Chabod, pp. 34–36, n. 2. He argues that the statement in Chapter 14 about the successors of Francesco Sforza becoming "ordinary citizens" includes Massimiliano, refers to the situation after September, 1515, and the Battle of Marignano, and indicates an example designed to update a particularly important point, namely the need for a citizen army; see note to Chapter 14, line 13.

⁵⁹Among others, Ridolfi, *Life*, pp. 294–295, n. 10; Chabod, pp. 31–32, n. 2.

⁶⁰See Baron, "Republican Citizen," especially p. 239. In effect, I am convinced by his argument in this important article about the dating of *The Prince* and *The Discourses*, but I am not sure he is correct in utilizing this argument to minimize any sense of continuity and progression between the two works; see especially pp. 247ff. For the notion of progression, see Clough, *Researches*, pp. 79–107, which are partly dependent upon the discussion on pp. 43–78.

Cosimino Rucellai, one of the men to whom *The Discourses* are dedicated, and the meetings at his Oricellari Gardens. It is generally agreed that the earliest possible date was 1516; but those who feel the historical allusions in *The Discourses* are later than this argue for 1517 or 1518.⁶¹

Regardless of the polemics involved in dating the works—and even sections and passages in them—we can say that Machiavelli produced most of his literary works in the period from 1515 to 1520. *The Discourses* are not a literary composition. But in the main they were written before 1518, although again the question of later interpolations is relevant; they were not printed until 1531, a year before the publication of *The Prince*—four years after Machiavelli's death. *The Discourses* are an obvious result of his reading and thinking about Livy for many years and his conversations at the Oricellari Gardens. They are the basis for advocating that Machiavelli's sympathies were fundamentally republican in nature and that he clearly saw the dangers of absolute power. No student of Machiavelli should ever assume he can ignore the ideas and reflections set down in them. But there was also a strong literary emphasis in the group that met in Rucellai's gardens, and it nurtured Machiavelli's literary aspirations; his play *Mandragola*, belonging to the last three years of this period, is one of the best and freshest of Renaissance comedies. It is a highly "political" domestic comedy, with its carefully delineated Fra Timoteo embodying, for many, a comic version of attitudes sketched out earlier in *The Prince*.⁶² His *Belfagor* is in the style of Boccaccio: a tightly-knit, dressed-up presentation of a tale Machiavelli might have told at the inn near his Villa Albergaccio. Although several more poems were written in these years, the most ambitious was his unfinished "[Golden] Ass," written in *terza rima* and usually

⁶¹Baron, pp. 239–240, n. 2. He suggests that since *The Art of War* is in part a compliment to Cosimino Rucellai, since its fictive date is 1516; and since it represents a discussion held in the Oricellari Gardens, the implication is that Machiavelli would not have created a debate he did not witness. We know that his spokesman in the dialogue, Fabrizio Colonna, visited Cosimino early in 1516. (This could even mean that Machiavelli first started attending these sessions late in 1515.) I agree that "the setting of a Renaissance dialogue can only in rare cases be used as a testimony to biographical facts," but Castiglione set his dialogue *The Courtier* at the court of Guidobaldo da Montefeltro in Urbino in 1508 when some of its interlocutors could not possibly have been present. His decision was a means of paying tribute to the duke, who died in 1508, just as Machiavelli's was in part a tribute to Cosimino, who died in 1519 while Machiavelli was composing *The Art of War*. The first time Machiavelli alludes to these Oricellari meetings, however, is in a letter to Alamanni, December 17, 1517 (G¹, pp. 382–384; Gpb, pp. 191–193; AG.II, pp. 966–968).

⁶²Proof of its contemporary popularity is the fact that Andrea del Sarto helped paint the scenery for a Florentine performance later in 1524.

dated 1517 and early 1518. Many commentators see in it poignant allusions to his troubled personal and political life. His continuing interest in the vernacular is confirmed by his “Dialogue on Our Language,” in which the persona of Machiavelli dares to debate Dante.

His connections with the influential men at the Oricellari Gardens enabled him to get some employment. To protect the interests of Florentine merchants, he was sent to Genoa in 1518 and to Lucca in 1520. While there he wrote the *Life of Castruccio Castracani*, what today we might call a historical novel, about a highly successful *condottiere* from early fourteenth-century Lucca. It denotes a major shift in his curiosity, away from creative literature to the “mode” of historical writing and, more importantly, to the problem of fashioning an historical style. *The Art of War*, finished in 1520, is a dialogue containing the fullest exposition of his ideas about a citizen army, based on his initial experiences with the Florentine militia in 1506. It appeared in 1521—and is the only major work that he saw through the printer. Although it does fuse his reading with his experience, the historian’s sense of detail and synthesis is also clearly present.

This acuity put him more in the eyes of the Medici. Upon the death of Lorenzo II, the Duke of Urbino, in 1519, Lorenzo’s uncle, Cardinal Giulio de’ Medici, became the leader of Florence. At his behest in 1520 Machiavelli wrote his first methodical examination of Florence’s constitutional needs, “A Discourse on Florentine Affairs After the Death of Lorenzo.” But even before setting out to write it, he was commissioned by the cardinal to write the most important work of his later years, *The History of Florence*. The ironic twist of fate responsible for the switch from being a steadfast defender of republican Florence to being commissioned by a Medici cardinal to write a history of Florence did not go unnoticed by Machiavelli:

For quite some time now I never say what I believe nor ever believe what I say; indeed, if sometimes I happen to speak the truth, I conceal it among so many lies that it is difficult to recognize it.⁶³

⁶³Letter to Francesco Guicciardini, May 17, 1521 (G¹, p. 405; Hale, p. 162; Gpb, p. 200; AG.II, p. 973). The circumstances involve a mission to a general assembly of Franciscans in Carpi—a rather demeaning job, but still work. Machiavelli whiled away the time by writing a series of amusing letters to Guicciardini, thereby cementing a friendship that was to grow warmer during the rest of Machiavelli’s life and virtually replace his friendship with Vettori, even though the fervor both his friends felt for a republican form of government in Florence was tinged with aristocratic sympathies. It is by no means certain that he is referring specifically to the place of the Medici in his *History of Florence*. Ridolfi (*Life*, p. 309, n. 8) feels that he had not yet started to write about them, but there is no reason

The most striking feature of the *History* is Machiavelli's determination not to be merely another annalist, but to be an analyst of the events that made Florence great. Furthermore, the style is much closer to that of *The Prince*: clear and direct, sparse and strong.⁶⁴

His preoccupation with his *History* marks the last phase of his career—a curious blend of the active and the contemplative life. He began the *History of Florence* in 1520 and presented the eight books in 1525 to Pope Clement VII, the former Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, who had become pope in 1523. But he also wrote *Clizia*, based on Plautus's *Casina*, performed first at a lavish banquet early in 1525. Machiavelli was beginning to move more freely in Florentine society. By refusing employment with his former protector, Piero Soderini, in 1521, he reaffirmed his loyalties to Florence, and, perforce, to the Medici. In 1522 he wrote a report for Cardinal de' Medici on governmental reform. When he journeyed to Rome to present the *History* to the pope, he had an opportunity to urge his conviction that the pope needed a national militia. Clement, noted for his indecision, sent him in the summer of 1525 to consult with Guicciardini, then the governor of the Romagna, to discuss the feasibility of realizing the project. Defense preparations were a prime consideration because France, Germany, and Spain persisted in using Italy as the battleground for their expansionist aims. Francis I continued to pursue the policies of his cousin and father-in-law Louis XII. A series of Hapsburg–Valois battles began in 1522 as Emperor Charles V, who attained to the Spanish throne with the death of Ferdinand the Catholic in 1516 and who also succeeded Maximilian I as the Holy Roman Emperor in 1519, set his sights on Italy and France and attacked cities in northern Italy. The irresolute papacy supported the emperor at one point and the French at another. The Battle of Pavia, in February of 1525, momentarily blocked the French, and Francis I was captured. Upon his liberation he formed the League of Cognac in May of 1526 with Pope Clement VII; Francesco II Sforza, the Duke of Milan; Venice; and Florence—all against the imperial forces. Because of the desperate situation, Machiavelli wrote a proposal

why he could not have been dreading the prospect. Ridolfi does, however, summarize a series of conversations with a friend. The gist of them is that in discussing the Medici oligarchy Machiavelli will give the facts and let theorizing about causes be done by the reader. As for pressing his theory about learning from historical example, the reader can perform that task himself by paying special attention to what he has the Medici opponents say (*Life*, pp. 198–199).

⁶⁴For his revisions and his desire to impose this style on his material, see the documentation in Ridolfi, *Life*, p. 314, n. 26.

for the fortification of Florence; in May of 1526 he was named the chancellor of the new magistracy, the Cinque Procurati delle Mura.

Machiavelli spent the rest of his active life running several missions back and forth for the Florentine government to Guicciardini at various key defense towns in northern Italy. But no one in Italy was able to stave off the army of Charles V. It bulldozed its way south, bypassing Florence in April of 1527, but brutally sacking Rome in May. The Medici were again forthwith driven out of Florence, which immediately re-established a republican form of government. But Machiavelli never lived to see its results. He was taken sick on June 20, and died two days later.

Machiavelli had devoted his life to politics. Indeed, shortly after his release from prison following the incidents of the Boscoli conspiracy, he wrote Vettori some striking words about his commitment to theorizing about politics:

Fortune has decreed that since I am unable to discuss either the silk or the wool trade, profits or losses, I must discuss politics. I need either to take a vow of silence or to discuss politics.⁶⁵

Yet his political life teeters on a distinction Max Weber draws, not in an exclusive sense, between those men who make politics their vocation by living either “for” politics or else “off” politics. That Machiavelli never had enough independent wealth to ignore the income his political activity offered was a source of continual discontent. To live “off” politics by being rewarded for his efforts and ideas might for him have been ideal. Machiavelli, however, lived “for” politics precisely in Weber’s notion of the internalization of politics. His letters to his friends and his reports to Florence are vibrant evidence that he enjoyed the naked possession of the power he exerted. All his works attest to his nourishing “his inner balance and self-feeling by the consciousness that his life has *meaning* in the service of a cause.”⁶⁶ Without the cause to serve he performe resorted to recreating his experience. Most of his life after the winter of 1512–1513 was spent renouncing any vow of silence and discussing the idea of politics. Political ideas replaced a political cause.

An incident occurred in the summer of 1526 that epitomizes what his biography has to tell us about his career, one that was spent veering precariously between the active and the contemplative life, between a

⁶⁵April 9, 1513 (G¹, pp. 239–240; Hale, p. 132; Gpb, p. 104; AG.II, pp. 900–901). Cf. Ass I, vv. 88–90, but see the recently discovered evidence referred to in note 5, p. 4 above.

⁶⁶“Politics as a Vocation” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, eds. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 84.

life devoted to practical action and one committed to the life of the mind. The story comes down to us in the preface to a tale by Bandello and dedicated to Giovanni de' Medici (*Novelle*, I, 40). On March 15, 1526, Machiavelli writes an admiring letter to Guicciardini about Giovanni de' Medici—a man who, it would seem, had learned the precepts of Machiavelli's *Art of War* so well as to suggest that he was a leader capable of fulfilling the desires of Chapter 26 of *The Prince*: a strong general around whom Italy could rally. Giovanni de' Medici (called "of the black bands" probably because his soldiers added black stripes of mourning to his white banner upon hearing of the death of Pope Leo X in 1521) had fought as a mercenary on both the imperial and the French sides. Although to Machiavelli he appeared to be the only hope of survival for Florence and the papal states, he died in November of 1526 fighting against the advanced guard of Charles V's army. Bandello tells the story that one sweltering summer's day Giovanni delle Bande Nere asked Machiavelli if he would like to drill his 3,000 troops and execute some of the military formations he had outlined in the *Art of War*. Machiavelli, although delighted, quickly got the troops hopelessly confused; Giovanni let him flounder for two hours, but eventually took pity on his hungry men flailing about in the heat of Lombardy. He swiftly and deftly reordered them and then invited Machiavelli to dinner. Bandello succinctly reveals the dilemma that we often sense characterizes Machiavelli's career:

How great the difference is between someone who knows and who has not set in operation what he knows and someone who, as well as knowing, has often rolled up his sleeves and plunged in, as we usually say, and has derived his thoughts and mental view from outward deeds."⁶⁷

But it is clear that even though Bandello pokes fun at Machiavelli, he also cherishes him. For the licentious, barroom story he alleges that Machiavelli told that night after the meal redeems the situation: he calls Machiavelli "an excellent and eloquent teller of tales."⁶⁸

Perhaps, then, in attempting to assess Machiavelli, we should attend as much to his literary writings as to his political treatises. Approaching

⁶⁷Matteo Bandello, *Le Novelle*, ed. Gioachino Brognoligo (Bari: Laterza, 1928), II, 83. Ridolfi quotes a statement attributed to Giovanni delle Bande Nere contrasting himself with Machiavelli: "Niccolò knew how to write things well and [I] knew how to do them" (*Life*, p. 323, n. 34).

⁶⁸II, 84.

his corpus with the techniques of literary criticism results in an inescapable conclusion. Biographical facts alone, and specifically the ingenuous and sentimental temptation to attribute the strength and diversity of his style to his enforced exile, tend to force a misleading distinction between Machiavelli the "secretary" and Machiavelli the "author." The continuity of imagination, thought, and style throughout his life is an omnipresent reality.⁶⁹

In fact, there is one image that combines biographical, literary, and even physiognomic evidence; it serves as a neat summary for anyone who wants to understand the totality of his impact. There is a powerful appositeness in the lines from Petrarch that Machiavelli characteristically inserts suddenly into a letter to Vettori shortly after the Boscoli conspiracy and his release from prison:

Therefore if sometimes I should laugh or sing,
It is because there is no other way
My eyes can let go of these tears that sting.⁷⁰

Ridolfi quotes Guicciardini as saying of Machiavelli, "He will just laugh at men's weaknesses since he cannot remedy them."⁷¹ Perhaps this is the source of that smile we see playing over his lips in the surviving portraits and busts—as enigmatic a smile as any of those in Leonardo. Perhaps it is the source of that portrait of his emotions, expressed in conventional Petrarchan antitheses, contained in the following poem, a *strambotto* that is impossible to date:

I hope and hoping increases my pain; I weep and weeping
nourishes my weary heart; I laugh and my laughter remains external;
I burn and my passion remains within; I fear what I see and feel.
Everything gives me new suffering: thus hoping, I weep,
laugh, and burn—and I fear what I hear and see.⁷²

⁶⁹See especially the work of Chiappelli on Machiavelli's writings from 1498 to 1501, *Nuovi Studi*, and his conclusions, pp. 167–168.

⁷⁰April 16, 1513 (G¹, p. 243; Gpb, p. 106; AG.II, p. 902). The last line is heightened emotionally, whether intentionally or because he is citing from memory, by his substitution of *sfogare* ("to let go") for Petrarch's *celare* ("to conceal"); see *Rime*, 102, vv. 12–14.

⁷¹*Life*, p. 229. Cf. Ridolfi's own words: "Looking about him, he was overcome by the desperate state of the good and the immanence of evil, and his spirit rebelled. Then he either gave expression to his feelings in those bitter maxims or in laughter. He hid behind his laughter; he laughed at his own emotion, he laughed because he had looked for and believed in the noble and the good, he laughed at himself for not laughing before" (p. 13).

⁷²G³, p. 357; Tusiani, p. 39. For more on Machiavelli's smile, see the section from the chapter "The Portrait of the Artist" in Peter E. Bondinella, *Machiavelli and the Art of Renaissance History* (Wayne State University Press; Detroit, 1973), pp. 133–137.

Had Machiavelli known what his fortune would become in the hands of posterity, he might have had even more justification for an ironic smile. From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, with the exception of Bacon, Harrington, Spinoza, and Rousseau, few read him for his “entering upon a new path as yet untrodden by anyone else.”⁷³ For them he was the “murderous Machiavel,” true to the Italian root of his name: *machia* means “cunning” or “astute” and it was a friendly nickname for him among his cronies in Florence and at the inn across from his country estate. The eighteenth-century inscription on his monument in Santa Croce marks a turning point in the history of “Machiavellianism”; not until the twentieth century have scholars helped us to become aware of its validity: *tanto nomini nullum par elogium*—“to so great a name no praise (epitaph) is equal.”

2

MACHIAVELLI'S USES OF THE PAST: ANCIENT HISTORY

How to build and preserve a base for power is one of the main themes in *The Prince*; thus it is not surprising that Machiavelli's interest in ancient history turns especially to crucial points during the rise and fall of political dominions. He draws upon his “constant reading of classical authors” at strategic moments in his argument, putting historical examples into a focus that is always not only intense but intentioned. Sometimes he will concentrate on individual careers—leaders who created an empire, tyrants who wielded great power. Sometimes, however, even though the individual focus is restricted, a synthesis of the allusions produces a much longer view of the situation. For example, there are only scattered references to the history of ancient Greece in *The Prince*. But listening to them as if they were a leitmotiv, one realizes that they contribute greatly to the total orchestration: they state the theme of how and why Greece became a Roman province.

The history of the Persian Empire is no more than hinted at in *The Prince*. That Cyrus the Great (559–529 B.C.) carved out his power first

⁷³ *Discourses*, I, Proem (B, p. 123; ML, p. 103; W.I., p. 205; Pen., p. 97; AG.I, p. 190). The “boast” is a standard topos used by Horace, Dante, Boccaccio, and Ariosto, among others; see Ernst R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, Bollingen Series: 36, tr. Willard R. Trask (New York: Pantheon, 1953), pp. 85–86.

through cooperating with the Medes and then through exercising his own *virtù* is basic to Machiavelli's discussion in Chapter 6. Furthermore, the administrative reorganization introduced later by Darius I (521–486 B.C.) was a model for any prince to follow: he centralized the empire by revising its divisions, previously based on the boundaries of the conquered nations, into twenty efficient units called satrapies. A satrap was a provincial governor with almost absolute power, except that any plans for consolidating his own power were checked by his having immediately below him men in charge of domestic and military policy who were responsible directly and solely to the king. The system was so effective that Alexander the Great retained it after his conquest of the Persian Empire and of its king, Darius III.

Machiavelli's interest in Alexander III of Macedon ("the Great"; 356–323 B.C.) is governed by his concern for what happens to a power after a mighty general and leader dies. Alexander's father, Philip II (359–336 B.C.), was the first Macedonian king to build a viable power structure for the kingdom by his conquest of the Athenians and the Thebans at the Battle of Chaeronea (338) and by his subsequent centralization of power. Upon ascending to the throne Alexander immediately invaded Asia in pursuit of his father's policies (and his own inheritance). He crossed the Hellespont in 334, defeated Darius III at the Battle of Gaugamela in 331, reached India in 327, and penetrated to the Indus River in 324. Upon his death his enormous territory was partitioned among his generals, known as the diadochi ("successors"), chief among whom were Antigonus I and his son Demetrius Poliorcetes, Antipater and his son Cassander, Craterus, Eumenes, Lysimachus, Perdikkas, Ptolemy I, and Seleucus I. The period known as the Age of the Diadochi is thought of as running either from 323 to 301 (the Battle of Ipsus, terminating the attempt of Antigonus I to regather Alexander's empire under his own aegis) or else from 323 to 281 (the Battle of Corupedium, with Seleucus's victory over Lysimachus and the stabilization of the Hellenistic world's political boundaries).

Individual careers, like those of the tactician Epaminondas, Agathocles, Hiero, Pyrrhus, Philopoemen, and Nabis, are also important for Machiavelli in establishing points of contact with an audience that was far more familiar with their lives than we are. Agathocles and Hiero are treated at length, even though they had divergent notions about how to rule Syracuse, the Greek settlement in Sicily. But Syracuse offered a suggestive parallel with Florence: a strong state surrounded by yet

stronger and more aggressive ones (Rome and Carthage). Philopoemen is used almost symbolically to epitomize the virtues of a reflective, disciplined military strategist. Nabis, Pyrrhus, and Epaminondas are fleetingly cited as a kind of shorthand, to warn princes about the need for three things: protection against attacks from all levels of society; tight, direct control of areas under their sway; and innovative tactical maneuvers.

It is curious that Machiavelli never provides any profound analysis of the ramifications of the Greek city-states' proclivity for banding together into confederacies or leagues. Yet it is typical of the quality of his mind that he would allude to the situation in a series of scattered references to the functions and policies of the Aetolian League, the Achaean League, the Macedonian Wars, and, finally, Rome's annexation of Macedonia. These federations offered a model for unifying areas of land greater than the city-state—a model contemporary Italy desperately needed.

The Aetolian League was a military alliance of federated states in western Greece early in the third century B.C. instituted to liberate its members from Macedonian control. It joined the Romans in 211 B.C. and fought with them against the Achaean League, formed by other Greek states and allied with Macedonia, and also against Philip V of Macedon during the First Macedonian War (215–205), when Philip attempted to aid Hannibal and Carthage in their campaign against Rome (Second Punic War). The Second Macedonian War ran from 200 to 196 B.C. The Romans defeated Philip V of Macedon at the Battle of Cynoscephalae (197); thus Philip had to give up the cities in Greece he had won during the First Macedonian War. Dissatisfied with the current territorial and financial situation, the Aetolians declared war on Rome and invited Antiochus III of Syria to help them. The Romans were now allied with Philip and the Achaean League, a powerful, defensive federation of twelve towns in the northern Peloponnesus. They defeated Antiochus twice: at Thermopylae (191) and at Magnesia (190). Because Philip V of Macedon sided with Hannibal in the Second Punic War, Rome began to intervene in Greek politics. Their general Titus Quinctius Flaminius, the victor at Cynoscephalae, announced the freedom of Greece at the Isthmian Games in 196 B.C., but Roman interference continued throughout the four Macedonian Wars (215–146). In 146 Corinth was destroyed by Roman generals who confiscated her art treasures, sold the population into slavery, and—at the order of the

Roman Senate—razed the city to the ground. (Chalcis, the main city of Euboea, and Thebes as well, were also badly destroyed.) Thenceforward Greece was in effect a Roman province.⁷⁴

The question of federated states is, of course, related to one of the fundamental problems facing the type of ruler to whom Machiavelli directed *The Prince*. Once a new territory is incorporated into his power, the prince will have to solve the question of how to govern the area, especially since it is accustomed to its own civic life and institutions. In Chapter 5 of *The Prince* Machiavelli cites the contrasting examples of Greece and Rome. Although modern accounts of the Greek federations known as *symmachia* (“fellowship in fighting”) and *sympoliteia* (“fellowship in citizenship” or “in civic life”) might fault Machiavelli for too polarized a distinction, he clearly prefers the Roman system. As he sees it, Rome made a series of alliances with other states in which she retained the rights of both sovereignty and initiative in military operations.⁷⁵ The Romans also made sure that when they made “associates” (Machiavelli uses the word *compagni*) of these people, the capital city and place of central authority was not a local city. This entire procedure is also intimately linked to the Roman strategy (outlined in *The Discourses*, II, 3) of encouraging conquered communities to come into the empire—even the city of Rome—and settle. With a large population, Rome had a greater source of manpower for her army—and men rapidly developing a vested interest in the peaceful workings of their “new society.”

It is precisely this kind of political acumen that made Rome an excellent example for Machiavelli to impress upon his readers. To be sure, he is not unique in doing so, except perhaps in the distinctness of his emphasis. Throughout his writings, and especially in *The Art of War*, he talks about “my Romans.” What made Rome most exemplary was her ability, as ruler of the world, to create an interdependence between individuals and institutions. Machiavelli was one of the first to emphasize the contention that

the individual Roman had been able to develop and to use his talents by means of the institutions, but the institutions had also restrained him and kept him within the bounds necessary for the well-being of the whole society.⁷⁶

⁷⁴See p. 36 below.

⁷⁵In addition to Chapter 5, *Discourses*, II, 4 and I, 16 are relevant.

⁷⁶Felix Gilbert, *M and C*, p. 182.

Yet it is also possible to detect varying degrees of emphasis on this theme within Machiavelli's works. Some commentators distinguish sharply between the Romans of *The Prince*, who generally represent the realities of political action and the complexities of political infighting, and the Romans of *The Discourses*, who generally represent a constant model of political perfection worthy of imitation for all time.⁷⁷

The Prince begins, "All states and all dominions that have had or now have authority over men have been and now are either republics or principedoms." At various points Machiavelli describes Rome as a "mixed state" (*stato misto*) and as a "perfect republic." For him another reason why Rome attained her political acme was because she correctly understood the mechanics of the cyclical devolution of the state. The three acceptable forms of government (by a prince, the aristocrats, or the people) and the degenerate forms of these three (the tyrant, an oligarchy, or the mob) continue inevitably to devolve unless the state takes measures to halt the cycle.⁷⁸ What is generally referred to as "Republican Rome," from around 500 B.C. through the changes in the first century B.C., was never a democratic republic as we usually think of it today. It began as an aristocracy, and ended in a kind of oligarchy in the hands of the senate. But what made it "perfect" for Machiavelli was the checks and balances worked out between the consuls, the senators, and the tribunes of the people. Through all the turmoil of the time, some sense of stability persisted for several centuries.

Within this system the senate was central. Machiavelli knew this, and also knew that it was the senate that initiated Rome's desire to rule and colonize the world. Nor was he unaware that the magnitude of problems involved in administering that dominion was what ultimately destroyed the senate itself. Although in *The Prince* he has great praise for the Roman system of establishing colonial settlements, he also refers to rebellions against colonial authority (end of Chapter 4, beginning of Chapter 5). By far the most important event in establishing the commercial hegemony of Rome in the ancient world was her ultimate victory over Carthage in the protracted Punic Wars that lasted from 264 to 146 B.C. In *The Prince* Machiavelli refers mostly to the events during the Second Punic War (218–201), and specifically to the opposing policies

⁷⁷Sasso, *Pensiero*, pp. 245–246.

⁷⁸Based on *Discourses*, 1, 2; see note to Chapter 1, line 3.

of Fabius Maximus Cunctator (“the Delayer”) and Scipio Africanus against Hannibal during his daring invasion of the Italian peninsula. Actually, as Machiavelli admits, both strategies were decisive in the eventual Roman victory: the defensive, delaying tactics of Fabius in Italy but also Scipio’s insistence on invading North Africa and carrying the war to Carthaginian territory. He alludes to two other factors, equally important in Rome’s victory. First, her wise colonial policy retained the loyalty of most of her Italian allies—even the Gauls refused to join forces with Hannibal before he crossed the Alps. Second, the senate was a bastion of cool wisdom throughout this chaotic period.⁷⁹ At the end of the Third Punic War in 146, Rome controlled Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, and most of Spain. As we have seen above, this was also the year that Rome cemented her control of Greece. Rome’s conquest of the Mediterranean was complete by the end of the second century.

The most extended discussion of Rome in *The Prince* occurs in the long chapter “How to Avoid Contempt and Hatred” (Chapter 19). But that involves imperial Rome, and the causes for the decline of the empire. The context is determined by the threat that conspiracies represent to a prince. A consistent thread throughout *The Prince* is the ruler’s need to keep the largest possible segment of his people happy; if the largest segment is not necessarily the most powerful, then he must still determine who they are and keep a watchful eye on them. But the example of imperial Rome differs from republican Rome, a period much closer to Machiavelli’s own in terms of governmental characteristics. Julius Caesar’s appeal to the populace was the climax of a disruptive period in the first century B.C. when the power of the people, and their desire to aggrandize that power, forced a radical change in Roman government. From his assassination in 44 B.C. through the subsequent anarchy to the Battle of Actium in 31 B.C., the locus of power shifted from one man to another. The senate was no longer in control and Octavian, Caesar’s nephew and heir, emerged victorious, was given the title of Augustus by the Senate in 27 B.C., and was made a tribune for life by the people: in effect, then, he was the first Roman emperor. In Book I of *The Art of War*,⁸⁰ Machiavelli speaks of the advantages of a citizen army over a professional one; his spokesman, Fabrizio Colonna, argues that the creation of the Praetorians under Augustus and

⁷⁹See notes to Chapter 17, lines 76–80, 81–86, 105–108, 109–112.

⁸⁰*Guerra*, p. 340 (LLA, pp. 20–21; AG.II, p. 578).

Tiberius led to the downfall of the Roman Empire. Augustus enlarged the *cohors praetoria*, originally a bodyguard for generals during the republican period, in 27 B.C. Motivated by a desire to keep the people unarmed so as to control them better, both emperors helped to consolidate a strong, divisive, elitist group of professional soldiers that, in time, was able to give and withdraw the title of emperor at will. Thus the largest factions that developed under the emperors were the army and the people—with the army the stronger. An alliance with the strongest group, consequently, was a military alliance. In Chapter 19 Machiavelli designs his coverage of what is sometimes known as the Age of the Praetorians to demonstrate the potential dangers of such a policy. But, with a proper balance governing the interdependence of the two factions, Machiavelli is able to make his “civil principedom” become one with its roots as much in the army as in the citizenry. The final great example of Rome, then, is both the strength and the weakness of the link between civic *virtù* and military *virtù*.⁸¹ To discover why this example is particularly germane to Machiavelli’s audience, we must turn to the history of Renaissance Italy.

3

MACHIAVELLI’S USES OF THE PAST: CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

What Machiavelli has “learned from wide experience of recent events” is indeed a sad lesson. Because he is rather flexible in referring to what he calls “the recent past,” we can best begin with the consolidation of power in the major states of fifteenth-century Italy: Naples, the “cockpit” of the Italian invasions; Milan; Venice; the papacy; and Florence. It should be pointed out, however, that the following discussion abbreviates many details and selects only those necessary to an understanding of the context in which Machiavelli wrote *The Prince*—especially the background for some of the more particular references in the textual notes. *The Prince* is not an historical essay, but our judgment of its harsh political verdicts must be somewhat mitigated by realizing the conditions that led Machiavelli to believe that a strong governing

⁸¹See pp. 56–57 below for more on this important topic. The actual details of the way in which the Praetorians eroded imperial power are related in the notes to Chapter 19.

hand was required to reverse the ravages of history.

The Kingdom of Naples set a pattern that unfortunately was imitated all too frequently by other Italian powers: when faced with a dynastic dilemma, one invites a foreign power in to help settle the matter. The Angevin dynasty had once laid claim to the Kingdom of Naples—the southern part of the Italian peninsula, south of the Papal States—and to Sicily; because the members of the dynasty were from the House of Anjou, as the French kings were (either directly or through relatives), the French military might was always a potential source of strength for local Neapolitan wranglings. Moreover, the pope claimed suzerainty over Naples; thus, the French were frequently joined by papal forces. When Queen Joanna II came to the throne in 1414, the kingdom was protected by one of the strongest mercenaries, the famous *condottiere* Muzio Attendolo Sforza. Squabbles broke out when Joanna married James, Count of La Marche, and when the Neapolitans wanted to make Muzio their king. In 1420 her authority was threatened—on the one hand by the Angevin claimant to her throne and on the other by Muzio, who tried to intimidate her so that he could obtain power. She was obliged to bring in Alfonso V, then king of Aragon and Sicily, for protection. She adopted him as her heir in 1421, but she also inadvisedly named a few other men as her heirs. Consequently, the period until her death in 1435 was scarred by battles between the Angevin claimant, René of Anjou, backed by Pope Martin V, and Alfonso, backed by Filippo Maria Visconti. Even after Joanna's death, it took Alfonso seven years to consolidate his authority; Pope Eugenius IV recognized him as King of Naples and Sicily only in 1442.⁸² Alfonso the Magnanimous, as he came to be known (and probably because magnanimity was the only choice he had), and his natural son Ferdinand I, or Ferrante, successively ruled over their tempestuous kingdom until 1494; Alfonso died in 1458. Although they reorganized a great many political institutions and enlarged Neapolitan commerce—with royal prerogatives exercising monopolistic control—Alfonso and Ferrante imposed a severe tax burden on the barons and the people. Therefore the barons were constantly attempting to bring back the Angevins, and Pope Innocent VIII was generally on their side. But Ferrante was aided by two former advocates of France: Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan, who had previously been an Angevin supporter, and Cosimo de' Medici, who had also

⁸²Machiavelli discusses some of these dynasties in *History* I, 38 (G², pp. 132–134; Htb, p. 43–44; AG.III, pp. 1076–1078) and *War* I (*Guerra*, p. 336; LLA, p. 16; AG.II, pp. 574–575).

come to Ferrante's side, and was equally anxious to minimize French interference in Italian affairs. From 1494 to 1501 first Alfonso II, then Ferdinand II (Ferrantino), and finally Frederick ruled Naples, but they were unable to stave off the French and Spanish forces that overran the kingdom. The Valois kings of France pressed a complicated genealogical claim to Naples through the Angevins; so did the Spanish king, Ferdinand the Catholic, capitalizing on the confused situation of his relatives in Naples.

The history of Naples, however, was also interwoven with that of Milan. Controlled during the fourteenth century by the Visconti family, Milan developed into a strong, centralized, efficient state. The last Visconti, Filippo Maria, died in 1447. Some Milanese wanted a republican form of government and others wanted a prince. The latter faction favored two candidates: Francesco Sforza, Filippo's son-in-law, and the King of Naples, Alfonso the Magnanimous, who was alleged to have been named to succeed Filippo as the Duke of Milan. Sforza, the son of Muzio Attendolo Sforza, fought off the efforts of those who wanted a republic, but they in turn had Venetian support. In September of 1448 Sforza won a significant battle at Caravaggio. On October 18, 1448, however, he agreed to join with Venice against Milan.⁸³ This agreement, made at Rivoltella near Peschiera, returned to Venice the cities Sforza had captured. Since he now really sought to make Milan his, Venice promised military and financial support. The Milanese, with overt but unreliable Venetian backing, fought Sforza until they were forced to capitulate and make him their prince on February 26, 1450.⁸⁴

The most significant development of the accord between Venice and Francesco Sforza was the subsequent Peace of Lodi (1454), to which most of the states in Italy eventually agreed. Thus, despite local flare-ups, the Italian peninsula enjoyed a relatively peaceful forty years, primarily because the alignments between the papacy and the four major Italian powers were so well adjusted that the expansionistic projects of any one of them were expeditiously checked by the others.

Yet Venice loomed as a major threat to Italian tranquillity. Venice rarely appears in too favorable a light in Machiavelli's writings; she was

⁸³As Machiavelli puts it, Sforza was "very much disposed to peace since he wanted the victory he had at Caravaggio to be his and not that of the Milanese" (*History*, VI, 19 [G², p. 416; Htb, p. 280; AG.III, p. 1307]).

⁸⁴See *History* VI, 13–24 (G², pp. 405–426; Htb, pp. 272–289; AG.III, pp. 1299–1316).

nevertheless a republic with international as well as Italian interests. To Machiavelli her faults were twofold: her imperialistic overextension from a naval empire to a land empire, with the concomitant necessity to employ mercenaries; and her refusal to modify her constitution to ease the strains of expansion adequately and to involve the people sufficiently.⁸⁵ The diminution of Venetian authority in the Levant as a result of the increased power of the Turks occasioned Venice's expansion into Italy. She went after and conquered Treviso (1339), Vicenza (1404), Padua and Verona (1405), and Bergamo and Brescia (1428). Although Commynes notes that the people of Venice had little power (*Memoirs*, VII, 18), the city actually treated her conquered towns fairly well and arranged a system of protection for all classes, from high to low. Consequently Venice emerged from a relatively isolated position with respect to Italian affairs and became a force with which the other Italian states were obliged to contend.

Early in 1482 Venice sought to annex Ferrara; she was supported by Francesco della Rovere, who reigned as Pope Sixtus IV from 1471 to 1484 and was the uncle of the future pope Julius II—nephew, like uncle, resolute about augmenting the temporal power of the church, as well as that of their own family. Venice proceeded well in her plans. So well, indeed, that by the end of 1482 Sixtus seceded from his alliance and, to stem the Venetian tide, formed the Lega Santissima with King Ferdinand I of Naples, Ludovico "Il Moro" Sforza, Duke of Milan, and Lorenzo the Magnificent of Florence. The war ended with the Peace of Bagnolo in August of 1484. Venice was allowed to retain the city of Rovigo and the land in the Polesine, but otherwise all captured territory reverted to its original situation. The historical importance of the war was the added stimulus it gave the major powers to realize precisely where their best interests lay. Several states urged Venice to halt her attack: Florence added her voice to that of Naples and Milan, two states that felt particularly threatened by the Venetian suggestion to the French that they make good their dynastic claims in Italy (the claim of Charles VIII, through the Angevins, to Naples and that of the Duke of Orléans to Milan). The Venetian success also alarmed the pope. Consequently, the major powers realigned in order to restore the balance of power. Not everyone was particularly content with the Peace of Bagnolo, but the efficacy of this balance was generally recognized. Perhaps no one saw more clearly the need to preserve the balance of power than did

⁸⁵See Chapter 12, lines 115ff., and notes; also *D.*, I, 6.

Lorenzo de' Medici.⁸⁶ For Machiavelli, however, any power that called upon foreign help—the papacy being the major offender—was guilty of destroying that balance.

With the election of Martin V as pope in 1417, the Great Schism of the church ended. The papacy immediately set about consolidating its power on two fronts. First, Martin attempted to stamp out any vestiges of the conciliar theory which sought to subject the pope to the ultimate authority of a general church council. Second, he tried to restore his authority over the Papal States—each city ruled by a local leader who theoretically swore allegiance to the pope, but who actually ruled fairly independently over their own dominions. The grand design of papal policy, which continued throughout Machiavelli's lifetime, was directed at bringing all Italy under its control. No pope dreamed of such power more ardently than Roderigo Borgia, Pope Alexander VI; no pope came closer to realizing that dream than Pope Julius II. In *The Prince* Machiavelli deals primarily with the temporal power the papacy had acquired and strove to extend. His anticlerical stance is obvious: *The Discourses*, II, 2, makes a particularly interesting statement about Christianity having emasculated the active desire for freedom which Machiavelli felt the religion of ancient Rome nurtured. His primary objection to the church, however, was less theological than political. In *The Discourses*, I, 12, he makes the point that the church has always called in a foreigner whenever an indigenous power seemed too strong: Charlemagne against the Lombards (773–774), the French against the Venetians (1509), and the Swiss against the French (1512). In fact the temporal power of the papacy is usually dated from the Donation of Pepin (756) when Charlemagne's father declared the lands, originally part of the Eastern Empire, to be his—but gave the pope honorary primacy in them. By driving out the Lombards, Charlemagne in effect confirmed this "donation." The defeat of the Lombard Kingdom meant the end of the only really effective attempt to attain Italian national unity before the Risorgimento. But there were factors inherent in the papacy that militated against its consolidation of temporal power: since it was an elective office, it had no army and no continuity of policy. Hence it had been powerless to halt actions toward independence carried out by

⁸⁶The term "balance of power" first found its way into descriptions of the Italian situation in a history of Charles VIII's invasion of Italy, *De bello Italico*, written early in the sixteenth century by Bernardo Rucellai, the grandfather of the Cosimo Rucellai whose "gardens" and influence figured so importantly in Machiavelli's life; see pp. 25–26 above. For Guicciardini's use, based on Rucellai's work, see Appendix B, 11, 1; see also E. W. Nelson, "Origins," p. 129.

individual lords and strong cities, despite the nominal suzerainty they owed the papacy. Just as the major Italian cities strengthened their powers during the fifteenth century, so did the popes.

Because Florence was a strong, economically sound state bordering on the very lands over which the papacy sought to extend its control, it soon became a particular annoyance to the nepotistic and expansionistic Sixtus IV. His reign began in 1471 and even before he launched his attack on Ferrara, he started to complicate his dealings with Florence. His nephew, Girolamo Riario of Forlì, married Caterina Sforza, the natural daughter of Galeazzo Maria Sforza, then Duke of Milan. Sixtus gave the couple the town of Imola in an effort to strengthen his position in the Papal States by having Imola ruled by a loyal relative; but the money to finance its purchase actually came from the Pazzi family in Florence, who, knowing Lorenzo de' Medici also wanted to augment his realm by annexing the town, involved themselves in the plan as part of their long-range aim to harass Lorenzo. In 1474, still trying to bring more independent towns under his control, the pope attacked Città di Castello, ruled by Niccolò Vitelli, who was supported by Lorenzo. Sixtus backed off, but strengthened his alliance with Ferdinand I of Naples while Florence did the same with Milan and Venice. In 1478 the Pazzi family, actively abetted by Girolamo Riario and covertly by Ferdinand I, conspired to kill Lorenzo and his brother Giuliano. They succeeded in murdering the latter, but Lorenzo was merely wounded. The pope was livid at the failure of the second most powerful family in Florence to overthrow the Medici; with Ferdinand of Naples as his ally, he went to war against Florence. Neither side fought energetically, and in 1480 Lorenzo boldly went to Naples and arranged a treaty. But the threat of a papal attack goaded Lorenzo into centralizing his control over Florence. In 1480 he confirmed the oligarchical nature of the Medici control, even though the government was nominally republican, by convoking a parliament which, in turn, established a *balià*—a reform committee with extraordinary powers. The latter formed a new Council of Seventy, eventually a self-perpetuating body which delegated its most powerful executive decisions to permanent working committees composed of men from the Council: The Eight of Consultation (*Otto di Practica*) were responsible for military and foreign affairs; The Twelve *Procuratori*, for commercial and financial matters. The Council of Seventy elected the Signoria, which in turn was obliged to seek the Council's approval to introduce major

legislation. Thus, to placate the republican spirit of the people, Lorenzo retained the regular power structure and the time-honored institutions. Instead, he merely superimposed upon them a group he could control from his seat in the Council and his representatives in the two committees. The centralization of Medici power, therefore, meant a more consolidated state in the heart of Italy.

If the concentration of Florentine power annoyed the papacy, there was one Florentine citizen who irritated Rome even more: Girolamo Savonarola, the Dominican priest and religious reformer, who lived from 1452 to 1498. Savonarola was particularly popular in Florence because of his fiery, eloquent preaching against every sort of human laxity and ecclesiastical excess; even his contemporaries, since they believed he predicted the death of Pope Innocent VIII in 1492 and the invasion of Italy by Charles VIII in 1494, considered him to be a prophet. He swiftly built upon his reputation. He became the prior of San Marco, the Dominican house in Florence, in 1491, and was thought by most people to be the spiritual leader of Florence once the Medici were ousted in 1494. His conviction that the Medici regime fostered corruption also led to his attaining political influence. In a sermon he delivered shortly after the expulsion of the Medici, he recommended a revision in the Florentine constitution: that, following the Venetian practice, Florence adopt a Great Council.⁸⁷ The city instituted the reform and, for Florentine republicanism, the council came to be regarded as the symbol of Florentine freedom. Outraged at what he considered the profligacy of Pope Alexander VI and his court, Savonarola urged Florence to join forces with Charles VIII of France. Alexander VI excommunicated him in 1496; he countered by denying Alexander's claim to be pope. Florence was in turmoil and when the pope promised an interdict, the government sought to stop Savonarola's preaching and finally arrested him. He was alleged to have confessed, under torture, to being a false prophet. On May 23, 1498, he was hanged and burned at the stake in the Piazza della Signoria.

With Savonarola and Charles VIII, this brief review of the major Italian powers in fifteenth-century Italy comes into focus. Ensclosed in San Marco, Savonarola was able to watch the crucial events of 1492

⁸⁷Commenting on Savonarola's political influence at this time, Guicciardini observes, "It seemed that everything recommended by him had greater than human power" (*Florence*, XII [P., p. 111; Domandi², p. 106]). For more on Savonarola's place in Florentine politics, see Rubenstein, "Politics and Constitution."

with some degree of equanimity. The discovery of America had little effect, indeed, on the Italian situation, but 1492 was also the year in which Lorenzo de' Medici died and Roderigo Borgia became Pope Alexander VI upon the death of Innocent VIII. Furthermore, with the imminent threat of a French invasion, the balance of power was endangered. Obviously Naples was the crux of the matter, but curiously it was Milan which quickened Charles VIII's resolve to invade Italy. His head was turned by romantic and chivalric thoughts of using Naples as a base for a crusade to rid the Mediterranean of the Turk. But he was also cognizant that by proclaiming such a policy he could make more of Christendom amenable to his real aim—Naples itself. He was beset by constant pressure from Neapolitan representatives at his court to assert his tenuous claim to Naples, which passed to his ruling house of Valois upon the death of the last Angevin in 1481. Ludovico Sforza, meanwhile, was regent in Milan for his nephew Gian Galeazzo Sforza, who was married to Isabella of Aragon, and illegally exercising power that rightfully belonged to Gian Galeazzo. His rule did not go unchallenged. Isabella appealed to her father, Alfonso—then Duke of Calabria, but soon to rule Naples as Alfonso II—and to her grandfather, Ferdinand I, who was still King of Naples in 1492, to declare war on Milan. To add to the pressure, Alexander VI outfoxed and outbribed Giuliano della Rovere for the papacy; Giuliano soon turned up in Charles's court urging an invasion. The major Italian powers realized that the time had come for them to determine with whom to cast their lot. Piero de' Medici, rather blind to the political realities, pigheadedly remained with Naples. Venice, aware that none of her immediate mainland interests were involved, stayed neutral. Alexander VI knew he could neither withstand France nor guard his own power structure against Neapolitan encroachments. He reluctantly chose to support the nearer evil, Naples. Finally, aware that he had usurped the throne from two legitimate heirs and that Naples would lose no opportunity to attack him, Ludovico Sforza—with his perspicacious intuition for intrigue—openly came out in favor of the French. For Charles this decision tipped the scale in favor of a campaign against Naples. Thus, in September of 1494, he marched into Italy with an eagerness which Sforza had not anticipated. For Guicciardini, Ludovico's action was tantamount to an invitation to a French invasion of Italy.

Charles VIII's campaign was a pushover—Machiavelli alludes to the proverbial phrase describing Charles as able "to conquer Italy with

chalk."⁸⁸ Charles marched south through Pavia, Florence, and Rome and entered Naples on February 22, 1495. The two most significant results of this campaign for Florence, and for Machiavelli, were Charles's capture of Pisa and his decision to make it an independent state, and his insistence that Piero de' Medici, driven from Florence by her citizens' ire at his reckless behavior with the French, remain in exile. Since the French were safely in Naples by February of 1495 and Charles VIII's cousin, Louis, Duke of Orléans—the future King Louis XII—had defiantly assumed the title of Duke of Milan, Ludovico Sforza feared for his dukedom, reversed his loyalties, and urged the formation of the League of Venice; it was arranged in March and April of 1495. The signatories were Ludovico for Milan; Venice; Ferdinand V, "the Catholic," for Spain; Maximilian I, for the Holy Roman Empire; and Pope Alexander VI. Alarmed at the potential power lined up against him, Charles headed for France. The battle of Fornovo on July 6, 1495—a bloody, indecisive engagement in which both sides claimed victory—was his last encounter on Italian soil; he withdrew his bedraggled troops to France in October of 1495.

The decision of Ferdinand V to enter the League of Venice, motivated primarily by his desire to protect his interests in Sicily and Sardinia and secondarily to aid his Neapolitan relatives, had important ramifications: now there was a rival to France's desire to impose external control on Italy. For our purposes it is significant that Ferdinand's career was a constant source of fascination for Machiavelli, especially as an example of "how a prince should act to obtain prestige" (Chapter 21). Within five years after Ferdinand's marriage to Isabella I of Castile, the couple ruled over a united Spain—except for the northern region of Navarre and Granada. The Castilians were anxious to preserve their independence and viewed his marriage to Isabella with alarm. Therefore Ferdinand began his attack on the Moorish Kingdom of Granada, in part to distract the Castilians. He succeeded in defeating them in 1492, the same year in which the king and queen expelled from Spain any Jew who did not become a convert to Catholicism. Ferdinand turned against the Moslems as well. They were conventionally baptized into Christianity against their will once they reached their fourteenth birthday; they were expelled from the Kingdom of Granada, where they had organized a rebellion in 1501 and 1502, more on Queen Isabella's orders than on Ferdinand's. Machiavelli also refers in Chapter 21 to Ferdinand's subse-

⁸⁸See Chapter 12, line 43, and notes to lines 39–44.

quent attacks on the North African coast, which gained for him the area from Oran to Tripoli, and on France when he crossed the Pyrenees in his successful attempt to unify Spain by annexing the Kingdom of Navarre.

But the situation came to a head when Ferdinand began to turn his attention to winning a foothold in Italy in 1500. To be sure, he realized that he was taking on Louis XII of France. Louis, who had succeeded his cousin Charles VIII when the latter died in 1498, began to assert an interest in Italian affairs because he claimed the Duchy of Milan through his distant connections with the Visconti, who had ruled Milan before the Sforzas. When the last Visconti, Filippo Maria, died in 1447 he left no male heirs. His sister Valentia Visconti married Louis, Duke of Orléans—Louis XII's grandfather. The marriage contract, sanctioned by Pope Nicholas V, specified that she was to succeed her father should there be no male heirs. Under the command of Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, whom Guicciardini describes as a man with a "turbulent nature and an arrogant, restless spirit,"⁸⁹ the French easily drove Ludovico Sforza out of Milan and conquered the city in September of 1499. But what sparked the campaign against Milan was the Venetian invitation, through a treaty signed in February and made public in April of 1499, for assistance to protect her waning mainland influence, especially to strengthen her hand in Lombardy against the threat of Ludovico. Venice agreed to support Louis's claim to Milan in return for his surrendering the Ghiara d'Adda territory, as well as Cremona, a major city in central Lombardy situated in the territory known as the Ghiara d'Adda, between the Mincio and Adda Rivers. In sum, Louis ceded about a third the value of the Duchy of Milan.

Yet Naples still remained the primary objective for both Louis XII and Ferdinand the Catholic. On November 11, 1500, they signed the Treaty of Granada. This guaranteed the northern sector of the Kingdom of Naples and the title "King of Naples and Jerusalem" to Louis; and to Ferdinand, the southern part of the Kingdom of Naples and the title "Duke of Apulia and Calabria." The treaty was not made public until the following June when the two kings initiated their campaign against Naples, then ruled by Frederick of Aragon. But the two kings soon quarreled over occupying the Capitanata and the Basilicata. After spending the winter of 1502–1503 besieged at Barletta, the great Spanish general Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba carried the day at the

⁸⁹*Italy*, IV, 13 (Pan., I, 385).

battles of Cerignola (1503), Garigliano (1503), and Gaeta (1504). The final defeat of the French led to Ferdinand the Catholic becoming King of Naples through the Treaty of Blois, October 12, 1505.

But Louis XII had also been conducting his campaign against Naples on a second front, namely through negotiations with Pope Alexander VI, who—like the della Rovere pope, Sixtus IV—tried to expand both the temporal power of the church and that of his large family, specifically Cesare Borgia.⁹⁰ The Romagna was the center of both theaters of operation. Cesare, who was made cardinal of Valencia in 1493 at the age of eighteen, decided in 1498 to resign and take up a more political career. Consequently, his father sent him to the court of France. As a result of a diplomatic *quid pro quo*, Louis XII made him “Duke Valentino” of Valence (a duchy in southeastern France), and Cesare delivered the papal bull that annulled Louis’s first marriage to Jeanne of France, daughter of Louis XI, so that Louis XII could marry the widow of his cousin Charles VIII, Anne of Brittany. Another aspect of the deal was the creation of a cardinalship for Louis’s trusted adviser and former archbishop of Rouen, Georges d’ Amboise, who subsequently became a stalwart advocate of a Neapolitan campaign.

Cesare Borgia is a key figure in *The Prince*, but he is not, I believe, its “hero.” Regardless of whether or not he is the “redeemer” Machiavelli alludes to in the last chapter, a good case could be made for considering him as a *concept*⁹¹ in the work. Here I prefer to deal fairly minutely with Cesare’s career; Machiavelli’s comments in Chapter 7 are useful points of departure. Pope Alexander VI was the motive force behind Cesare’s rise to power, but he knew that the Duke of Milan, Ludovico Sforza, and Venice would block any extension of papal power in the Romagna. Ludovico had his own interests to protect in the Romagna: his niece Caterina Sforza Riario was ruler of Imola and Forlì, while a distant cousin, Giovanni Sforza, ruled Pesaro. The Venetian interest in the Romagna was a by-product of the energies of Florence being almost exclusively devoted to her war with Pisa because Charles VIII had reneged on his promise to return Pisa to the Florentines. The Venetians moved into several cities in the Romagna: they had their own “superintendent” in Faenza and would have regarded a papal move on Rimini as a threat to their traditional control over Ravenna. Alexander

⁹⁰A third area of endeavor, his treaties and dealings with Florence, has been alluded to earlier.

⁹¹See pp. 74–76 below for the extent to which he is a crucial figure in illustrating Machiavelli’s concept of Fortune and *virtù*.

also knew that the Orsini and Colonna families in Rome would oppose any steps toward papal aggrandizement. Both were powerful and prolific, had their own private mercenaries, and had long been active in Roman politics (usually on opposing sides). Nonetheless, both were dead set against papal power. They could threaten papal authority and expansion because they possessed a great deal of land and many fortresses in and around Rome.⁹² In order to upset this unfavorable balance of power, Alexander was happy to do anything that would bring the French into Italy. He was aware that Venice was negotiating with Louis XII for help against Milan, and did his share by annulling Louis's first marriage—as we have seen. The consolidation of power which resulted from Louis's marrying Anne of Brittany and securing Brittany for the French crown facilitated his project of forming more concrete plans to enter Italy. Once Louis XII entered Milan in October of 1499, Alexander immediately moved into the power vacuum created by this revision of alignments. His instrument was Cesare Borgia.

Cesare began his first campaign in the Romagna; the basis of his attack was that the princes in the Romagna and the Marches were alleged not to have paid their feudal dues. He left Rome on November 9, 1499. He made short work of Imola, and by early January of 1500 had successfully carried through a long siege at Forlì and captured Caterina Sforza.⁹³

Cesare Borgia's second campaign began in September of 1500. He acquired Rimini, with the defeat of Pandolfo Malatesta, on October 10, 1500; then Pesaro, with the defeat of Giovanni Sforza, on October 21, 1500. Cesare surrounded Faenza in November, 1500, but the local infantry was so loyal to their leader, Astorre Manfredi, that they forced Borgia to wait until the spring of 1501 to beseige the town again. It capitulated after a long bombardment; Astorre was sent to the Castel Sant' Angelo, a nefarious Roman prison, and strangled. Thus Cesare's subjugation of the Romagna was virtually complete. In April of 1501 he was created Duke of the Romagna. In the same month he captured the Castel Bolognese, one of Bologna's outlying fortresses. This was a significant event: the powerful Giovanni Bentivoglio, prince of Bologna, agreed to supply men to Cesare in return for a promise not to attack his

⁹²Precisely because of their strength, the pope resented their having eased the entry into Rome of Charles VIII in 1495. He also held Paolo, Francesco, the Duke of Gravina, and Cardinal Gianbattista—all Orsini—responsible for the murder of his favorite son Juan Borgia, Duke of Gandia, in 1497.

⁹³For the simultaneous attacks on the powerful Roman families, see note to Chapter 7, lines 86ff.

city. Furthermore, Bentivoglio insisted that not only Cesare, but also Vitellozzo Vitelli and several members of the Orsini family, be parties to the treaty. This provision prevented them from privately attacking Bologna, but it had the further result of establishing a connection between Bentivoglio and Cesare's military leaders; the ambiguous outcome of this handy clause came to fruition during Cesare's third campaign. Contemporary accounts are silent about what Machiavelli calls the "apathy" of the Orsini troops.⁹⁴ But it is quite clear that the French withdrew the troops they had supplied to Cesare and warned him not to attack Bologna. Medici partisans among his leaders—Vitellozzo and the Orsini—urged him to attack Florence. His father, however, had ordered him to return to Rome by way of Umbria and the Romagna because he feared that were Cesare to pursue his campaign he would antagonize France, whose connections with Florence were strong. Cesare did as his father bade him, but the Florentines still felt highly threatened and worked out an arrangement with him. From July to September of 1501 Cesare was in Naples, since he had agreed to help France in her expedition. His eyes were on Piombino—which surrendered to Vitellozzo and thus forced her prince, Jacopo d'Appiano, to flee to France. The second campaign ended with Cesare's attacks on the islands of Elba, rich in iron mines, and of Pianosa.

Cesare's third campaign ran from the early summer of 1502 through early 1503. Louis XII had a hold on the direction in which Cesare moved—for example, in 1501 he called a halt to any attempt on Florence. But this campaign proved to the French that Borgia's rise to power might interfere with Louis's ultimate objective: Naples. While Vitellozzo Vitelli, Giampaolo Baglioni, and Piero de' Medici persuaded Arezzo to revolt against Florence early in June, Cesare hovered in the outlying territory and claimed to be ignorant of any part of the intrigue—even after Vitellozzo took over the city. But Cesare was close enough to march on Urbino, capture it in one day (June 21, 1502), and cause Guidobaldo da Montefeltro to flee for his life. In April, meanwhile, France had reached a defense agreement with Florence: Florence would pay the French a 40,000-ducat indemnity for three years, and France would supply Florence with 6,000 cavalry upon demand. In July French troops arrived outside Arezzo; by the end of August—thanks to France—Florence possessed Arezzo and most of the towns in the Val di Chiana that she felt were necessary for her security.

⁹⁴Viz., Guicciardini, *Florence*, XXI; *Italy*, V, 4; for Machiavelli's comment, see Chapter 7, line 104.

But in July, after Cesare's troops had conquered the town of Camerino in the Marches, where Giulio Cesare da Varano was deemed to have too strong a hold, Cesare traveled incognito to Milan to parley with Louis XII. There he restrengthened their friendship, recommitted himself to aid Louis against Naples and Spain, and received a promise of aid for the Borgia attack on Bologna. Thus Louis XII was rather dexterously double-dealing with the affairs in the Romagna and Tuscany to clear the path for his expedition against Naples. His route down the western coast of Italy, with Florentine acquiescence, was secure; hence Bologna, even though she had previously enjoyed French protection, was expendable. And it was of no small moment that Louis was casting his lot with the strongest man in Italy.

Louis's promise of aid for the Bologna attack rapidly became known and inspired a conspiracy among Cesare's *condottieri*. The Vitelli and Baglioni regarded Giovanni Bentivoglio of Bologna as a safer ally than Cesare. Furthermore, many of Cesare's leaders realized that Louis XII—an even more formidable enemy than Cesare—held them responsible for the threat to Florence, and that Cesare might readily double-cross them. They met privately and planned a revolt at the Diet of Magione, on October 9, 1502. In addition to Ermete Bentivoglio, Giovanni's son, and Ottaviano Fregoso, the nephew of Urbino's Duke Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, Machiavelli lists the following participants: Cardinal Giambattista Orsini; Paolo Orsini; Francesco Orsini, Duke of Gravina; Vitellozzo Vitelli; Oliverotto da Fermo; Giampaolo Baglioni; and Antonio da Venafro (sent by the Prince of Siena, Pandolfo Petrucci, the probable mastermind of the conspiracy, who soon joined them). The conspirators, however, were indecisive. Although they were good leaders in their own right, they were unable to act jointly; the degree of mutual trust was minimal, since each was acutely familiar with the other's potential for duplicity. They did gain control of Urbino, Fossombrone, Pergola (through local uprisings in the Romagna), and Camerino in the Marches. Machiavelli, who had been sent by Soderini to assure Cesare of Florence's loyalty to him and to France, never doubted that the outcome would be favorable for Borgia. When the time came for some sort of arrangement, since conditions had reached a stalemate, Paolo Orsini carried back to the conspirators a rather one-sided agreement. In ostensible harmony, Cesare bided his time for about six weeks. Then he summoned Vitellozzo Vitelli, Oliverotto da Fermo, and Paolo and Francesco Orsini to Senigallia late in December of 1502. Machiavelli's

“description” of the “methods” Cesare used, as we have mentioned, is too outstanding to paraphrase. Suffice it to say that New Year’s Eve was not a festive one for Vitellozzo and Oliverotto—they were strangled. The strangulations of the Orsini were postponed several weeks until the pope could round up the cardinal and other members of the family.⁹⁵ Cesare, in the meantime, hastily swept west and south collecting the cities left either defenseless, as was Vitelli’s Città di Castello, or vulnerable, as was Baglioni’s Perugia. By late January he was before the gates of Siena demanding the expulsion of Pandolfo Petrucci. Although he was tempted to flex his strength by testing the French protection in Tuscany, he decided such a move would be imprudent.

In July of 1503 Louis XII decided he had to press his Neapolitan campaign harder because of the Spanish victory at Cerignola. He hastened south from Milan and Parma to relieve the continuing Spanish siege of his troops in Gaeta; by mid-August they were at Viterbo, just north of Rome. Meanwhile the Spanish were gathering their forces to challenge them and Gonzalo de Córdoba led a contingent north to Viterbo. Both Alexander and Cesare were attacked by malaria in early August; Alexander died on August 18, and his son lay ill until September. Soon after the pope’s death, Venice seized Rimini and Faenza; Perugia, Città di Castello, Urbino, Senigallia, and Camerino left Cesare’s orbit and returned to their former princes.

Alexander’s death was a disastrous blow to Cesare Borgia’s ambitions; his only hope of preserving his winnings lay in the College of Cardinals and their decision about who would be Alexander’s successor. Most contemporaries believed that Cesare had full control over the Spanish cardinals, who numbered slightly less than one-third of the conclave, because they were fellow Spaniards and because they owed their preferment to the Borgias. At the beginning of September, before the election of Francesco Piccolomini as Pius III, Cesare had told Louis that he would back the French candidate, Georges d’Amboise, the Cardinal of Rouen, in exchange for French support in the Romagna. That it was injudicious for observers to assume that the Spanish cardinals were a decisive factor should have been obvious from the voting pattern during Pius’s election. Lacking the Spanish votes, the French candidate lost, and Pius III, a compromise candidate reasonably favorable to Cesare, began his reign on September 22—but died on October

⁹⁵See note to Chapter 7, lines 122ff., for more detailed information about the Diet of Magione and Senigallia.

18. Of the connection between Cesare and the Spanish cardinals Guicciardini notes that the latter “were, as is the case with men, more bent on their own profit than on paying back favors they had received from [Cesare’s] father and from him.”⁹⁶ Meanwhile, during September and October, Guidobaldo da Montefeltro had returned to Urbino, Camerino was taken over by the Varani, Venice helped the Malatesta family to return to Rimini, and Giovanni Sforza came back to Pesaro. Only Cesena (Cesare’s administrative seat in the Romagna), Forlì, Imola, and Faenza remained Borgia territory.

Although Machiavelli blames Cesare for supporting Giuliano della Rovere as the next pope, Julius II, Cesare—given his shrinking position—had few alternatives. On October 28 Giuliano and Cesare signed an accord that pledged the Spanish cardinals to Giuliano and made Cesare Gonfaloniere of the church and governor of the Romagna. Thus on November 7 Julius became pope. Yet even with this accord, Cesare’s life in Rome was often in someone else’s hands: early in October the Orsini forced him to seek refuge in the Castel Sant’ Angelo. Julius II constantly moved him around, no doubt because of his indecision about what use he could make of Cesare—namely, could he rely on Cesare’s strength in the Romagna to surmount the Venetian threat to take over the Romagnol towns? Late in January 1504 Cesare agreed to turn over the loyal cities in the Romagna to Julius II, but Forlì held out until August 10. Meanwhile, since the papal authorities believed Cesare had fulfilled his part of the bargain, they granted him a safe conduct under the protection of Gonzalo de Córdoba. But King Ferdinand V of Spain wanted papal support for his designs on Italian soil, therefore he ordered Córdoba to imprison Cesare; he was brought to Spain where he was incarcerated until his escape in 1506. He died fighting for his brother-in-law, the King of Navarre, in a local civil war in 1507.

Julius II was one of the most ambitious and industrious of the Renaissance popes. With his determination to rid Italy of the “barbarians,” international politics tended to dominate his projects. But the extermination of the barbarians had to be initiated by a policy whereby he could fill the numerous empty pockets of power within Italy so that he could lead a federated Italy against the invaders. As we noted earlier, he began his reign with Spain victorious over Louis XII and entrenched in Naples—after the retreat at Gaeta in January of 1504—and the Span-

⁹⁶ *Italy*, VI, 4 (Pan. II, 102; Alexander, p. 169). For more analysis of these events and Machiavelli’s aim in “narrating” them, see notes to Chapter 7, lines 43ff, and 251–258.

ish domination being finally confirmed by the Treaty of Blois between Ferdinand the Catholic and Louis XII in 1505. On the home front, however, Julius's most formidable opponent was Venice, and specifically her designs on the Romagna. Venice, fearing increased antagonism with the pope, agreed in 1505 to restore all but Faenza and Rimini. Simultaneously, Julius had been laying his foundations for loyal allies by reinstating much of the land in the Romagna that Alexander VI had appropriated. Late in August of 1506 Julius left Rome personally commanding an army, and dragging along 24 cardinals, first against Perugia, then against Bologna. At Perugia he humbled Giampaolo Baglioni—but not without first giving Baglioni an opportunity, which the latter did not take, to capture the pope. His lightning attack on Bologna forced the Venetians to remain neutral and France, out of unwilling loyalty, to send aid to its prince, Giovanni Bentivoglio. These were the precise results that Julius expected from his ingenious project. Basking in his triumph—one that not even Cesare Borgia had achieved—Julius kept his entourage in Bologna during the winter of 1506–1507 until foreign interference, this time that of France in Genoa, forced him to return to Rome in February of 1507.

French policy in Italy considered Genoa basic to establishing a foothold. Difficult to retain because of sharply divided allegiances—the *popolani* supported Julius II and the aristocrats supported Louis XII—Genoa was ruled by a series of governors appointed by Louis in his attempt to retain control of the city. But in 1506 Genoa revolted, established a popular government, seized territory on the Riviera, and refused to cede it until Louis personally entered the city on April 28, 1507, quelled the rebellion, executed the *popolani* leaders, and re-annexed the town.

At that point a third foreign force began to meddle directly in Italian affairs. Maximilian I, the Holy Roman Emperor, was furious at Louis's unabashed play for power. He called the Diet of Constance, as we have seen,⁹⁷ and announced his intention to invade Italy. In response to this declaration, Louis XII and Ferdinand the Catholic met at Savona, about thirty miles west of Genoa. But Maximilian was not to be toyed with—he attacked Venice early in 1508. After six months of intermittent fighting, however, he capitulated to Venetian might. With an about-face characteristic of Renaissance politics, Maximilian and Louis XII resolved their differences in December and formed the League of Cambrai with

⁹⁷See p. 12 above.

Julius II, Ferdinand the Catholic, and the heads of several other important Italian cities. The purpose of the League was to strip Venice of her mainland power. Under the provision of the League Julius II was to attack in the Romagna and obtain such cities as Ravenna, Cervia, Faenza, and Rimini; Maximilian was to get Padua, Vicenza, Verona, Rovereto, Treviso, and Friuli; France was to attack in Lombardy and obtain the Venetian possessions in the Ghiara d'Adda (Brescia, Bergamo, Crema, Cremona); the Venetian possessions in Naples were to go to Ferdinand the Catholic, who was to attack Venice by sea; the Duke of Savoy was to get the Kingdom of Cyprus; Ferrara and Mantua were to recover what area they had lost to Venice. On May 14, 1509, Louis attacked the Venetian troops at Vailà (or Agnadello) "where in one day's battle Venice lost what she had very laboriously acquired over the course of eight hundred years."⁹⁸

But everything was not lost for Venice—in part because of her decent treatment of conquered cities and in part because no one in the League really trusted anybody else. Furthermore, Julius II decided in 1510 that France was more dangerous than Venice, particularly since he systematically saw to it that his interests were secure in the northern Romagna—Rimini, Faenza, and Ravenna. All that stood in the way of his regaining power completely within the Papal States was Ferrara, which Louis XII was anxious to keep under his protection. So, now designating France as the chief enemy, Julius reversed himself and signed a treaty with Venice in February of 1510: Venice submitted to papal authority and refused to meddle in Julius's relations with Ferrara. It was a pretty piece of juggling. What the pope was trying to do was to free Venice in order to halt Maximilian and to take on Louis XII himself. In September the bellicose pope personally led his troops into Bologna and planned to attack Alfonso d'Este, Duke of Ferrara. After a series of bad policy decisions—Ferrara held out and Julius lost Bologna to the Bentivogli, backed by the French—the pope formed the Holy League and thus pinned his hopes on still another outsider, Ferdinand the Catholic.

The Holy League now included Ferdinand on the side of Julius II and Venice to drive the French "barbarians" definitively out of Italy. The turning point came at the Battle of Ravenna on April 11, 1512. Although

⁹⁸Chapter 12, lines 143–146; Machiavelli uses a similar phrase in *Discourses*, I, 6; see also *Discourses*, III, 31.

the French won the battle, their great general Gaston de Foix—a nephew of Louis XII—was killed. Guicciardini writes of him:

If, as people believe, death is desirable when a man is at the apex of his greatest prosperity, then his death was extremely fortunate, for he died having already won such a glorious victory.⁹⁹

The demoralized French troops were in no state to confront another member of the Holy League: the Swiss forces, led by Matthias Schinner, bishop and cardinal of Sion, that chased the French out of Italy. With Massimiliano Sforza as their man in Milan, the Swiss controlled it and held it for the pope.

Louis XII, therefore, was obliged to re-examine his options: the face of Italian politics had been altered once again. Julius II died in February and Giovanni de' Medici became Pope Leo X in March. With the Medici in control of Florence as well as Rome, central Italy appeared to be the locus of power—hence Machiavelli's decision to dedicate *The Prince* to a Medici. Louis realigned with Venice, despite his record of betraying the republic, and persuaded her to withdraw from the Holy League. He also cajoled Venice into aiding him in his vain attack on Milan. He lost his gamble: the Swiss routed him again at Novara, in June of 1513. By October the league had forced the Venetians to sue for peace after the Battle of Vicenza.

Even the foregoing condensed and selective review of fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Italian history indicates the tremendous strife and upheaval rampant in a period of cultural splendor. At the point when Machiavelli actually started to write *The Prince*, therefore, Italy was indeed “left lifeless” and desperately in need of something to “cure her of those sores that [had] been suppurating for such a long time.”¹⁰⁰ The control of the power balance in Italy, carefully nurtured and developed by foresighted princes like Lorenzo de' Medici, had now slipped irrevocably into foreign hands. Machiavelli is curiously silent about the economic interests that could have forced some of the Italian states to acquiesce to this loss of control: the spice and silk trades of Lyon were vital to Venice and Florence, respectively. For him Italy's woeful condition is a direct result of mediocre military planning: “In so many of Italy's upheavals and military campaigns, it always seems that her

⁹⁹*Italy*, X, 13 (Pan. III, 191; Alexander, p. 250).

¹⁰⁰Chapter 26, lines 29, 32–34 below.

military *virtù* is exhausted"; but "great *virtù* lies in individual people."¹⁰¹ Thus the potential for "military *virtù*" exists on a nationwide level: once it has been nurtured and disciplined, then it can be effective in action.

Therefore, as the last chapter of *The Prince* also makes clear, this "military *virtù*" must be complemented by a civic *virtù*; the example of Rome constantly dominates Machiavelli's thinking. Loyalty to no entity greater than one's local city—provincialism, not patriotism, and paranoia, not participation—is what has prevented any truly unified Italian action. Machiavelli proclaims that "Italy has had to be reduced to her current extreme position in order that the *virtù* of an Italian soul be recognized."¹⁰² Yet despite the nationalistic claims of nineteenth-century Italian and German critics, it is questionable whether or not Machiavelli could have accommodated his thinking to the full implications of Chapter 26.¹⁰³ His "wide experience of recent events" has made him crave the tempting potential of Italian unity that a "constant reading of classical authors" offers through the outstanding example of Roman civic *virtù*—coupled with Roman military *virtù*. But it is unclear whether the unity he calls for is that of a national state as we think of it today, that of federated states modeled on the Greek example, or that of a temporary military alliance that would keep Italy—but more importantly, keep each city-state—free and independent. When we recall how tangentially Machiavelli's political life and opinions were acceptable to the Florentine majority during the last half of his public life, it is perfectly consonant for him to articulate an appeal void of any local interests: a popular, virtually democratic, exhortation.¹⁰⁴ Comprehending the Roman ability to fuse military and civic institutions and *virtù* is the first step in grasping the exact nature of this plea. But lest we be swept away on a patriotic tide, we need to know how specific concepts, upon which he consistently draws, transform his thought and operate on individual statements. In *The Prince* Machiavelli is not writing history, but constantly alluding to historical examples with a concision that assumes that the reader shares his familiarity with and understanding of

¹⁰¹Chapter 26, lines 68–70, 79 below. But see Cecilia M. Ady's remarks that "the failure of Italy to stand up to invasion should not be attributed primarily to military incapacity"; *The New Cambridge Modern History* 1 (1967), pp. 365–367.

¹⁰²Chapter 26, lines 17–19 below.

¹⁰³On several occasions Machiavelli uses the word *provincia* with a meaning similar to what we mean by "nation": see notes to Chapter 4, lines 21–24; Chapter 5, line 42.

¹⁰⁴See Felix Gilbert, "Nationalism," pp. 46–48.

the events. The line between politics and history is not often sharply delineated: Machiavelli's writing is permeated by the staking of individual *virtù* against Fortune and necessity. These concepts must affect our appraisal of the extent to which he believes men can and should unite to assert independent action.

4

MACHIAVELLI'S CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

To the extent outlined above, external circumstances and objective facts are sufficient to reconstruct the "resources" that Machiavelli cherished and valued. But these external matters are filtered through and interpreted by a mental set, or more appropriately, a *forma mentis*. The patterns of his thought—both the traditional and the innovative ones—are governed by certain internal circumstances and subjective interpretations of facts. Machiavelli predicates the adaptation of his "knowledge" "of the deeds of great men, learned from wide experience of recent events and a constant reading of classical authors," on several basic assumptions about the place and value of history in his actual world and about the nature of the men who react to that history. Given the presumed audience for *The Prince*, however, it is understandable that Machiavelli isolates two distinct aspects of "man." Despite the belief that there are certain things that are common to all men, he proceeds to analyze the people differently from the way he analyzes princes. The people—the mass of mankind—have formed a society to protect their interests; hence, they have resigned control and power, transferring it to a more powerful ruler. This is the basis for Machiavelli's notion of a "civil principedom." On the other hand, because his attention is centered on another man, the new prince, he predictably devotes most of his comments to the kinds of control such a prince can wield: for example, the use of force and the interdependence of good laws and good armies. Nevertheless, these controls are inadequate unless the prince has certain personal prerequisites, such as foresight and self-reliance. Yet even within this framework there remains a further problem: Machiavelli's conception of the nature of the universe. He readily concedes that not only men but institutions—even states—can display *virtù*. But he also posits a Fortune to account for the dynamic flux

which, for him, is always an imminent threat to any constructive, active exercise of the human will. Machiavelli's prose is tough, direct, confident, and argumentative; still, it must be admitted that he often raises as many questions as he answers. Readers can quickly become irritated with his unsystematic—often cavalier—treatment of fundamental philosophical problems. Perhaps, then, it is as profitable to be alert to the kinds of questions his procedure raises as to listen for any answers it provides.

What is the meaning of history, what are its uses? Throughout *The Prince* Machiavelli bends historical *exempla* to his narrative and tendentious purposes, out of a firm conviction that his contemporaries can thereby learn philosophical, political, moral, and psychological truths. He tells Vettori that he is "unashamed to converse" with the Ancients and "ask them the motives for their action";¹⁰⁵ why? A statement in *The Prince* gives the answer in terms of cause and effect:

Since men almost always walk along paths beaten by others and base their actions on imitation . . . a prudent man ought always to go along paths beaten by great men and imitate the most pre-eminent.¹⁰⁶

But there are also two passages in *The Discourses* that clarify what Machiavelli means by "imitation." Those who are now responsible for governing, he argues in the introduction to Book I, have not profited from the examples of antiquity. Since the heavens, the sun, and the elements—as well as mankind—have all remained unchanged, it is ridiculous that men should ignore these ancient examples and deem it difficult, even impossible, to imitate them. Furthermore, such examples are especially important in a changing world: any institutional changes ought to be based on a reversion to the original principles that the Ancients established and delineated.¹⁰⁷ As we see, Machiavelli rarely separates philosophical considerations from political ones.

Three significant conclusions are to be drawn from these passages: that there exist original principles; that they provide a stable model; and

¹⁰⁵P. 19 above.

¹⁰⁶Chapter 6, lines 5–11 below.

¹⁰⁷In *Discourses*, III, 1 he uses such phrases as "ritirar[e] . . . verso il suo principio," "riducano inverso i principii loro," "ridurgli verso e' principii suoi," and "riduca al segno" (B., p. 379; ML, p. 397; W.I, pp. 459–460; Pen., pp. 385–386; AG.I, p. 419). The frequency with which quotations from *The Prince* are glossed by remarks from *The Discourses* in the subsequent discussion should be sufficient proof that *The Prince* alone is an inadequate basis for a complete understanding of Machiavelli's political thought.

that they serve the use of human beings, not as any proof of an eternal or natural law. Renaissance intellectuals were passionately interested in the history of civic institutions and in the political lessons they taught—lessons they sought to apply to contemporary situations. Unlike their immediate forebears, who valued those examples as demonstrations of an eschatologically oriented universal history, Renaissance political humanists were seeking to secularize wisdom.¹⁰⁸ They were profoundly aware that the neat, hierarchical order no longer retained the symmetrical, rational lineaments that medieval historians had attributed to it. For Machiavelli, all coherence was not *quite* gone; he could descry recurrent features, original principles, in the welter of historical facts. There remained the pattern of perfection to be deduced from Rome as the archetype of political action, and hence of laws. The curious blend of optimism and pessimism that pervades *The Prince* can be explained by Machiavelli's disappointment that few contemporary Italian leaders were cognizant of this pattern and by his hope that if he reiterated their value—as he did most consistently in *The Discourses*—he could guide men in power toward reviving and reinstating this model which, to him, was “a still point in a turning world.” Thus a vital interaction permeates his writing: if he is absorbed in the stases of historical life, it is because they bring the dynamics of political life into high relief.¹⁰⁹ Machiavelli and Guicciardini provide an interesting contrast indicative of the intellectual turmoil at this point in the history of Western culture. Guicciardini eschews conceptual patterns from the past and vaunts the need to know present-day reality unencumbered by former examples or prototypes.¹¹⁰ For Machiavelli, on the other hand, the “actual truth of matters”¹¹¹ subsumes both current experience and past example. His political humanism constantly accentuates the role of men and—as he tells Vettori—their motives, because the moral lesson of history, by teaching men to shun evil and seek good, calls attention to man's power

¹⁰⁸The phrase is borrowed from Hans Baron, “Secularization.” This process of “secularization” is trenchantly developed by Mazzeo in a series of articles I have found very useful in sorting out my ideas in this section; see *Studies*, pp. 90–165 and *Revolution*, pp. 69–130. Plamenatz,¹ pp. 7–53, Plamenatz,² I, 1–44, and Wolin, pp. 195–238, have also been helpful.

¹⁰⁹Cassirer, pp. 155–156.

¹¹⁰The distinction, obviously, is simplified for the sake of argument; it is true in its general outline. See Guicciardini's remark from his *Ricordi* quoted in Appendix B, 3, 7 and the remarks about “a conceived government” in note to Chapter 15, lines 11–12. On the question of “pattern” and “revival,” see Chabod, pp. 191–200.

¹¹¹See Chapter 15, lines 9–11, and note.

to act. Even within the limits of Fortune, this action occurs and provides another use for history's moral lessons: a psychological constant for determining the nature and behavior of men. Or, as he puts it:

Prudent men usually note—not carelessly or unjustly—that whoever seeks to foresee the future should consider the past, because everything that occurs in the world has at all times its exact correspondence with events in antiquity. This reciprocity arises from the fact that since everything is produced by men, who have and always have had the same desires [*passioni*], the same results must of necessity follow.¹¹²

What, then, is the nature of man? Machiavelli's response is succinct: man is by nature evil, constantly driven by egocentered desires, appetites, and passions, that are a human constant: they are, have been, and will always remain the same. Unlike the Utilitarians or even Hobbes, Machiavelli does not systematically theorize about the political consequences of these conditions in human nature. It is significant that the type of man that interests him is social man. His psychological assumptions about man, like those of Burke or de Tocqueville, are governed by considerations of how men behave individually and—in a political context—as a group. Furthermore it is of particular consequence to understanding *The Prince* that he baldly states that men are evil because it is a direct reminder to the “new prince” that he can use the dictum to keep his subjects in line. To paraphrase T.S. Eliot, who incidentally says that Machiavelli “merely told the truth about humanity,” what Machiavelli knows is that the detail of the historical pattern is movement; the movement of desire is not in itself desirable—but it is inevitable.¹¹³

What Machiavelli has to say about these motives is less explicitly stated in *The Prince* than in some of his other works. Yet it is clear what his operative assumptions are. “A man who wants to practice goodness in all situations is inevitably destroyed, among so many who are not good”; “men always turn out to be wicked unless some necessity makes them good.”¹¹⁴ In other words, an astute prince must never forget that he must always act within the context of man's evil nature. To a certain

¹¹²*Discourses*, III, 43 (B., p. 496; ML, p. 530; W.I., p. 575; Pen., p. 517; AG.I, p. 521).

¹¹³A paraphrase of the closing stanza of “Burnt Norton”; see Eliot's essay on Machiavelli in *For Lancelot Andrewes* (Garden City, New York, 1929), pp. 47–65, especially 62–63. But for Eliot the “truth” is only “half the truth about human nature”—Machiavelli ignores the element of Grace.

¹¹⁴Chapter 15, lines 17–20 (see note), and Chapter 23, lines 73–74 below. See Chapter 18, lines 33–36, in the context of princes respecting their word, for an explicit statement that men are “bad.”

extent Machiavelli echoes Augustine's notion that in a postlapsarian world, government is necessary: civil authority is the sole restraint on man's nature corrupted, as it is, by original sin. But Machiavelli views man's evil nature not as a metaphorical construct or a metaphysical *donnée* theologically sanctioned and imposed on mankind. It is a "fact." The preservation of the state demands that a ruler be cognizant of it:

. . . whoever sets a republic in order and establishes its laws must necessarily assume that all men are evil and that they must always make use of the malice in their soul whenever opportunity gives them free reign.¹¹⁵

It is significant, however, that in both *The Prince* and *The Discourses* Machiavelli states the proposition in hypothetical terms. To retain power, a prince must act "as if" this is the way man is. The hypothesis is a creative fiction for securing his regime; behind it lies a distinction between act and potency. Intrinsic to man's nature is his potential for evil which becomes active when conditions force the potential to become actual. "Malice" becomes an efficient, effective means for highlighting the two kinds of evil a prince must handle. On the one hand there is the malice inherent in the material a prince shapes—men, laws, political institutions, and men themselves; on the other hand, there is the malice inherent in the actions a prince decides to pursue when the malicious "material," whether on an international or a domestic scale, threatens his destruction.¹¹⁶ An offhand remark in a letter to Guicciardini epitomizes the depth of Machiavelli's concern with the necessity of coming to terms with evil: "I believe that the following would be the true way to go to Paradise: learn the road to Hell in order to steer clear of it."¹¹⁷ He does not deny, even in *The Prince*, that the good is a proper aim. Yet one of Machiavelli's innovations in political theory is his admission that evil may have to be done to preserve one's political life—something that few thinkers before Machiavelli were willing to believe, for the goal of classical and medieval ethical theory had been finding ways to eradicate evil. Machiavelli, on the other hand, was trying to find ways to live with it.

Desire, movement, and change, then, are concomitant results of

¹¹⁵*Discourses*, 1, 3 (B., p. 135; ML, p. 117; W.I, pp. 216–217; Pen., pp. 111–112; AG.I, p. 201). See note to Chapter 15, line 20, and Appendix B, 15, 2.

¹¹⁶See Sasso, pp. 136–137, n.3; 235, n.3; for more on act and potency, see pp. 72–73 below.

¹¹⁷May 17, 1521 (G¹, p. 403; Gpb, p. 198; AG.II, p. 972).

man's base nature. "The acquisitive desire is certainly very natural and common"; "changes originate primarily in a natural difficulty, evident in every new principdom: men are willing to change their ruler if they expect improvements."¹¹⁸ In the first statement Machiavelli has in mind mankind's desire to acquire and preserve power. In the second, he leaves the "improvements" men desire unqualified; but if their nature is evil, then the potential is great that these "improvements" are self-aggrandizing, even when he is taking an example of men's desire for freedom from tyranny. The rationale for such a state of affairs is clearly delineated in *The Discourses*. Machiavelli starts with the assumption that men are so constituted that everything is an object of desire, but few things are attainable. Consequently, since men desire more than they can attain, they are always discontent and dissatisfied. Hatred on an individual level, and war on a national one, result from the encounter between those who desire more and those who are afraid of losing what they have.¹¹⁹ No wonder that "all human affairs are in motion and cannot remain stable."¹²⁰

At times Machiavelli is rather cynical about man's rapacious desires for property. When the Medici regained Florentine power in 1512, he wrote Giovanni de' Medici concerning the suggestion that their possessions be restored:

Men feel more grief at a farm that is taken away from them than at a brother or father put to death, because sometimes death is forgotten, but property never. The reason is evident: everybody knows that a brother cannot rise from the dead because of a change in regimes, but there is a good possibility of regaining a farm.¹²¹

The "acquisitive instinct" in the people, then, must be controlled by the ruler. When Machiavelli says that "to understand the nature of the people fully, one must be a prince; to understand the nature of princes fully, one must be of the people,"¹²² he is probably merely indulging in a rhetorical flourish. But the necessity for mutual understanding is basic to government. A prince must forge this reciprocity between the people and himself.

¹¹⁸See Chapter 3, lines 268–269; 4–7 below.

¹¹⁹*Discourses*, I, 37; see Appendix B, 3, 3.

¹²⁰*Discourses*, I, 6; see note to Chapter 3, lines 268–272 below.

¹²¹Quoted in Tommasini, *Machiavelli*, I, 601; Burd, p. 294; AG.I, p. 63, n. 4. Cf. "men are quicker to forget the death of a father than the loss of an inheritance" (ch. 17, lines 68–69, and note).

¹²²Dedicatory Letter, lines 31–34 below.

What is the nature of the people? Since their instinct is that of individual men raised to a higher and potentially more dangerous power, Machiavelli regards them as fickle. But his attitude is not always consistent.¹²³ By and large he trusts them to decide correctly about matters that intimately concern them within a well-organized legal system. There is, of course, the pragmatic fact uppermost in *The Prince*: a new prince must have the people on his side if his administration is to succeed. He needs them when he is taking over new regions, and he is less open to attack if the populace is loyal. With Machiavelli's view of social and human circumstances, he resolves the question of whether it is better to be feared or to be loved—better, he claims, to be feared. Yet this position is tempered with the constant caution that the point beyond which a prince dare not go is signaled by the people's hatred, which is a grave threat to his retention of power.¹²⁴ Fundamental to the notion of the "civil principedom" that Machiavelli develops in *The Prince* is the necessity that the prince's power be independent of the *grandi*, the rich. Since the rich are potentially in a position to appropriate some of the legal and military rights that he believes the state needs in order to be strong, the rich must be curbed. By his definition, as long as the prince lives harmoniously with the people, without a struggle for power, the principedom is "civil." But the locus of his interest is less with the people and more with the prince.

What is the role of a prince, and especially of a new prince? All princes, of course, must realize that the moment they start to disregard laws, traditions, and customs, their power begins to dwindle. Machiavelli distinguishes new princes from dynastic ones. The latter, too, can profit from his remarks, but to insure a modicum of support from their people it is usually sufficient that they simply observe the customary practices of rulers in their principedom. But Machiavelli's treatise is really aimed at the new prince. Despite the fact that such a ruler is unable to rely on these habitual patterns, Machiavelli's confident tone implies that a new prince has certain advantages. If he understands and applies certain principles, he has the opportunity to start fresh and maintain order according to his vision. Once in power, however, a new prince confronts a perplexing situation: forming a new government involves potentially unpopular innovations. Machiavelli skirts any systematic examination of this situation in *The Prince*, but the gist of his

¹²³See notes to Chapter 6, line 99, and Chapter 19, lines 104–107 and 119.

¹²⁴See note to Chapter 17, lines 34–35, and Sasso, p. 146, n. 12.

assumptions is clear. Again, several passages pieced together from the first book of *The Discourses* provide a proper perspective. Basic to all his discussion of power is his conviction that only one man can establish a new republic or totally reform the existing situations of an old one (Chapter 9). There is also the question of preserving freedom (Chapters 16–18): in an area where the people are used to a prince's regime and then suddenly become free, it is hard to retain a free government; if the region is a "corrupt" one, the chances are even less that such freedom can be maintained. Then the crucial question, related to the *virtù* of an entire population, emerges: how in a free but "corrupt" state a prince can preserve the existing freedom, or else foster a purer freedom. These discussions eventually prepare for two contrasting chapters that argue: to reform a government in a free state, a prince should preserve the semblance of the old institutions (Chapter 25); to govern a newly conquered people, the new prince should reorganize everything from the bottom up (Chapter 26). At this point Machiavelli is obliged to acknowledge that circumstances sometimes require force and measures that are "most ruthless and inimical to all ways of life—not only Christian but worldly ways of life."¹²⁵ Hence the question of what kind of controls are available to a new prince.

What is the nature of a prince's power? Machiavelli's habit of putting his thoughts disjunctively is well known. But one such expression that has particularly upset commentators is the disjunction "to conquer either by force or by fraud."¹²⁶ A prince should be ready to draw upon these two means of control regardless of his inhibitions about, or proclivities for, their use. And Machiavelli exhibits little compunction about joining the notion of ruthlessness (*crudeltà*) to that of force. Cesare Borgia rarely hesitated to apply forceful and ruthless measures. Although Machiavelli recognizes the corner his argument gets him into, he does attempt to distinguish between good and bad uses of ruthlessness. The main hope in Chapter 8, given the example of Agathocles, is that such measures—although a new prince may need to have recourse to them at the outset of his new administration—can be turned ultimately to the benefit of the people. Machiavelli can sanction the use

¹²⁵*Discourses* I, 26 (B., p. 194; ML, p. 184; W.I., p. 274; Pen., p. 177; AG.I., p. 254). Guicciardini, in his *Considerations*, seems to suggest that Machiavelli polarizes the alternatives too much. A prince does not have to accept as an "absolute rule" what Machiavelli says, because Machiavelli "always finds inordinate pleasure in both extraordinary and violent remedies" (Pal., p. 33; Grayson, p. 92). See Sasso, pp. 57–58, n. 22 for the piecing together of Machiavelli's assumptions.

¹²⁶Chapter 7, lines 270–271 below; see note to lines 268–280.

of such methods under these conditions, but he simultaneously believes that it is self-defeating to continue to apply force and violence after a state has been conquered. Admittedly it is important for a new prince to protect himself, but when his enemies are the people the prince is “unlucky” if he has to resort to extraordinary measures: “the more ruthlessness [*crudeltà*] he uses, the weaker his principedom becomes.”¹²⁷ Machiavelli argues in *The Discourses* that “fraud” is worthy of praise and glory in warfare when a military leader practices deception in order to win a victory; for historians approve this kind of victory as much as the kind won with military might. He makes an interesting distinction, although it is not one necessarily applicable to each discussion of fraud in his works:

I do not mean fraud is worthy of glory if it causes you to break promises you have given and treaties you have made; for this kind of fraud, although it may sometimes acquire you territory and position . . . will never acquire you glory.”¹²⁸

In a discussion of the circumstances under which a prince should keep his word, Machiavelli—taking his clue from Cicero—symbolizes the need to employ occasional force and fraud in terms of the lion and the fox: “Since the lion is powerless against snares and the fox is powerless against wolves, one must be a fox to recognize snares and a lion to frighten away wolves.”¹²⁹ The metaphor solicits a recognition that these animals operate on a plane of instinctive action—one basic to successful control in a political sphere. The metaphorical cast of this sentence, however, does not mean that Machiavelli is totally at ease with such a recommendation: a prince “does not deviate from the good, when that is possible; but he knows how to do evil when necessary.”¹³⁰ Furthermore, the prince who depends solely on the violent force represented by the lion is “ignorant.” In other words, it is the inherently evil and bestial nature of man that compels Machiavelli to utter such conclusions. He condemns naked force. But there is another, more covert aspect of force: dissimulation, lying, and hypocrisy—fraud. Circumstances sometimes require using fraudulent force; unfortunately a new prince ignores these circumstances at his peril.

¹²⁷ *Discourses*, I, 16 (B., p. 175; ML, p. 162; W.I, p. 254; Pen., p. 155; AG.I, p. 236).

¹²⁸ *Discourses*, III, 40 (B., p. 493; ML, p. 526; W.I, p. 571; Pen., p. 513; AG. I, p. 518); see note to Chapter 18, lines 29ff.

¹²⁹ Chapter 18, lines 25–28 below.

¹³⁰ Chapter 18, lines 76–78 below.

The development of Machiavelli's argument in Chapter 18 is particularly significant for understanding what he means by the necessity of resorting to force and fraud. His sole example is Pope Alexander VI, who knew that man's evil nature not only made him susceptible to fraud, but also facilitated its practice. Machiavelli passes no judgment on his action, but he immediately proceeds to allude to qualities which men esteem—that is, virtues. Although there is no explicit equation of fraud and "appearances," his point is that a prince must *seem* to have praiseworthy virtues. The thrust of his argument, then, is that a new prince must adorn himself with all the trappings of power and good government. Hence, Machiavelli is really advocating the creation of the myth of power and the creation of a persona or character type of a ruler, in order that those who are ruled will be awed by the power of the mythic image. Once the ruled are convinced of the potency—and durability—of the myth, the ruler can impose his will. What is of particular concern to the new prince is that he can impose his will more immediately and fully on a populace that is convinced of his image and thereby restore order to chaos. The idea of *creativity* is always in the foreground: create the image of power, create stability out of an inchoate mass. Simply seeming to have princely virtues permits a ruler more leeway and freedom of action. The prince can use any of his attributes—positive or negative—at will, but if in the minds of his people his primary attributes are positive, he can, when necessary, more readily coax people into sanctioning the use of his negative characteristics. What Machiavelli has done by stressing the prince's will is to secularize the notion, common in medieval political theory, that God's will is the only criterion for judging right and wrong. Still, for Machiavelli, the overriding consideration is that both the ruler and the ruled benefit from the continued preservation of order.

Finally, the argument of Chapter 18 is governed by opening and closing analogies that are important framing devices. At the end of the chapter Machiavelli crystallizes his conception of the myth of power in terms of an everyday comparison from the marketplace: people judge whether an administration is effective more by what they see on the outside than what they can feel on the inside—and it is in any case difficult to feel the fabric of abstractions like compassion, fidelity, integrity, humanity, and piety. All are necessary virtues for a prince to appear to possess. Their appearance is worth as much as, if not more than, their reality:

. . . People judge all men's actions, and particularly those of a prince, by the final outcome. Therefore, let a prince be the conqueror and the supporter of the state.¹³¹

It is the word "supporter" that is significant here, because the chapter ends with a tacit condemnation of Ferdinand V, the Catholic, King of Spain, a "prince" who has blatantly misappropriated the potent weapons of force and fraud.

That same chapter begins with the figure of Chiron, the most venerable of the centaurs. In Greek mythology centaurs were wild monsters with a human head and torso and the lower part of the body like a horse. They were thought to symbolize animal instinct and desire, barbarianism, and wildness in general. Yet Chiron—who was considered the wisest and most just of all the centaurs and had his own cult in Thessaly—was famous for his various skills: prophecy, medicine, and hunting. The great Greek heroes—Achilles, Asclepius, Hercules, Jason, Theseus, Castor, and Pollux—were alleged to have learned these and other arts from him. Machiavelli allegorizes Chiron into a perfect representation of two elements fundamental to the notion of the prince being the "supporter of the state." On the one hand, Chiron is part beast and hence an excellent figure for the prince to contemplate in his necessary uses of force and fraud—the lion and the fox—and the centaur is also convenient for emphasizing a prince's need to consider the bestial in man. On the other hand, Chiron's human part makes him skillful, curative, and virile; thus he is an excellent figure for the prince to imitate in exercising his control over his people.¹³²

Since Machiavelli says that Chiron was the teacher of the valiant, heroic fighter Achilles, there exists a further important consideration. Military prowess is of paramount importance in *The Prince* because a good army is basic to Machiavelli's conception of good government. "There cannot be good laws without good armies, and where there are good armies there are good laws."¹³³ The relationship is a complementary and reciprocal one; it is fundamental to the notion of the prince as "supporter" of the state. For an adequate understanding of the end toward which Machiavelli's entire argument drives, it is essential to bear

¹³¹Chapter 18, lines 92–94 below. Lest it be too readily assumed that "the final outcome" is tantamount to a statement that the end justifies the means, see note to that passage.

¹³²It would appear that Machiavelli is the first to personify Chiron in this fashion; see note to Chapter 18, lines 19–22, for Francis Bacon's objection to it. See also Mazzeo, *Studies*, pp. 101–103; *Revolution*, pp. 78–81.

¹³³Chapter 12, lines 13–15 below.

in mind the importance of the idea of justice. Without this concept, the full force of “good laws” is lost.

Machiavelli does not engage in lengthy disquisitions about justice. For him it is a foregone conclusion that justice is predicated on men banding together in a social community (*D.*, I, 2). Then, when society realizes that it must check the potential excesses of man’s self-assertive appetites, it codifies this need in laws that develop and nurture that society’s concept of social discipline—namely, justice. Judicial authority and an army are the implied, attendant factors with which a prince institutes and perpetuates a powerful, durable regime, one in which he exercises control for the mutual benefit of ruler and ruled. Yet the exercise of power depends on the sort of man the prince is.

What are the characteristics of the prince *before* he attains power? Foresight, as much as is humanly possible, and self-sufficiency are essential prerequisites of a good prince. Again, a dynastic prince can use delaying tactics when faced with unforeseen events (*accidenti*),¹³⁴ but a new prince cannot afford the luxury of temporizing. The anticipation of difficulties before they arise and the provision of speedy remedies for *accidenti* were important aspects of Roman policy; it delights Machiavelli to recommend them as traits to be cultivated by a new prince who aspires to retain his power. As he wrote Vettori in the summer of 1513,

I believe that the duty of a prudent man is at all times to consider what may harm him and to foresee problems in the distance—to aid the good and to thwart the evil in plenty of time.¹³⁵

As important as prescience is self-reliance. Cesare Borgia’s success in the Romagna increased in direct proportion to his dismissal of Louis XII’s reinforcements and soldiers. Of course Cesare had been successful even with the French troops, and of course Louis XII began to see the danger of too great an involvement with Borgia. But the point Machiavelli is anxious to hammer into the mind of his readers remains the same: when a prince depends on himself alone, he can force an issue on his own terms and hence reduce the risk of danger.

Foresight and self-reliance, then, are such basic features of a good prince that they are inextricably intertwined. Consequently, two quotations from Chapters 7 and 24 lucidly indicate the kind of universe in

¹³⁴See Chapter 2, lines 9–13 below.

¹³⁵See note to Chapter 3, lines 85–89.

which Machiavelli sees his new prince operating. A new principedom is so vulnerable that its defeat is

inevitable unless . . . those men who become princes unexpectedly possess such great *virtù* that they know immediately how to get ready for, and keep hold of, what Fortune has put in their laps; unless they can lay those foundations, after the fact, which others laid prior to becoming princes.¹³⁶

. . . the only good, certain, and enduring defenses are those rooted in yourself and your own *virtù*.¹³⁷

What is the nature, then, of the world in which new princes dwell? Any commentator is hesitant to increase “the usual fog of words about the concepts of ‘virtù’ and ‘fortuna,’”¹³⁸ and the prominence of those words in Machiavelli’s writing. Although he does not necessarily treat them consistently as doctrines or concepts, they are definitely ideas he repeats—either singly, or in conjunction, or in disjunction.¹³⁹

The Latin connotations of the word *virtù* can produce some clues to its meaning, but cannot provide one single, adequate definition. *Virtus* derives from the Latin word for “man” (*vir*), but *vir* can also be used emphatically to denote courage, spirit, and manliness. In this respect the word is related to *vis*, “force,” “power,” or “strength.” (There are instances in Cornelius Nepos and Virgil when *virtus* is synonymous with *vis*.) In a medical context,¹⁴⁰ *virtus* refers to the power of a life-giving, animating spirit-potency and efficacy. As this power operates in man, it becomes an energy exercised by his will, thus bringing in notions of bravery and valor. Cicero is noteworthy for elaborating these qualities into a concept of virtue that sums up a Roman ideal of manly and moral excellence. Christian moralists, finally, added to the word the implication of those natural virtues which reason could discriminate and those theological virtues which God infuses into man.

All these connotations, even the positive and moral ones, are within

¹³⁶Chapter 7, lines 29–35 below.

¹³⁷Chapter 24, lines 61–63 below.

¹³⁸Ridolfi, *Life*, p. ix.

¹³⁹I have found the following sources helpful: Whitfield, *M.*, “The Anatomy of *Virtù*,” pp. 92–105; Neal Wood, “*Virtù* Reconsidered,” (see especially his list of twenty commentators on Machiavelli’s use of *virtù*, p. 159, n. 1); Felix Gilbert, *M and C*, pp. 179–197; and Wilkins, “History and Fortune.” The Introduction to Mark Musa’s bilingual edition of *The Prince*, pp. x–xv, is a useful justification for the various translations he employs for *virtù* and their contexts. But because I feel that the word is such an elusive, complicated one, I have chosen always to retain the Italian and to rely on the reader to adjust his understanding of the passage in question with the following discussion in mind.

¹⁴⁰For Machiavelli’s use of medical metaphors, see p. 82 below.

the range of significations Machiavelli wants us to hear in "*virtù*." For him the word suggests a kind of flexibility that can initiate effective, efficient, and energetic action based on a courageous assertion of the will and an ability to execute the products of one's own calculations.¹⁴¹ Such calculations are a significant adjunct to his ideas about *virtù*: they outline what might be called an internal or mental *virtù*. Again, biographical considerations govern this particular kind of *virtù*. Machiavelli rarely had the opportunity in his own life to effect the bold, intelligent action he envisages for a prince in power. His actions were always the intelligent contributions of a mental *virtù*. He knew full well that a prince had to be endowed with this kind of *virtù*—hence the argument that in the Dedicatory Letter it is really Machiavelli's mind and mental capacities that constitute his "gift" to Lorenzo de' Medici. But, as his ideas on Fortune indicate, the basic problem is that both internal and external *virtù* are necessarily exercised at the convenience, almost, of "the conditions of the times." If a prince changes with the times, he is independent of "the conditions of the times." In the last analysis, the prince with *virtù* is a man of ability, not destiny.

Furthermore, Machiavelli ascribes *virtù* to institutions as well as individuals. By a process of transvaluation the inherent or naturally endowed spirit of *virtù* that enables a man to lead and to perform great, decisive actions becomes a spirit that can be instilled into an entire society by the proper functioning of education, religion, and justice, so that these processes provide society with an adequate model for discipline. Again Rome serves as a source for individual and social examples, and also exemplifies a *bontà* or "goodness," a civic and moral quality that is as essential as *virtù*. The necessity for a society to possess both *bontà* and *virtù* is an operative assumption in Machiavelli. Like so many of his assumptions, however, it is one that is more usually taken for granted than argued or delineated. His dynamic theory of the devolution of the state¹⁴² raises the question of whether or not a leader with *virtù* can revive the *virtù* of a state, once it has lost it. Throughout his

¹⁴¹I have stressed the "word" *virtù* as distinct from the doctrine or the "concept" of *virtù* because I believe Machiavelli is erratic and unsystematic in his usage. Wood's case for Machiavelli specifically developing a concept of *virtù* rests on several speeches made by Fabrizio Colonna (*War II* [*Guerra*, pp. 392–396; LLA, pp. 76–81; AG.II, pp. 621–624]). Wood argues that "*virtù* . . . is a set of qualities, a pattern of behaviour most distinctly exhibited under what may be described as battlefield conditions, whether actual war or politics provide the context" ("*Virtù* Reconsidered," p. 117; see also the Introduction to his edition of *War*, LLA, pp. liv–lvi).

¹⁴²See p. 35 above.

works Machiavelli wavers between an optimistic and a pessimistic view of this matter.

Whether it be an inborn, individual quality or an exemplary, institutionalized public spirit, *virtù* is affected, and often threatened, by external circumstances—chance or *fortuna*. As a means of suggesting the tremendous power of the word *fortuna* as well as its enormous significance to Machiavelli's thinking, I have adopted the somewhat unsatisfactory device of using "Fortune" when I believe Machiavelli intends to draw attention to an abstract idea—inherited from Latin and medieval writers—of that powerful, pervasive, and arbitrary force that makes it difficult for men to exercise intelligent foresight—and using "fortune" when I think he intends to refer merely to good or bad luck (although, obviously, "fortune" as luck is a function of the operations of "Fortune" in this world).¹⁴³ Clearly the implication of a capricious force, a notion of chance, lies behind his assertion that Fortune

. . . is anxious to show the world that it is she, not prudence, that makes men great; she starts to show her powers during times when prudence can play no part in the matter, indeed, all things have to be attributed to her.¹⁴⁴

Machiavelli concentrates more on describing the effect of Fortune on individual men than on describing the nature of Fortune herself. But the very notion, symbolized in the wheel of Fortune, of the world being turned by the will of an external force conveniently accounts for the dynamic movement and turmoil that surround man in Machiavelli's universe. Of particular interest is his "Capitolo di Fortuna." There he dramatically alters the traditional image of Fortune's wheel and pictures her in a palace with not one but "as many wheels revolving as there are varied ways of ascending to those things on which every man alive sets his sights."¹⁴⁵ In other words, as he says later on, he holds open the theoretical possibility of a man being able to jump from wheel to wheel and hence always being successful. But in actuality a man cannot check Fortune's prerogative of swiftly reversing the direction of the wheel he is riding. Foresighted *virtù* may keep his purposes in harmony with hers, but the context constantly remains indeterminate. What is

¹⁴³Although *fortuna* is almost as complicated a word as *virtù*, it is much less multivalent; consequently, I believe the compromise does less injustice to Machiavelli's usage.

¹⁴⁴"Castruccio" (G², p. 9; AG.II, pp. 533–534); cf. the remark in the letter to Vettori, p. 17 above. "Prudence," in this case, is analogous to "*virtù*" in *The Prince*.

¹⁴⁵Vv. 61–63 (G³, p. 313; Tusiani, p. 113; AG.II, p. 746).

new about his conception of Fortune is his vision of the dynamic interplay between a man's action—which can compel Fortune to assist him—and Fortune's malignant revolution of her wheel. This interplay can be both positive and productive, as well as negative and destructive. A poor choice of action, of course, spells man's end. Contention, clash, and change are posited as basic facts of political life: as "luck" or as "force," as fortune or Fortune, here we have the kinetic reality of life.

Machiavelli's fundamental assumption that luck or force is the mode of action in this world is based on the idea that one of Fortune's purposes is to furnish men of *virtù* with opportunities and occasions to prove their worth. The opening chapter of *The Prince* bluntly announces that princedoms "are acquired either with the armies of others or with one's own, either through Fortune or through *virtù*."¹⁴⁶ As he warms up to his argument, these points are held in abeyance, only to surface again in Chapters 6 and 7: the former, about princes who use their *virtù* and armies to conquer, contrasts sharply with the latter, about princes who depend upon Fortune and armies. In Chapter 7 he concretely opposes Francesco Sforza to Cesare Borgia. Machiavelli dramatically postpones until Chapter 25 any definitive statement about the degree to which *virtù* can dominate Fortune. But what is important in the arrangement of the early chapters is the creative fiction he establishes: a prince must always act as if he can control Fortune. For him the men he cites as examples in Chapter 6 demonstrate that "they received nothing else from Fortune but the opportunity which gives them the raw material that they could shape into whatever form pleased them."¹⁴⁷

This conceit sets up an interesting set of relationships: on the one hand, between Machiavelli as artist (creating both a work of art and a character type for a prince) and, on the other hand, as a thinker fusing his ideas about the role of Fortune and *virtù* with the Aristotelian sense of the potential form inherent in matter. This is, perhaps, the material side of the notion of "creation *ex nihilo*": during the Renaissance the idea that God created *ex nihilo* is extended to an analogy between the artist, shaping the inchoate mass God provides, performing a godlike function when creating.¹⁴⁸ It is an effective way for Machiavelli to

¹⁴⁶Chapter 1, lines 12–14 below.

¹⁴⁷Chapter 6, lines 43–46 below.

¹⁴⁸Pico della Mirandola, near the beginning of his "Oration on the Dignity of Man," talks of God placing man, whose nature is of indeterminate form, at the center of the world and has God say to him that part of his dignity inheres in his ability, as the maker and shaper of his self, to fashion himself

indicate, in the opening chapters, his thoughts about the interaction of Fortune and *virtù*. If the opportunity does not materialize, then the effect of *virtù* is nullified; by the same token, if there is no initial *virtù* capable of recognizing and seizing the opportunity, then the opportunity is wasted. Note, however, that it is Fortune that causes the opportunity to materialize in the first place; *virtù* is powerless to create the opportunity. At this point in the disjunction between Fortune and *virtù*, then, Fortune dominates. Yet Machiavelli clearly seeks not to emphasize this dominance, but rather to indicate the power and worth of *virtù* in a leader.¹⁴⁹

It is precisely this *virtù* that is emphasized in Chapter 25, which discusses how the power of Fortune in human affairs can be countered. There he states outright, and more sanguinely than in other places, that "Fortune is the mistress of half of our actions, but that even so she leaves control of the other half—or nearly that much—to us."¹⁵⁰ He then sets up an antithesis between men who proceed circumspectly and those who act impetuously. But a paradox ensues: no single man can be simultaneously circumspect and impetuous. If the paradox were to be resolved, it would be through the prince's ability to understand the necessity to act with the times, to make adroit use of the circumstantial material Fortune offers a prince to mold. If he mishandles it by not adjusting his tactics to "the conditions of the times," action cannot save him—intelligence may. Consequently a prince needs both an internal, mental *virtù* and an external *virtù* manifest in action. The basic problem, however, is that both categories of *virtù* must be practiced more or less at the beck and call of time and circumstance—that is, of Fortune. Thus man is never in total control of a given situation. This, of course, is the true paradox with which Machiavelli deals not only in Chapter 25, but throughout *The Prince*. It is a paradox that can be conceived theoretically and conceptually, but its resolution can never be absolute.¹⁵¹ The famous image of Fortune being subjugated, like a woman, by force, asserts the need for impetuosity over circumspection.

into any shape he prefers. See Chapter 26, line 78, and note, for another use of this analogy. See also Kantorowicz for a careful statement that the analogy is quietly employed before the eighteenth century. His evidence is mostly from legal commentators; therefore I think it is the kind of comparison we could legitimately expect Machiavelli to have heard bandied about during his active career in politics.

¹⁴⁹See Sasso, pp. 55–56, n. 15; cf. the previous discussion of act and potency, p. 61.

¹⁵⁰Chapter 25, lines 15–18 below.

¹⁵¹Sasso's notes to Chapter 25 are very acute with respect to the paradoxes involved in it.

But ultimately he is not advocating the wild rape of Fortune, but rather action that is thoughtful and intelligent, action guided by *virtù*.

The strategies of the Borgias provide excellent examples for Machiavelli's ideas about Fortune and *virtù*. Describing the decisions of Alexander VI in the early stages of his aggrandizement of power, Machiavelli emphasizes the "necessity" that obliged the pope to "throw the Italian states into turmoil so that he could safely make himself ruler over a part of them."¹⁵² And "necessity" reverberates through Chapter 18, which concerns the circumstances under which a prince should keep his word. In Machiavelli's created world, necessity acts as a force even more powerful than Fortune. It, too, lies beyond man's control, but the stance man adopts toward necessity determines his own merit. "Necessity engenders *virtù*, as we have often said"¹⁵³; as such it is useful. This recalls a standard theological assertion about free will—which, by the way, Machiavelli seconds—that the proper reaction to necessity constitutes one of the glorious and distinctive characteristics of man. In both instances reason is the crucial factor. Necessity is not so much a sinister force as a productive element that gives man a chance to decide rationally how to act. What sort of action is morally undetermined; necessity can make princes do evil, and it is possible that "necessity persuades you to do many things that reason does not."¹⁵⁴ Notwithstanding, the *virtù* that can be engendered by necessity is proof to man that he is not a pawn in a determined universe. *Virtù*, then, activates his rational faculties. Even though he may act irrationally under certain circumstances, necessity is what makes him act, and thus not be eternally submissive to uncontrollable, external events.

And this is where the Borgias come in. Cesare "acquired his power through the fortune of his father Pope Alexander VI, and lost it through the same fortune—despite the fact that he used every method and did everything a man with prudence and *virtù* ought to."¹⁵⁵ With this statement Machiavelli initiates the lengthiest analysis he gives of any one ruler in his entire treatise—and this emphasis has led many readers to consider Cesare the "hero" of *The Prince* and to see in his idealized portrait the model for all the pragmatic "advice" Machiavelli dispenses

¹⁵²Chapter 7, lines 78–80 below.

¹⁵³*Discourses*, II, 12 (B., p. 309; ML, p. 316; W.I, p. 390; Pen., p. 307; AG.I, p. 355); cf. the opening paragraph of *Discourses*, III, 12.

¹⁵⁴*Discourses*, I, 6; see note to Chapter 3, lines 268–272.

¹⁵⁵Chapter 7, lines 45–49 below.

in his "handbook."¹⁵⁶ Such a reading misses the point of this chapter and produces a distorted interpretation of the entire text. A sounder approach would be to read Chapter 7 as a conceptualized study of the relationship between Fortune and *virtù*.

To begin with, Francesco Sforza is the prince who comes off best in Chapter 7, even though few words are devoted to him.

Francesco Sforza, an ordinary citizen, became Duke of Milan with proper means and with great *virtù*; what he had acquired with enormous exertion he maintained with little effort.¹⁵⁷

Sforza's "proper means" are in obvious parallel with Cesare, who used "every method . . . to put down roots"; thus the phrase recalls a sentence in the previous paragraph in which Machiavelli implies that great *virtù* is the prime requisite if a quickly formed state (a gentle way of saying that most newly acquired princedoms are precisely that) is not to be just as quickly swept away. At first Machiavelli subtly shifts the onus of Cesare's fall: it did not come from lack of *virtù*: "if his methods did not work to his advantage, it was not his fault but a result of the singular and inordinate malice of Fortune."¹⁵⁸ Most of the rest of the chapter proceeds to outline these methods; as we have seen,¹⁵⁹ they fairly bristled with *virtù*. But we are brought up short at the end of the chapter. Machiavelli does an about-face and says of Cesare, "the sole act we can criticize him for is the election of Julius as pope: he made a bad choice."¹⁶⁰ A bad choice is not a "result of Fortune" or arbitrary chance. If anything, it is a failure of internal *virtù*: faulty judgment and a lack of foresight. Since Machiavelli is silent about Francesco Sforza's mental *virtù*, there is all the more reason to assume that he singled out this characteristic for special note. The one fact Machiavelli attributes to Fortune—the unexpected death of Cesare's father and Cesare's simultaneous illness—is expressed deliberately: "had [Cesare] been in good health, he would have withstood every onslaught."¹⁶¹ The cal-

¹⁵⁶I admit my partiality for the view of Cesare Borgia developed by Clough, *Researches*, pp. 46–70, and the parallels he establishes with Giuliano and Lorenzo de' Medici; see also his studies "Yet Again" and "Troche Episode." In the latter article he makes the point that in the direct contact Machiavelli had with Cesare in 1503, Cesare "was not a hero for Machiavelli at this time but an antagonist whom Machiavelli with some justifiable pride could believe he had outwitted" (p. 143). But the argument of Sasso, "M and CB," should not be overlooked.

¹⁵⁷Chapter 7, lines 40–43.

¹⁵⁸Chapter 7, lines 60–62 below.

¹⁵⁹Pp. 47–52 above.

¹⁶⁰Chapter 7, lines 280–282 below.

¹⁶¹"*lui fussi stato sano, arebbe retto a ogni difficoltà*"; Chapter 7, lines 242–243 below.

culatedly hypothetical cast to this sentence wrenches the emphasis on Fortune out of all proportion to any historical fact, dramatically and deliberately heightening the element of Fortune only to bring us back sharply to reality by later pointing out Cesare's injudiciousness. The cautionary tale thus woven with the figure of Cesare Borgia—*virtù* is not merely impetuous action but also carefully calculated assessment—is mirrored later linguistically in Machiavelli's treatment of Septimius Severus. His *virtù* enabled him to rule successfully, he knew how to combine the attributes of the lion and the fox, and he was keenly aware that military strength was the most secure basis for political strength—"even though he oppressed the people."¹⁶² Yet this is the very characteristic for which Machiavelli condemns Agathocles, whose "savage ruthlessness and inhumanity . . . forbid his being honored among the most outstanding men"; "it cannot be termed *virtù* to murder one's fellow citizens, to betray friends, and to be without loyalty, mercy, and religion; such methods can cause one to win power, but not glory."¹⁶³

Virtù with glory is the point. But isolating situations in which this glory occurs is a delicate matter. The *bad* use of ruthless measures "occurs when, though initially few, they increase rather than diminish with time"; this may seem an imprecise guideline. But it is to Machiavelli's credit not only that he acknowledges the thin line separating political life and death, but also that he recognizes the problem of disaffection among the people when a prince practices wholesale violence. "It is the man who uses violence for destruction who ought to be blamed, not he who uses it for restoration."¹⁶⁴ It is significant that no historical figure in *The Prince* achieves a combination of *virtù* and glory. Once more we must see *The Prince* in the context of history and of the men for whom it was originally drafted: Giuliano and Lorenzo de' Medici. Like Cesare Borgia, both men had power bases in Rome and in central Italy. But after more than a decade of reflection, Machiavelli had the opportunity to reconsider Cesare's career. Consequently Machiavelli could turn to the Medici and seek a job, yet with the vindicating evidence that he indeed "neither slept nor played"—that evidence being a concrete

¹⁶²See Chapter 19, lines 234–235 below.

¹⁶³Chapter 8, lines 61–64 and 53–56 below.

¹⁶⁴For the context, see Appendix B, 18, 11. For Machiavelli's comment on the bad use of ruthless measures, see Chapter 8, lines 150–152 below.

study of the ways in which, even under the aegis of Fortune in a mutable world, active and mental *virtù* can be engendered. And perhaps he alludes ironically and gently to Cesare Borgia in his "Exhortation to Seize Italy and Free Her from the Barbarians" to clinch this idea. Yet Machiavelli is certainly not alluding to a positive, optimistic, durable "redeemer," but to a subtle idea; it serves almost as a negative example. Only when Lorenzo de' Medici fully understands what Cesare Borgia was not, can Lorenzo become a true prince. The nationalism, or better yet the *italianità*, of the last chapter of *The Prince* thus has a particular coloring to it. Machiavelli uses the words *provincia* ("native land," "nation") and *patria* ("native city," "birthplace") almost interchangeably. Yet for all the cultural awareness of an identity defined by language, custom, tradition, and history that *italianità* implies, and for all Machiavelli's reiteration of "Italia" in Chapter 26, it is more likely that what he envisages is the pride that he and other Florentines will feel when, through the Medici, Florence will have the honor of restoring unity to Italy.¹⁶⁵ *Patria* still precedes *provincia*. The study of history has shown him the need for such a restoration and the potential that a leader and a people both possessing *virtù* have for achieving it. Individual and institutional *virtù*, taken together, can harness the acquisitive desires common to man. A "civil" principedom provides the institutional patterns precisely because some modicum of consent from the governed is necessary to make it work. The Medici have the best available model in Florentine tradition, language, custom, and history. But the leader himself, with all the control at his command, must also remember that foresighted *virtù* is as much a question of his mind as of his external deeds. The reality in "fiction" of this particular configuration of glorious *virtù* is what Machiavelli strives to create in *The Prince*.

And perhaps this energy is not without personal motive. Toward the end of his life Machiavelli became increasingly concerned with achieving respect and admiration among powerful Florentines. Around 1520 he expressed a fundamental principle:

I believe that the greatest honor men can have is that which their native city [*patria*] gives willingly to them; I believe that the greatest good to be done, and the most pleasing to God, is that which is done for one's native city [*patria*].¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵Illardi, "Italianità," pp. 342; 357–364.

¹⁶⁶"Florentine Affairs" (*Guerra*, p. 275; AG.I, pp. 113–114); see Appendix B, 19, 7.

In his *History of Florence* he expands the role of one Michele di Lando in the Ciompi Rebellion. Michele's *virtù* stemmed the tide of riot. He was a wise and prudent man,

indebted more to nature than to fortune. . . . in courage, prudence, and goodness [*bontà*] he excelled any citizen whatever during that period. He deserves to be counted among the few men who have helped their native city [*patria*], because had his heart been evil or ambitious, the republic would have completely lost its freedom . . . but his goodness [*bontà*] never let a thought enter his mind that was contrary to the common weal. . . . And yet his native city [*patria*] was little grateful for his good deeds.¹⁶⁷

In the first case Machiavelli seems to be saying that Florence is the ultimate arbiter of the heroic *virtù* that obtains fame, honor, and glory for men. The underlying assumption is that these virtues will be bestowed by principles upon which all men can agree. He may even have believed that his loyal service and intelligence should merit his being considered to have satisfied such standards. In the second case, even granting that the writing of history admitted of rhetorical and decorative flourishes, the emphasis on *bontà* and the common weal suggests the kind of standard by which he, or any man, could expect to be judged. Like Michele di Lando, Machiavelli had experienced obloquy and exile from his native city. It may not be surprising, then, that much of Machiavelli's demonstration of his capacities, for which he might have hoped for honor, occurs in a "fictive" world.

5

METHOD AND STYLE: THE CREATIVE MACHIAVELLI

Machiavelli may not always employ a consistent methodological approach to the problems he considers; and, as we have seen, he raises as many questions as he answers; but the guiding method that he *tries* to adhere to is nevertheless apparent. Myron Gilmore puts it sharply into historical perspective:

¹⁶⁷*History*, III, 16–18; 22 (G², pp. 245, 248, 256; Htb, pp. 135, 138, 145; AG.III, pp. 1166, 1168, 1175).

Machiavelli, whose father was a lawyer, was impressed with the fact that in both medicine and law the particular case was assimilated to a general rule, and this general rule had been tested by many authorities of classical antiquity. Those who had contemplated the course of history had indeed found examples of virtue and vice, of wisdom and foolishness, but these had never been reduced to a system; there existed no systematic body of knowledge which could be compared to that accumulated by the commentators on the civil law and this was the focal point of Machiavelli's criticism of the humanist tradition—a tradition from which he had himself started, and upon which he had built, but which he found wanting as he reflected on the failure of the Italian political institutions to meet the shock of the northern invasions.¹⁶⁸

Machiavelli's primary concern is not really as methodological as many modern commentators would like it to be. Rather, he seeks to extract and enumerate the hidden difficulties and problems implicit in the actual examples he adduces. A new prince can learn from this analysis and make certain that he is not trapped by these problems in his own career as prince. What Machiavelli really does is to proceed to general rules and general principles from a series of ordered particulars. It is not the method that is important, but the process of scrutiny and analysis that Machiavelli uses. He says that the prince "certainly ought to question freely and often."¹⁶⁹ This is why classical and contemporary examples are legitimate: Machiavelli is "teaching" what questions to ask and how to ask them—often this is the only objective indication we have of a man's intelligence.¹⁷⁰

A good example occurs early in Chapter 3; Machiavelli is discussing the strategies employed in retaining conquered territory, and France is his specific case in point.¹⁷¹ What he does is simultaneously to attribute causes, to spell out conditions, and to point out consequences—all the while attempting to derive general rules for handling real political events. When a conquered area is homogeneous in language and thought and unused to self-government (conditions and causes), then it can easily be ruled (consequences). All a prince has to do is to eliminate

¹⁶⁸Gilmore, *Humanists*, pp. 27–28, based on an analysis of the introduction to the first book of *The Discourses*.

¹⁶⁹Chapter 23, lines 50–51 below; see note to those lines.

¹⁷⁰Sasso, pp. 19–20, n. 18.

¹⁷¹Chapter 3, lines 47ff. below; see Russo, pp. 45–46, and note to lines 38–47.

the living members of the former ruling family (general rule) and retain as much of the previous conditions of life as possible, since the customs are similar (causes)—and the conquered area will live peacefully (consequence). France is an exemplary country for Machiavelli's purposes: although there were differences in dialect (negative cause), there were none in customs (positive cause). He continues by wrapping his examples into a reminder of the two basic steps a prince needs to take to unite new areas. Everything in the paragraph is carefully ordered and intimately linked together; yet it all flows so easily and develops so naturally that the reader does not feel he is in the grip of a grinding syllogism. Machiavelli tells us that since *The Prince* is aimed at utility, it is more profitable "to go straight to the actual truth of matters": this is the procedure for getting there.

In fact, the phrase "to go straight to the actual truth of matters rather than to a conception about it" epitomizes Machiavelli's method in *The Prince*. The phrase occurs early in Chapter 15, which states immediately in its first sentence the significance it has for understanding the man and his method: "what . . . ought to be." In context it is a notable shifting of gears. As the chapter progresses it becomes crystal clear—because Machiavelli says so and because any alert sixteenth-century reader would have realized it—that his own conception of "what ought to be" is quite different from traditional approaches to the idea. In sum "what ought to be" is "the actual truth of matters." No longer is the posture of a ruler to be defined in terms of social, ethical, moral, or political platitudes. It is to be defined in terms of truth, *la verità effettuale della cosa*, rather than a conception, *immaginazione*. There is an obvious connection between Machiavelli's notion of "actual truth" and his belief that powerful leaders can institute change. The direction history has taken and the idea of historical causation cannot be observed empirically, whereas decisive action can. It is a truth that he believes, at least, he can isolate, analyze, discuss, and offer the reader. But truth rarely comes at us directly; it usually passes obliquely through a human refractor. And, if we have not become aware of it before Chapter 15, we become keenly alert to Machiavelli's narrative posture throughout the rest of *The Prince*. The narrative begins to call attention to itself and to its stance more assertively. For example, Machiavelli resorts to the topos of humility: he fears that he "may be judged presumptuous." In context he forces a delicate interaction between self-effacing modesty and aggressive self-assertiveness. It is an ingenious means for setting a

tone designed to pique the reader's interest. His rhetoric constantly swings between charming and shocking the reader. The only other time he uses the rhetorical device of humility is toward the end of the Dedicatory Letter. In both instances these are but token bows, prefatory to remarks that are replete with confidence and a sense of the originality of his contribution, the "gift" of his intelligence. In the first case he modestly proffers the entire work; in the second he signals a "'methodological' interlude."¹⁷² He also cannot refrain from stating in Chapter 11 how presumptuous it would be to discuss ecclesiastical principedoms—then immediately launches into the topic. An archly ironic tone colors his discussion of Moses in Chapter 6. The form of the man and the content of his work merge beautifully.

But it is not merely that individual paragraphs or isolated segments of his argument are ordered, arranged, and calculated. The gradually unfolding structure of the entire treatise is neatly plotted. After the Dedicatory Letter Machiavelli defines the various types of principedoms, their forms of government, and the means for acquiring and retaining power in them. This last concern is then elaborated specifically in terms of the military preparation necessary to combat domestic and foreign threats. These points lead him to examine the relationship between a prince and his subjects—his citizens as well as his own staff: both segments of his "populace" are potential dangers. Finally, after narrowing his argument to particulars, he moves out again into broader speculative questions about the reasons for the ravaged states in Italy, the role of Fortune in human affairs, and the need for a strong prince to appear on the scene and save Italy from foreign, barbaric invaders.

But within this structure, he allows himself a great deal of freedom to pick up, drop, and then re-examine themes and topics—while continuing to remind the reader, overtly and covertly, of the tenor of his overall argument. Sometimes he uses verbal echoes; other times, abrupt shifts in tone. His most consistent device is the use of figurative language. On two occasions he returns to metaphors originally stated in Chapter 3, but these echoes are at great remove from one another: in one case it is ten chapters later, in the other it is seventeen. In the last sentence of Chapter 14 he alludes to his famous comparison of Fortune to a woman—eleven chapters later. To stress the need for precision in applying the *virtù* required to free Italy "from the barbarians," he recalls his use of the word *mira* ("target") in Chapter 6, when he wants

¹⁷²Sasso, p. 135, n. 1.

to remind the Medici of the men with admirable *virtù* who indeed have freed their countries from the barbarians. This habit of internal references is indicative of the clear-sighted extension of Machiavelli's thought processes throughout the work as a whole, as well as throughout long paragraphs¹⁷³ and even long periodic sentences.

It is even legitimate to speak of a metaphorical structure in *The Prince*. The range of metaphors most frequently drawn upon is that from medicine: pulmonary tuberculosis, *fisici dello etico*, is a disease that works in the state as it does in the body; a prince must have a limitless supply of "remedies" for diseases; he may also have to resort to "strong medicines" in drastic situations; Cesare Borgia "wanted to purge the minds of the people" in the Romagna; social classes are *umori*, "humours," which must be kept balanced. The numerous medieval and Renaissance comparisons between a healthy body and a healthy state, with the prince as the doctor caring for the sick, militate against assuming that this complex of metaphors indicates any naturalistic tinge to Machiavelli's thought or even any direct influence from previous political thinkers. As a matter of fact, it seems to have been a common comparison in arguments before *pratiche* (committees convened on an *ad hoc* basis to advise a magistracy about a serious problem).¹⁷⁴ In *The Prince* these metaphors help to engender an internal consistency. In the last chapter they are united into a forceful, effective statement: "Thus Italy, left lifeless, awaits that man who may heal her wounds . . . and cure her of those sores that have been suppurating for such a long time."¹⁷⁵

Architectural and horticultural metaphors also knit together the poetic and argumentative texture of Machiavelli's "little work." As in the letter to Vettori about the composition of *The Prince*, laying the proper "foundations" to a regime is a recurrent idea, appropriately enough in the opening section of the argument. The image of the prince as a statesman-architect indicates the drift of Machiavelli's political mentality: "whoever does not first lay his foundations could—with great *virtù*

¹⁷³In most cases I follow the paragraph designations of modern Italian editions of *The Prince*; the reader should know that Machiavelli composed his study without any paragraphs at all.

¹⁷⁴Felix Gilbert, *M and C*, quotes a phrase from a speaker at a *pratica* in 1502: "The illness of the city is so severe that we do not have much time to look for remedies" (p. 69).

¹⁷⁵Chapter 26, lines 29–34 below. The textual notes point out most, but not all, of the examples of medical metaphors. For a discussion of the general topic, see Paul Archambault, "The Analogy of the Body in Renaissance Political Literature," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 29 (1967), 21–53.

—do so later, although causing trouble for the architect and danger to the building.”¹⁷⁶ The hazard of change to a government is also figured in architectural terms: “one change always leaves indentations for the construction of another.”¹⁷⁷ Similarly with horticulture: to capture the sense of the interaction of the various parts in mixed princedoms, Machiavelli chooses to describe it in terms of an “appendage,” almost as if grafting on new regions to the original one, thus suggesting how the character of the newer princedom becomes less apparent and grows into the older one over the course of time. Similarly, “putting down roots” is what Cesare Borgia did in those areas that he conquered or that came to him through Fortune. In fact Machiavelli casts his exemplum, partially based on Cesare’s career, in a significant combination of horticultural and architectural terms:

States that are formed rapidly, like all things in nature that are quick to sprout and grow, cannot have roots and branches fully enough developed so that the first spell of bad weather does not tear them up. This situation is inevitable unless . . . those men who become princes unexpectedly . . . can lay those foundations, after the fact, which others laid prior to becoming princes.¹⁷⁸

Behind this language rests the common Renaissance conception of the organic nature of the state. With the increasing availability and popularity of Aristotle’s works, sixteenth-century intellectuals made this notion common coin. But for the reader to refer to the language in the first part of the sentence as naturalistic, again, is to blur the issue and to lose sight of a very important emphasis. Those who would call this simile “naturalistic” base that designation on two different ideas: first, that Machiavelli, a product of his times, is aware of nature and hence can make natural comparisons serve his purposes gracefully and acutely; second, that Machiavelli, a prophet in his time, proceeds from some hazy notion that would presage that of the survival of the fittest. Both ideas minimize the humanistic notion of man as the measure of all things—a notion that is basic to this passage (after all, horticulture exists, as architecture does, to make man’s life comfortable). The language enunciates a concern for the power and foresight a man of *virtù* must exert so that his state is not “uprooted.” The primary emphasis is

¹⁷⁶Chapter 7, lines 52–55 below; see also Chapter 6, lines 134–135, and Chapter 9, lines 105–119.

¹⁷⁷Chapter 2, lines 28–30 below; see note to line 29.

¹⁷⁸Chapter 7, lines 25–35 below. The aphoristic thrust, always with a civic twist which we shall discuss below, characterizes many turns of phrase in Florentine political circles.

on man, and the range of preparedness open to him. Machiavelli's poetic imagination plays with a "natural" comparison, but remains loyal to the paramount object: man and his needs.

Another, entirely different, category of Machiavelli's use of figurative language is present in *The Prince*: a conscious attempt to distinguish his work from other studies advising a prince how to rule and to conduct himself, the conventional type of *de regimine principum* literature. To reinforce the fundamental principle of going "straight to the actual truth of matters," he deliberately chooses to differentiate his discussion from that of others by means of its style. As opposed to the polished, finely-wrought high style of the usual treatises of this sort, with their elaborate comparisons, Machiavelli selects a prose that, for the most part, is low-keyed. The obvious exception is The Dedicatory Letter, which demonstrates not only that he does know how to handle the high style which is conventionally assumed to be correct for addressing counsel to a prince, but that he is consciously eschewing it in the body of *The Prince*. The contrast between the subsequent material, sandwiched in between the high style of the Dedicatory Letter and the rhetorical, passionate, oratorical tone of the last chapter, calculatedly reminds the reader that he is in a different universe of discourse. The reality of this new world is underlined by adroit twists that are given to hackneyed phrases and old saws. He also peppers his argument with plain, simple, unpretentious diction and implied comparisons drawn from the ordinary realm of human affairs. For example, current diplomatic and political style repeated phrases, quoted disapprovingly by Machiavelli, like "to reap the benefit of time" and "Pistoia must be held by factions and Pisa by fortresses." Machiavelli regards these maxims as empty remarks handed down by "wise men" more to avoid argument than to stimulate the rethinking of real problems. He often uses deft choices of words to notify the reader of the need to develop a new slant, and sustaining this need is in itself a function of his method. If a prince cannot imitate the ancients point for point, then he should aim at "smelling" as if he did so (*ne renda qualche odore*). A prince should be as intimately aware of the *virtù* in his controls as an archer is of the *virtù* of his bow. French institutions control the arrogance and ambition of the nobility by keeping "a bit in their mouth to curb them." Some princes have constructed fortresses "as a kind of bridle and bit for those who might plan to attack them." "A prince should never let himself fall down in the belief that he will find someone to put him back on his feet." Italian princes have

been all too prone to believe that Fortune and God control worldly affairs and that it is “useless to sweat about these matters very much.” Italy is so devastated that “this barbarous tyranny stinks in the nostrils of all mankind.”

As this last statement indicates, Machiavelli also uses epigrammatic turns of phrase to call the reader’s attention to the novelty of his approach and the advisability of reconsideration. “Another man’s armor, in short, either slips off your back, or weighs too much, or constrains you”: therefore, arm yourself with your own men and weapons. “Men are quicker to forget the death of a father than the loss of an inheritance”: therefore, avoid appropriating your subjects’ property whenever possible.¹⁷⁹

Yet in the final analysis Machiavelli’s style and method fuse to foster an aim not dissimilar to that of many sixteenth-century painters who were soon to alter the direction of Italian art. As the Mannerist painters lengthened an arm here, contorted a posture there, so Machiavelli twists and distorts historical figures and events to make them conform to his own view of “reality.” Thus Machiavelli exaggerates his method and style because he is confident that he has the right to impose his vision of order on his readers. He is not at all embarrassed by distortion or alteration, because these devices shock sensibilities that are accustomed to time-honored frameworks and styles for representing similar material. Also like the Mannerist painters, he resorts to attention-getting effects that immediately involve the audience in the material represented. But he achieves his drama differently: his method is one of selective understatement rather than of dramatic highlighting. The exemplary career of Cesare Borgia is analogous to a situation common in stories about the fall of princes. To emphasize the disastrous effects of being overdependent upon Fortune, the early paragraphs stress her “malice.” The tenor of the argument at the heart of the story—the lack of foresighted *virtù*, the “poor judgment”—is withheld from the reader until the very last moment. As in good detective fiction, the unraveling process—postponing the crucial clue—whets the reader’s appetite and makes the outcome, in Machiavelli’s case the “moral” of the tale, all the more pointed and exciting. In the same narration, although in minia-

¹⁷⁹Machiavelli echoes each of the following civic aphorisms taken from contemporary Florentine political documents: “Wise men take what is least bad instead of what is good”; “one ought not to take risks without the most urgent necessity or without being sure of victory”; “to organize the city well and to introduce good government,” and “restore our city to the old political order”; see Felix Gilbert, *M and C*, pp. 33, 71, 79.

ture, he obliquely refers to the bloody events at Senigallia: “the naiveté of the Orsini led them to Senigallia, right into the Duke’s hand. . . . thus [he] both destroyed these leaders and compelled their partisans to be his allies.” The reader is left with the job of completing the gruesome missing details which Machiavelli has graphically supplied in his “Description of the Method Adopted by Duke Valentino when Murdering Vitellozzo Vitelli, Oliverotto da Fermo and the Orsini—the Lord Paolo and the Duke of Gravina.” To be able to add the facts which one needs to enjoy this understated narration, the reader has to know the story—either from Machiavelli’s work or from acquaintance with the facts from another source. Similar awareness of the stratagems of Septimius Severus is necessary to appreciate fully the cryptic sentence “he then went to seek Albinus in Gaul and took away both his territory and his life.”¹⁸⁰ If all *The Prince* turns on the question of whether *virtù* can compel Fortune to submit, then to allude to her in Chapter 1, to personify her in Chapter 7, and to delay a definitive statement until Chapter 25 is to toy daringly with the reader’s desire to be on sure ground and to know the author’s personal belief. And most dramatic of all is Machiavelli’s suppressed emotion. Behind the cool logic and the calm unfurling of general rules lurk an anger, frustration, and urgency that gush forth only in the last chapter. Again, delay intensifies effect.

On one occasion Machiavelli uses the verb *spegner*¹⁸¹—the same one he used to describe how Cesare Borgia “destroyed” the “leaders” at Senigallia—with masterful effect, suppressing facts and heightening narration. Toward the end of his account of the tyrant Hiero II of Syracuse in Chapter 6, Machiavelli mentions that “he disbanded the previous militia and organized a new one” (*spense la milizia vecchia, ordinò della nuova*). The translation is misleading, but deliberately so to bring out a subtle point that Machiavelli postpones even hinting at until Chapter 13. For all of its connotations of “extinguishing,” *spegner* in context seems relatively innocuous; particularly when combined with *ordinò* in the next phrase, it appears to be a disbanding of the inherited army and the reforming of his own. But in Chapter 13, he uses the phrase *il fece tutti tagliare a pezzi* (“he cut them all to pieces”) to

¹⁸⁰See textual notes to Chapter 8, lines 97 and 132, for narrative techniques used in discussing Oliverotto da Fermo. Alterations of historical facts for literary effects are pointed out in the notes to Chapter 14, line 59, and Chapter 19, lines 296–298. For Machiavelli on Septimius Severus, see Chapter 19, lines 272–274.

¹⁸¹A word with many meanings: “to extinguish,” “to quench,” “to check,” “to destroy,” “to kill,” “to uproot,” “to discharge,” and “to allay.”

describe exactly the same situation.¹⁸² Polybius 1. 9. 3–8 is the source for this information but he gives a clearer clue to the actual situation. Once Hiero was fairly well ensconced in power, he realized that the “veteran mercenaries were disaffected and turbulent,” and deliberately led them into battle against the Campanians. However,

. . . he held back the citizen cavalry and infantry at a distance under his personal command as if he meant to attack on another side, but advancing the mercenaries he allowed them all to be cut up by the Campanians.¹⁸³

The first interesting feature of this example is that Polybius specifies that they were two types of soldiers; one was a citizen (*πολιτικοὺς*, 1. 9. 4) force, the type Machiavelli favors. The “mercenaries,” the other type, were not really Hiero’s soldiers, but “inherited” and hence analogous to what Machiavelli means in Chapter 13 by “auxiliary” forces, which are to be avoided. Polybius also makes it clear that Hiero did more than “disband” the old mercenaries, he utterly destroyed them (*διαφθαρήναι*, 1. 9. 5). Machiavelli knows this fact, leaving it vague in Chapter 6 (*spegnere* balanced by *ordinò*), yet playing with the gentle ambiguity only to return to the example in Chapter 13, with a dramatic force close to the historical reality: *tagliare a pezzi*, “to cut” (almost “hack”) “them to pieces.” It is a lovely way of shaping the narration and making the force of the repetition virtually hang on one word. The stylistic technique dramatically clinches a theoretical point basic to the meaning of *The Prince*. The method and style dovetail.

There are aspects of this method, however, which complicate our evaluation of Machiavelli’s contribution to the development of political thought. He merely takes on trust, or does not bother to examine, many assumptions about the nature of the state, about the interaction between the governed and the governor, and about morality in general. His method credits his experience and his reading to such an extent that he feels no compulsion to test his postulates empirically. Concerning the reason why a state exists, he is so sure that security is man’s first requirement that he immediately proceeds to advise a prince how to achieve it for his subjects. Looking at the problem from the opposite perspective, *The Prince* speaks to a single issue: the preservation of a

¹⁸²See note to Chapter 13, line 80, for Sasso’s observation that those referred to in Chapter 13 are the leaders only, not the entire army.

¹⁸³Polybius, *The Histories*, tr. W. P. Paton, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann; New York: Putnam, 1922), I, p. 23.

ruler's power in the state. Furthermore, Machiavelli does not classify types of government. Unlike Hobbes, he gives no thorough scrutiny to what constitutes a sovereign state. Furthermore his attention is so riveted on the particulars of the contemporary Italian situation that he offers little help to those who would turn to him for consideration of how any large nation-state should be governed within the framework of a prototype explaining social and political interaction. Unlike Montesquieu, he does not think in terms of separation of powers. As for political interaction, Machiavelli seems to believe that the duties and obligations of the governed and the governor are so obvious that he can confine himself to inquiries into the abstract properties that both segments should possess so that the state may survive. We readily accept the Bill of Rights as the cornerstone of our constitutional history; although Machiavelli may have respected the principles set forth there, he ignores the need to define them. The question of interest groups and class conflict gives impetus to his study of Roman and Florentine history, but he does not come up with any systematic conclusions about the origins of these conflicts or suggestions about their solution. He clearly sees that the resolution of interest-group politics is a major issue for political theory to attack, but it will remain for Harrington and Montesquieu to provide more coherent investigations. Machiavelli sees morality as a proper concern of mankind, as the Utilitarians will later, but he does not see it as one that can automatically be transferred to the autonomous world of politics. Morality does not offer political situations absolute standards, and in this, perhaps, he anticipates Max Weber's ethical "polytheism." Thus, for example, he can envisage contexts in which ambition gauges a state's vigor and furthers society's goals. These gaps and assumptions have led to impatience on the part of some social scientists, who would hold him up to more rigorous standards of scientific method. But science is not the only means we have to arrive at the truth. Machiavelli's political art is a criticism of life focused through his personal, vivid, independent, and imaginative angle of vision.

"The actual truth of matters" is what Machiavelli seeks to establish as the norm not only by which political affairs should be judged but also, and to him more importantly, by which his treatise should be assessed. It is this desire, unquestionably, that accounts for the work's being a radical departure from the usual literature designed to advise a prince. The systemization of general rules for politics and history had rarely

been attempted before Machiavelli; such rules certainly had never been unveiled to present, as he does, a norm of "the actual truth of matters." It is easy to discover loopholes in his system; but these vagaries themselves have their hallmark. He chooses his illustrative particulars to conform to his general rules, the heart of his system. They are governed by a vitalizing sensibility. His logic brings together thoughts, ideas, and rules, as well as examples made more vividly alive through this special, human-oriented turn of his imagination. Furthermore, he consciously creates a style designed to alert readers to this aim and this achievement—but what it is that he is actually "creating" must be defined on several levels.¹⁸⁴ He creates a new awareness about how to examine political and historical facts. He creates a style that, through its sudden, novel thrusts into the real world, works to bring the reader up short and nudge him into reconsidering fundamental problems. He creates a fictive situation in which a ruler can admit that he often has to act or think in hypothetical terms, in which he can acknowledge that it is sometimes better to act *as if* events might require him to resort to unconventional means of control. He creates historical examples—or better, recreates them—molding and shaping his narrations of men and their actions to advance his vision of the actual meaning their deeds represent. Thus, the "fiction" of Cesare Borgia exists as a subtle demonstration of his point. Yet what Machiavelli ultimately creates is a myth of power. All his creative energy crystallizes around the greatest fiction a prince has at his disposal: the process of giving the illusion of power and authority. It is a prince's *virtù*, his efficient and effective action based on asserting both his reason and his will, that enables him to fabricate a persona of the ruler as he is to be seen by the ruled.

This necessity explains the contrast between *The Prince* and *The Discourses*. Political theory, from Aristotle through the *de regimine principum* literature, is not very much concerned with the origin of a new state, but rather with the origins and evolution of society in general and with constitutional changes in particular. To this extent *The Discourses* are more traditional in their approach: the general problem to which they address themselves is that of the natural and necessary changes within the context of a republic. But the requisites of obtaining and preserving power and authority in a new state are totally different. To slip into assumptions that these needs call for a tyrant is to misread Machiavelli. Driven by his appraisal of contemporary Italy, he was

¹⁸⁴For more on the "poet" Machiavelli, see Montanari, *Poesia* and "Fantasia e calcolo."

compelled to deal with a gray area about which traditional moral, political, and historical theories were either silent or inadequate. He sums up the political dilemma succinctly:

Reconstituting a city's political life assumes a good man, and becoming the prince of a republic through violent means assumes a bad man. Therefore one will very seldom find it happening that a good man seeks to become prince through evil means, even though his final purpose be good, or that an evil man, once he has become prince, seeks to do good, since it never enters his mind to use for the good that authority which he has gained wickedly.¹⁸⁵

The battleground of *The Prince* is an arena that is not as clearly polarized. There Machiavelli senses the need for applying new criteria in a new situation: personal energy and aptitude—not natural law or recourse to theological determinism, but laws designed to foster freedom, security for the common weal, and a call for loyalty. The autonomous world of politics requires a relativism that acknowledges the impossibility of isolating a single characteristic of a leader that always ensures success, as we see in the discussion of impetuosity and circumspection in Chapter 25. The difference between *The Discourses* and *The Prince* is the difference between description and prescription. Those who see the outlines of despotism in *The Prince* see it in two dimensions; they ignore the background against which it is created and the foreground's imaginative suggestions for impressing a new form on the material available. To paraphrase a remark from *The Discourses* (I, 11), *The Prince* tells how to fashion a beautiful statue out of a rough block of marble, not out of a stone already mangled by someone else.

Yet what causes the man Machiavelli to be a constant source of fascination is the fact that all his realistic, pragmatic "actual truth" occurs and operates in a fictive world. Not that *The Prince* is intentionally unhistorical, but its historical examples have been created and shaped. We do not read about the historical Cesare Borgia, for example, or even the history of Cesare Borgia: he is an historical character in *The Prince*. Machiavelli never had active power of his own: he could only cloak himself with the persona. His fantasy world, his created world replaces and outlines how he might have acted. By turning to his work, then, we can see the illuminating results that that world records.

¹⁸⁵*Discourses*, I, 18 (B., p. 182; ML, p. 171; W.I, p. 261; Pen., pp. 163–164; AG.I, p. 243); the context emphasizes the problem of freedom amid corruption and the need for a government of the people to give way to authority centralized in a king. For more on the problem this gray area raises, see note to Chapter 15, lines 56–60.

*The
Prince*

Dedicatory Letter. This has produced much confusion and polemic; see Introduction, pp. 23–24, for the basic issues.

1–3. Cf. an ancient example of advice to a ruler: Isocrates, *To Nicocles*, 1–2. The prose style of Machiavelli's opening paragraph, and indeed of the entire Dedicatory Letter, is markedly different from the direct, logical, and sometimes telegraphic style of *The Prince*. The ornate quality is consonant with the high style appropriate to a formal epistle and is more a function of the courtly recipient than an imitation of Isocrates, although his oration shares the spirit of Machiavelli's letter. Isocrates, too, believes his best "gift" to Nicocles, the young king of Cyprus, is advice about how to govern.

3. The superscript "a" here and all such letters refer to textual problems covered in Appendix A, whose designations are based on line and chapter numbers.

10. Here Machiavelli offers a concise approach to political affairs, one rooted in respect for previous example. He sets instructive examples of great deeds by great men side by side with his own contemporary observations, although the former define the criteria by which the latter are judged (see note to ch. 6, lines 5–12, and Introduction, pp. 58–59). The word *esperienza*, "experience," has two meanings in Italian: one is the particular sense of knowledge gained from an experiment or trial, the other the more Cartesian sense of knowledge derived from a generalized participation in, or observation of, a variety of events. Machiavelli uses it in the latter sense (Russo). In the Dedicatory Letter to the *Discourses*, Machiavelli speaks of "what I know and have learned from long experience (*pratica*) and constant reading in worldly affairs" (B, p. 121; ML, p. 101; W.I., p. 201; Pen., p. 93; AG.I, p. 188).

12. The emphasis on concision and selection suggests that Machiavelli considers *The Prince* a work of art.

15. The usual reading for what I have translated as "nevertheless" is the Latin *tamen*, but the printer of the first edition of *The Prince* in 1532 used *nondimeno*. Perhaps he was particularly attuned to Machiavelli's use of *nondimeno* and *nondimanco*; both words reverberate throughout the text. I have paid special attention to retaining them whenever they occur—in seventeen of the twenty-six chapters. These "neverthelesses" punctuate and add zest to the narration. They invariably pull the reader back to the serious matter at hand, which may sometimes get submerged when Machiavelli becomes discursive.

Dedicatory Letter

Niccolò Machiavelli

to

the Magnificent

Lorenzo de' Medici

In most cases, those who wish to win a prince's favor usually present themselves before him with what they most prize, or what they perceive that he most^a enjoys. Hence we often see princes given horses, armor, cloth of gold, precious stones, and other such beautiful objects worthy of their greatness. I therefore wish to offer myself to Your Magnificence with some evidence of my devotion: I have found nothing among my resources that I cherish or value as much as my knowledge of the deeds of great men, learned from wide experience of recent events and a constant reading of classical authors. I have extensively and diligently scrutinized and thought through these matters; I have now reduced them into a little volume which I send to Your Magnificence.

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Although I consider this work unworthy of being offered to you, nevertheless I am quite confident that your human kindness may cause you to accept it, considering that I am unable to give you a greater gift than the power to understand in a moment

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19. Cf. "it would be evident that during the fifteen years I have been studying the art of the state I have neither slept nor played" (quoted in Introduction, p. 20). But the note of pride in Machiavelli's acuity and perception is as apparent as the delight in scientifically synthesizing a vast amount of knowledge and making it "very quickly" available in a condensed abstract. Hence my belief that the "gift" Machiavelli offers in *The Prince* is that of his mind, his intelligence; see Introduction, pp. 22–23.

23. Cf. Isocrates, *Philip*. 27–28. Machiavelli refers to the diction of the numerous and highly rhetorical treatises on the education of a prince, the *de regimine principum* literature, and sharply distinguishes the style of his treatise from the ordinary kind.

28–34. The content of this elaborate comparison barely saves it from being an "elaborate decoration." Its circularity and diffusion are far from the abrupt comparisons of Machiavelli's usual terse and homey style—the style which characterizes the speaking voice of *The Prince* and attempts to establish the plain-speaking honesty of that voice. But the comparison does call attention to the flexibility Machiavelli claims for his procedure: his metaphorical perspective as a painter enables him to perceive the prince (mountains) from the viewpoint of the people (lowlands). Hence he is in a better position to recommend as well as to represent. It might be noted that Machiavelli's metaphor here is a little confused.

38. See Introduction, pp. 19–20, for Machiavelli's speculation about the consequences of not giving *The Prince* to Giuliano de' Medici. As the Introduction argues, Machiavelli's personal stake in *The Prince* is high.

41. For a discussion of "Fortune" and "fortune," see Introduction, pp. 71–72. The "undeserving . . . considerable, and continuous malice of Fortune" is a basic theme throughout *The Prince*; it is also, as here, a motivating force for Machiavelli's having written the work. See, too, the phrase "the singular and inordinate malice of Fortune" to explain Cesare Borgia's downfall (ch. 7, lines 61–62) and "the malice of my fate" (Introduction, p. 18). The recent events of 1512–1513 certainly corroborate his feelings; see Introduction, pp. 15–16.

*all that I have learned and understood, with many hardships
and dangers, over the course of many years. I have not embel- 20
lished or inflated this work with abundant rhythmical cadences
or with turgid and grandiloquent words; neither are there any
other blandishments and^b irrelevant decorations with which
many authors usually describe and bedeck their writings. For
I desired either that it be honored by nobody, or that it be 25
accepted solely for its unusual content and its serious topic. I
trust that it will not be deemed presumptuous if a man of low
and inferior condition ventures to treat of, and establish rules
for, a prince's administration. People who draw landscapes
proceed to a low point on a plain in order to study the nature
of mountains and higher elevations; they proceed to mountain- 30
tops in order to study the nature of the lowlands. Just so, to
understand the nature of the people fully, one must be a prince;
to understand the nature of princes fully, one must be of the
people.*

*Therefore, Your Magnificence, please accept this little gift in 35
the spirit with which I send it. If you read it and consider it
assiduously, you will recognize my intense desire that you attain
that greatness which Fortune and your other abilities promise
you. And, Your Magnificence, if from the summit of your
eminence you sometimes cast your eyes down upon these low- 40
lands, you will realize how undeservedly I endure Fortune's
considerable and continuous malice.*

The Prince. The early editions call the study *Il Principe*. Since no editions were published during Machiavelli's lifetime, we do not know definitely what his own title was. In his December 10, 1513, letter to Vettori it is "*uno opusculo De principibus*" (Introduction, p. 19); in *Discourses*, III, 41, it is "*nostro trattato 'De Principe'*" (B, p. 496; ML, p. 529; Pen., p. 516; AG.I, p. 520). Elsewhere he refers to it as "*nostro tratto de 'Principati'*" (*Discourses* II, 1. [B, p. 278; ML, p. 280; W.I, p. 360; Pen., p. 273; AG.I, p. 327]. Contemporaries generally referred to it by its Latin title. In Machiavelli's usage a "prince" refers to any ruler, whether his powers are absolute or those agreed to by the people he governs; it is a generic title that can refer to the ruler of a small town or of an empire.

The Various Kinds. . . . All chapter titles were originally in Latin, thus linking this vernacular treatise with the tradition of *de regimine principum* works. This is important, for it provided Machiavelli's contemporaries with a definite measure by which to gauge the extent to which he echoed the tradition—and the extent to which he made innovations within it. See Allan Gilbert, *Forerunners*, and Felix Gilbert, "Humanist Concept."

3. An antithesis, basic to Machiavelli's political thinking, which is clearly stated several years later when he wrote "Florentine Affairs" (1519–1520) at the request of Pope Leo X; see Appendix B, 1, 1. This opening sentence is often claimed to contradict *Discourses*, I, 2, where the Roman mixed government (*stato misto*) is called "una republica perfetta" (B, p. 135; ML, p. 117; W.I, p. 216; Pen., p. 111; AG.I, p. 200). It seems clear, however, that the *stati de mezzo* operate on the basis of a combination of self-defeating methods poorly adapted for republics and principedoms. On the other hand, Machiavelli's approval of the Roman *stato misto* rests on its ability to balance and harmonize the best elements in a workable arrangement. As his "Florentine Affairs" makes clear, Florence's inability to be either a republic or a principedom and even to select the best governing methods of the two resulted in the upheavals that plagued her history. What Machiavelli is really discussing in *Discourses*, I, 2 is his theory of the cyclical devolution of the state; see Introduction, p. 35. The reasons why Rome was "perfect" is because, with her combination of consuls, senators, and tribunes, she had arrived at a balanced, stable mixture. This interpretation is certainly what Guicciardini, commenting on the *Discourses*, I, 2 has in mind; see Appendix B, 1, 2.

7. Francesco Sforza (1401–1466) was the son of the famous *condottiere* Muzio Attendolo Sforza, the first Sforza to gain significant power; see Introduction, p. 38. A valiant soldier like his father, Francesco successfully defended Milan against the Venetians, then—with Medici support—used the Venetians to his advantage to gain control of Milan in 1450; in 1447 he married the daughter of Filippo Maria Visconti, who was Duke of Milan from 1412 to 1447; see Introduction, p. 39. Machiavelli considers Francesco Sforza a model for a "new prince"; see Introduction, p. 39. Francesco's youngest son was the famous Ludovico "Il Moro" Sforza.

10. For Ferdinand the Catholic, see Introduction, pp. 45–46. He "acquired" Naples in 1504 through the Treaty of Blois; see Introduction, pp. 46–47. For his subsequent attempts to control Italy, see Introduction, pp. 54–55. He too is considered a model for a "new prince."

12–13. See below, notes to Chapters 12 to 14, for this distinction basic to Machiavelli's thought. He approves of Cesare Borgia in Chapter 7 for renouncing the troops Louis XII was willing to give him. See note to Chapter 7, lines 180–182.

13–14. A common disjunction in Machiavelli's writings. The interpretation of, and the bibliography about, the function of these words in Machiavelli's corpus is extremely involved and lengthy; see Introduction, pp. 69–74.

The Prince

1

The Various Kinds of Princedom and How They May Be Acquired

All states and all dominions that have had or now have authority over men have been and now are either republics or princedom. Princedom are either hereditary, in which case their lord's ancestors have been the ruling princes for a long time, or they are new. The latter are either totally new, as was Milan for Francesco Sforza, or they are like appendages to the hereditary state of the prince who acquires them, as is the Kingdom of Naples for the King of Spain. Dominions so acquired are either accustomed to living under a prince or are used to being free. They are acquired either with the armies of others or with one's own, either through Fortune or through *virtù*.

Concerning. . . . The brevity of this chapter indicates that Machiavelli's interest lies much more in new principdoms than dynastic, or hereditary, ones. The latter are the subject of *Discourses*, III, 5, but as early as I, 10 Machiavelli cites the example of the Roman Empire degenerating into ruin once it became hereditary. Dynastic considerations are discussed with reference to Marcus Aurelius and Commodus; see below, pp.299; 307. Therefore he feels that analyzing this kind of monarchy is hardly worth the effort. Aristotle is also suspicious of dynastic sovereignty: *Pol.* 3. 10. 9, 1286b23–25; 5. 8. 20, 1312b21–26. Machiavelli may have had these lines in mind when speaking of Rome: "But later when they began to make sovereignty inherited instead of elective, the heirs quickly began to degenerate from their ancestors" (*D.* I, 2 [B, p. 131; ML, p. 112; W.I, p. 213; Pen., p. 107; AG.I, p. 197]); see also Polybius 6. 7.6, but see note to Chapter 3, lines 162ff. on the question of whether or not Machiavelli knew Polybius 6.

2. *Discourses*, passim., but especially Book I. But this little aside has precipitated drastic disagreement about the dating of *The Prince* and *The Discourses*; see Introduction, pp. 24–25.

3–6. Namely the outline proposed in Chapter 1, which establishes the plan and distinctions in the subsequent argument of *The Prince*. Note the attention to constructing and creating; the Italian for "shall consider" is *disputerò*, a strong word (think of Raphael's "The Dispute [*Disputà*] of the Sacrament" in the *Stanza della Segnatura* of the Vatican). Thus the diction of this one sentence gives us a sense of the poles between which Machiavelli operates in *The Prince*: logical planned argument, on the one hand, and impassioned, constructive proposals on the other.

13–19. In the *Discourses*, III, 5, Machiavelli says: "Princes should know, then, that they begin to lose their power the moment they begin to disregard the laws, ancient traditions, and customs under which men have lived for a long time" (B, p. 389; ML, p. 409; W.I, p. 469; Pen., p. 396; AG.I, p. 427). Machiavelli has Piero Soderini's father lecture the sons of Piero de Medici, Giuliano and Lorenzo (Lorenzo the Magnificent) on this topic in 1469; see *History*, VII, 24 (G², p. 489; Htb, p. 340; AG.III, pp. 1367–1368). Aristotle notes that tyrannical rule and the abrogation of legal prerogatives are frequent causes of the downfall of princes (*Pol.* 5. 8. 22–3; 1313a3, 11–16). The notion of using "delaying tactics when faced with unforeseen events [*accidenti*]" requires some elaboration. At this point Machiavelli is specifying the characteristics of dynastic and hereditary princes. But these conditions are quite unlike those of a "new prince," to whom Machiavelli's work is chiefly directed. Such a prince cannot indulge himself in "delaying tactics." He needs foresight and advance preparations to deal with the shifting variables of political reality; see notes to Chapter 3, lines 183, 189, and 203–204. There is no reason to assume, however, that Machiavelli believes "active" politics preclude quiet, cautious measures; prudence and diligence can be as much a part of *virtù* as powerful, energetic action; compromise can be as effective as conquest. On this point, see note on Chapter 3, lines 118–119.

13–14. That is, if he practices Machiavelli's kind of *virtù*. In this translation "diligence" and sometimes "skill" translate *industria*, often a convenient gloss on *virtù*—see the last sentence of Chapter 3, p. 125 below.

15. The "force" is Fortune; even *virtù* cannot guarantee success in every case, a point elaborated later.

16–17. The rapier-like thrust of this clause is characteristic of Machiavelli's style at its best and most terse. In the Italian text this paragraph is one long, periodic sentence; it ends with "regains" (*riacquista*), thus coloring the whole paragraph with an optimistic sense of reconquest and recovery. Compare this idea with the one expressed in Chapter 24, lines 50–53.

18. Machiavelli compresses the facts surrounding two successive Dukes of Ferrara from the House of Este, indeed one of the most "long-established" of all Italian ruling families. In *History* I, 21 (G², p. 109; Htb, p. 26; AG.III, p. 1059) Machiavelli discusses

2

Concerning Hereditary Princedom

I shall refrain from discussing republics because I have discussed them at length elsewhere. I shall concern myself solely with princedom; I shall proceed by weaving in the aforementioned threads and shall consider how these princedom may be governed and retained. 5

I submit, then, that hereditary states accustomed to their prince's lineage are retained with many fewer difficulties than are new states, because it is enough for the hereditary prince merely to observe the customary practices of his forefathers and then to use delaying tactics when faced with unforeseen events. Hence if this kind of prince uses normal diligence, he will always retain his power unless an extraordinary and extreme force deprives him of it; even if he is deprived of it, he regains it whenever adversity strikes the usurper. 10 15

We have an example in Italy: the Duke of Ferrara, who withstood the attacks of the Venetians in 1484

the early history of the Este. Seeking to extend her territory, Venice declared war on May 3, 1482, against Ercole I d'Este, duke from 1471 to 1505. The war—involving shifting alliances among the pope (Sixtus IV), Naples, Milan, Mantua, and Bologna—lasted until August 7, 1484, and the Peace of Bagnolo (Introduction, p. 40). In December of 1508 Ercole's son, Alfonso I, duke from 1505 to 1535, joined the League of Cambrai (Introduction, p. 54). In February, 1510, Pope Julius II concluded a separate peace with Venice, but Alfonso I stayed in the League. Julius attacked Ferrara, excommunicated Alfonso, and continued to harass Ferrara until his death in 1513.

22–24. Machiavelli's phrase for "hereditary prince" is *principe naturale*; compare the passage in Appendix B, 2, 1, written before 1286 and first published in 1473. The "unusual (*extraordinarii*) vices" are the second cause—after "extraordinary and extreme force"—for the downfall of an hereditary prince.

29. The metaphor is taken from a technical term in architecture. "Indentation" translates *addentallato*—a series of toothed projections, or dovetails, left on a structure so that an addition may be fitted onto the building later. For a discussion of architectural metaphors and their significance in *The Prince*, see Introduction, pp. 82–83.

and those of Pope Julius II in 1510 for no reason 20
other than his long-established rule in that domin-
ion. An hereditary prince has fewer reasons and less
necessity for causing trouble; hence it follows that
he will be more loved. If unusual vices do not make
him hated, it is reasonable that his subjects will 25
naturally be well disposed toward him. Recollec-
tions of, and reasons for, reforms fade away with
the permanence and duration of his sway: one
change always leaves indentations for the construc-
tion of another. 30

Concerning Mixed Princedoms. For a suggestion about the special pertinence of mixed princedoms to Giuliano de' Medici and a parallel with Cesare Borgia, see Clough, *Researches*, pp. 54–58; for a suggested parallel with Lorenzo (II) de' Medici, again see Clough, pp. 69–70.

2. "But like an appendage" translates *ma come membro*; the idea is analogous to botanical grafting and relates to Machiavelli's image of "putting down roots," a specific problem for a new prince in a new princedom (see pp. 157 and 319 for other examples; also the Introduction, p. 83). The image conveys the idea of a new, large princedom composed of several smaller princedoms that, before the creation of the new state, were each accustomed to being governed by a single prince.

5–7. See the passages from *Discourses*, III, 21 and I, 37, and the letter known as "Fantasies" (all Appendix B, 3, 1, 2, and 3).

8–11. See the passage from *Discourses*, I, 16 in Appendix B, 3, 4; but here it is less a question of subjects rising up to throw off the yoke of an oppressor than it is one of their being defenseless when they have done so—hence they are the victims of poor judgment in the first place.

3

Concerning Mixed Princedom

In a new princedom, however, difficulties do arise. First, if it is not totally new but like an appendage (so that we can almost call the entire princedom a mixed one), changes originate primarily in a natural difficulty, evident in every new princedom: men are willing to change their ruler if they expect improvements. This expectation induces them to take up arms against the prince; but they deceive themselves by so doing because with experience they subsequently realize that matters have become worse. Such a situation follows from another natural and normal necessity: a new prince always has to cause his new subjects inconvenience, both with soldiers and with countless other abuses resulting directly from his new acquisitions. Hence everyone whom you have inconvenienced by taking possession of that princedom is your enemy; you cannot keep as allies those who got you there, because you are unable to gratify them in the way that they had

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27. See pp. 147, 149 below, "For the innovator . . . in the new order." "Strong medicines" is synonymous with "cruelty," "ruthlessness," and "drastic measures"—a common expression in sixteenth-century Italian political writings. Cf. Guicciardini, *Dialogo*, II: "This disease, which is hard to cure, would require strong medicine and, to speak in the vernacular, ruthlessness [*crudeltà*]" (*Dialogo e discorsi*, 161). This medical metaphor, often as casual as a reference to "remedy," forms a neat tie between this chapter and Chapters 6 through 10, in which it reappears pointedly in slightly shifting contexts; see Introduction, p. 82. Ruthless measures are further discussed in Chapters 8 and 17. The direct address here to the prince, in the familiar "tu" form, is an important device to establish intimacy and immediacy, as well as to remind us that *The Prince* is addressed to a ruler; for the sole exception, see note to Chapter 19, line 58.

25–26. For Louis XII's claim to and campaign against Milan, see Introduction, p. 46. The French governed the city so poorly, however, that the Milanese persuaded Ludovico Sforza to return; he recaptured Milan in February of 1500. Guicciardini notes that Ludovico "recovered Milan with the same ease with which he lost it and . . . the Milanese turned out to be more anxious and joyful about his return than about his departure" (*Italy*, IV, 13 [Pan. I, 387]). At this point Machiavelli drops the historical analogy, which is curious, given his contempt for mercenaries: Ludovico was betrayed by his Swiss mercenaries two months later at the battle of Novara (April 5, 1500). Hence one would think that either here or in Chapter 12 Machiavelli would spin out this exemplary tale. Another detail, which also would fit Machiavelli's thesis, is mentioned in Guicciardini: Louis XII, through political passivity and economic tightfistedness, let the Swiss gain hold of the town of Bellinzona, thus making it easier for them to attack Milan at a later date (*Italy*, IV, 14 [Pan., I, 392]). Machiavelli rather bitterly alludes again in the last paragraph of Chapter 24 to the events after the taking of Milan.

26. Ludovico Sforza: throughout the translation I have expanded the proper names of historical figures. What is lost by retaining Machiavelli's frequent use of an abbreviated form—namely, the flavor of an assumed familiarity on the part of the author and reader—is presumably compensated for by increased clarity for modern readers. This decision violates the spirit of the text, and I hope the reader will keep in mind that Machiavelli often does strive for such intimacy.

40. Machiavelli was rather contemptuous of Ludovico's *virtù*. While this disdain is not apparent at the end of the previous paragraph, here he is condescending both toward Louis XII and toward Ludovico—"a Duke Ludovico." Two contemporaries also had little respect for Ludovico: Comynnes found him cowardly and untrustworthy (*Mémoires*, VII, 3) and Guicciardini took him to task for his vanity, ambition, and deceit (*Italy* IV, 14 [Pan., I, 393; Alexander, p. 155]; see also Guicciardini's *Ricordi*, C. 91 [B, p. 107]). Another slap at Ludovico: there is a hint that the disturbance is more smoke than fire. The "whole world" (line 43) is an allusion to the Holy League. For that and the battle of Ravenna, see Introduction, p. 55.

47. The mention of "general causes" (*cagioni universali*) here and the presence of analogous phrases elsewhere—"questa è una massima" (*D.*, II, 17 [B, p. 323; ML, p. 332; W.I., p. 404; Pen., p. 323; AG.I, p. 368]) "questa è una regola generale" (*War*, III [Guerra, p. 417; LLA, p. 101; AG.II, p. 641])—has raised the issue among many commentators of whether or not Machiavelli's method is inductive or deductive; see Introduction, pp. 79–80.

taken for granted—nor can you use strong medicines against them since you are indebted to them. 20
Even if a new prince has one of the strongest armies, to enter a region he always needs the good will of the local people. For these reasons Louis XII, King of France, quickly took possession of Milan—and 25
quickly lost it. The first time Ludovico Sforza's own troops were enough to take it away from him, because once those people who had opened the gates to him discovered that they were mistaken in their judgment and in the future benefits they had anticipated, they could not tolerate the irritations 30
caused by the new prince.

And it is quite true that when rebellious localities are reacquired they are less easily lost because the ruler, taking advantage of the rebellion, secures his position with fewer scruples than before: he 35
punishes those who neglected their fealty, gets information about whom he suspects, and protects himself at his weakest points. Thus for the French king to lose Milan the first time, a Duke Ludovico 40
had only to create a disturbance on his frontiers; for the king to lose it a second time, he had to have the whole world against him and his armies had to be destroyed or driven out of Italy—results of the causes mentioned above. Nevertheless, the city was 45
taken away from the king both times.

The general causes for the first loss have been discussed. It now remains to describe those for the second and to see what remedies he had, and what

57–58. “Living as a free community” (*vivere liberi*) means living in a state that is not governed by foreigners, hence a state living “in freedom” with “free government” —one that has chosen its form of government (cf. *D.*, I, 16, 49; II, 2, 3; III, 24, 25). For an indication that the problem has more ramifications than are given here, see the last two sentences of Chapter 5; the general discussion in *Discourses*, I, 16–17, 55; and Machiavelli’s quip in *D.*, III, 3 (B, p. 386; ML., p. 405; W.I., p. 466; Pen., p. 393; AG.I, p. 425)—“whoever takes over as a tyrant and does not murder Brutus and whoever liberates a state and does not murder Brutus’s sons stays in power a short time.”

58–60. Twice in the *Rhetoric* Aristotle cites similar adages: 1. 15. 14; 1376a, and 2. 21. 11; 1395a. Cf. Herodotus 1. 155.

63–67. Machiavelli is trying to emphasize how long these regions have generally been considered part of France: Burgundy was claimed a part of France in 1477; Brittany was part of the dowry that Anne of Brittany brought Charles VIII in 1491, and was finally annexed in 1515; Gascony was taken over from the English by Charles VII in 1453; Normandy was added by Philip Augustus in 1204. French did not become the official language of the civil government until the Edict of Villers-Cotterêts, proclaimed by Francis I in 1539.

73. Here the phrase “one body” (*tutto uno corpo*) is a way of indicating how the “mixed” nature of the principedom becomes less apparent through time. In the letter referred to in the note to line 79 below, Machiavelli also uses the phrase “to make of it one body” (*farne un medesimo corpo*). The idea is related to that of “grafting” discussed in the note to line 2 of this chapter. Russo draws particular attention to this paragraph as an example of the way in which Machiavelli radically altered conventional political thought; see Introduction, pp. 79–80.

75–76. The heterogeneity is particularly problematical when the governing institutions are different; here and for the recommendation below that the prince go and live there in person, see Chapter 5, as well as *D.*, I, 16–17, 55.

great good fortune and diligence (*Gran fortuna e grande industria*): reminiscent of the distinction between *fortuna* and *virtù*; but “fortune” has not the force, power, and ramifications of “Fortune” here. See the notes to Chapter 7, below.

77–79. See below, Chapter 5, and the same opinion in the letter to Vettori, January 31, 1515 (G¹), pp. 374–375; Hale, pp. 155–156; Gpb, pp. 185–186; AG.II, p. 962).

means anyone who might be in his position can 50
have to enable him to retain his acquisitions better
than did the French king. Now I submit that those
acquired states which are added onto a state long
held by the man who acquires them either are in the 55
same region and of the same language, or else they
are not. When they are, it is very easy to hold on to
them—particularly when they are not used to living
as a free community. To possess them securely, it is
enough to wipe out the line of princes who were 60
reigning, because—as far as other matters are con-
cerned—if their previous situation is retained and
there is homogeneity of customs, men live quietly.
We have seen this to be true of Burgundy, Brittany,
Gascony, and Normandy: they have remained with 65
France for a long time; although there is some dif-
ference in language, nevertheless their customs are
alike so they can easily get along with one another.
Whoever conquers such states, if he wishes to hold
on to them, must consider two matters: first, extir- 70
pating the family of their former princes; second,
making no modification in their laws or their tax
system. So in a very short time they join and be-
come as one body with their former principedom.

But difficulties arise when one acquires states in 75
a region where the language, customs, and institu-
tions are heterogeneous; here great good fortune
and diligence are required to hold on to them. One
of the greatest, most effective remedies would be for
the conqueror to go to them and live there in person.

82. Translates *Grecia*, but the geographical area includes more than present-day Greece. Machiavelli refers to the gradual extension of the Ottoman Empire momentarily culminating in the capture of Constantinople in 1453 by Mohammed II, who promptly made it his capital.

85–89. I have strained the text slightly in order to emphasize the medical metaphor. Machiavelli is talking about a fundamental characteristic of a leader with *virtù*: foresightfulness. He states in his letter to Francesco Vettori, June 20, 1513: “I believe that the duty of a prudent man is constantly to consider what may harm him and to foresee problems in the distance—to aid the good and to thwart the evil in plenty of time” (G¹, p. 259; Gpb, p. 118; AG.II, p. 911). In the *Discourses*, I, 18, Machiavelli defines a wise man as someone who “sees these troubles at a great distance and in their initial stages” (B, p. 182; ML, p. 170; W.I, pp. 260–261; Pen., p. 163; AG.I, p. 242). Compare Chapter 13, lines 121–123 below.

92–94. Chapter 19 offers a fuller consideration of how to encourage love and discourage hatred and contempt among subjects.

98. The example of Rome in this respect is a convincing one for Machiavelli. In the first sentence of *History II*, he refers to sending out colonial settlements as one of the greatest *ordini* the ancients developed (G², p. 137; Htb, p. 46; AG.III, p. 1080). In the *Discourses*, I, 1 it is seen as a cheap, secure method of defending newly conquered territory (B, p. 126; ML, p. 106; W.I, p. 208; Pen., p. 101; AG.I, p. 193). See also *Discourses*, II, 6, 19.

104–109. One of Machiavelli’s more realistic assessments. Like a good poker player, he is always aware of the odds: “Besides, a prince can never secure himself against a hostile populace, because they are many; he can secure himself against rich people because they are few” (ch. 9, lines 43–46 below). See also *Discourses*, I, 16, where he commiserates with princes who are forced to go beyond the legal limits when opposed by too many people; he notes that when the populace is one’s enemy it is difficult to feel secure. Cf. note to Chapter 19, lines 1–6.

This move would bring about a more secure and a 80
more permanent occupation—as it has done for the
Turks in the Balkan Peninsula. With all the other
methods they practiced to hold on to that area, had
they not gone there to live they would not possibly
have held on to it. The reason is that if one is there, 85
one sees the disorders as they flare up and one can
quickly remedy them; if one is not, one hears of
them when they are serious and no longer remedia-
ble. Moreover the region cannot be plundered by 90
one's official representatives, and one's subjects are
content with direct access to their prince: hence
they have more cause to love you, if they intend to
be good; and to fear you, if they intend to be other-
wise. Any outsider would be more cautious about
attacking such a state. All things considered, if a 95
prince lives there he can lose it only with the great-
est difficulty.

Establishing colonial settlements in one or two
places so that they may be like shackles on that
state is another and better remedy, because a prince 100
must either do that, or else garrison many cavalry
and infantry units there. A prince does not spend
much on settlements, so with little or no expense he
can establish and retain them. He causes trouble
only to those—an unimportant part of that state— 105
whose fields and houses he appropriates to accom-
modate the new inhabitants; those whom he trou-
bles, since they are scattered and indigent, can never
threaten him. On the one hand all the rest are un-

118–119. “men . . . destroyed” (*vezzeggiaro o spegnere*). This phrase has become proverbial; with utilitarian economy it pinpoints what actions a new prince must accomplish. Note how the rhythm begins to pick up in the previous sentence—a rapid-fire recapitulation of the foregoing argument—thus preparing the way for this pointed “aphorism.” Early in his career Machiavelli had written about the method that was used to deal with the rebellious population of the Val di Chiana (“Method,” 1503). He draws a parallel with the Romans, who “once thought that a rebellious population ought to be either helped or destroyed, and that every other method was extremely dangerous” (*Guerra*, 73–74; cf. p. 72). For similar expressions of this basic idea, see the quotation and references in Appendix B, 3, 5. Nevertheless, it is too simplistic to assume that diametrically opposed alternatives are the only ones Machiavelli offers or supports. Two passages in *The Prince* (“Nevertheless a prince . . . fade more quickly” [Ch. 17, lines 58–75 below] and “Hence a new prince . . . been established and stabilized” [Ch. 19, lines 411–418 below]) are important correctives to interpreting these “alternatives.” See also the passage in the *Discourses* quoted in the note to Chapter 15, lines 47–49, as an important caution; and Whitfield (*Discourses*, pp. 37–55), who is helpful in setting this phrase in proper perspective, for these and other cross-references. Whitfield argues that Machiavelli, when he deems the situation appropriate, is prepared to follow the middle way and to compromise; he is answering the contention of Chabod, pp. 126–148, that Machiavelli rejects completely any notion of compromise. For a related thought, juxtapose Machiavelli’s ideas about neutrality; see Chapter 21, lines 48–52, and note.

122. Cf. *Discourses*, II, 23: “A prince who does not punish someone who errs in such a way that he can never err again is considered either stupid or cowardly” (B, p. 347; ML, p. 360; W.I, p. 427; Pen., p. 349; AG.I, p. 390). Machiavelli categorizes injuries into those that affect property, life, or honor in *Discourses*, III, 6; see Appendix B, 3, 6.

138–139. The example of a “foreign invader as powerful as he” is probably an allusion to Louis XII’s failure to prevent Ferdinand the Catholic from entering the Kingdom of Naples; see Introduction, pp. 46–47. It is too bad that Louis XII was not privy to a letter Machiavelli wrote to the Dieci on Nov. 21, 1500, in which he notes that Louis ought to heed the following typical prescriptions for taking possession of foreign territory: “reduce the power of strong leaders, pamper the subjects, maintain alliances, and protect oneself against ‘buddies,’ namely those who want to have equal power with him in such a place” (*Leg.* I, 205; Chiappelli [1971], p. 458).

harmed and hence will probably be quiet; on the 110
other hand they are afraid of making a mistake and
fear that what happened to those who were dispossessed might happen to them. I conclude that these
settlements are inexpensive, more loyal, and less
troublesome; the troublesome people can do no 115
harm because they are indigent and scattered—as I
have mentioned. And in this connection it has to be
noted that men ought to be either pampered or de-
stroyed: for men can avenge slight injuries, but not
severe ones; hence an injury done to a man ought 120
to be such that there is no fear of reprisal. But if a
prince garrisons armed forces instead of maintain-
ing settlements, he spends a great deal more, for he
consumes all the revenue from that state in protect-
ing it: thus his gain becomes a loss. He causes a great 125
deal more trouble because he hurts the entire state
by switching around his army's camps. Everyone
feels some of this hardship and everyone becomes
his enemy; and these are enemies who can do him
harm because, even though they are defeated, they 130
are in their own houses. In every respect, then, this
form of protection is as ineffective as the colonial
form is effective.

Furthermore a prince in a region with heterogene-
ous customs and language ought, as I have said, to 135
make himself the leader and defender of his less
powerful neighbors, endeavor to weaken the pow-
erful^a ones, and take care lest a foreign invader as
powerful as he come in unexpectedly. It will always

143ff. See Introduction, p. 33. In the analogy the Romans are the “leader(s)” and “defender(s)” of the “less powerful” Aetolians; Philip is one of the “powerful”; Antiochus III, King of Syria, is a “powerful foreign invader.”

144–145. Historically speaking, this is an exaggerated assertion.

153. The word “unite” translates *fanno uno globo*, a military image; similar to “forming a square” for protection under attacks on all sides. Obviously this union is not motivated solely by “envy” (line 148), but by fear of aggression. In his letter to Vettori, December 10, 1514, Machiavelli predicts, in accordance with the ideas expressed here, that the states in Lombardy would go over to France if Louis XII were to invade Genoa or Tuscany (G¹, p. 354; Gpb, p. 170; AG.II, pp. 950–951).

162. Guicciardini has a rather caustic *ricordo* that may have been prompted by Machiavelli’s almost total admiration of the Romans; see Appendix B, 3, 7. For more on the Romans and Machiavelli’s conception of them, see Introduction, pp. 34–35.

162ff. For the historical events alluded to here, see Introduction, p. 33, and Chapter 21, lines 66ff., below; the strong, weak, and foreign relationships prevail. What Machiavelli admires about the Peace of Apamea, concluded in 188 B.C., was the intelligence with which the Romans handled the situation. Antiochus was forced to restrict his Seleucid empire to a continental state in Asia. And instead of rewarding their recent allies with chunks of territory, the Romans made the state of Pergamum very powerful, thus creating a balance of power that “humbled” the Kingdom of Macedonia (line 173) and checked the ambitions of other states in that part of the world. The actual source for this historical material is the subject of a lively debate. Polybius 18. 32–35; 20–22. 15 and Livy 37 cover this material. See Hexter, *SR* (1956) pp. 75–96, and Sasso, *GSLI* (1958), pp. 215–259.

turn out that the invader will be brought in by those 140
who are discontent because of either too much am-
bition or else of fear, as was the case long ago when
the Aetolians brought the Romans into Greece; in
every other region they entered, the Romans were
brought in by the natives. The order of things is 145
such that as soon as a strong invader enters a region,
all those there who are not so powerful join with
him, motivated by their envy of those who have
been ruling them. So, with respect to these less
powerful men, the invader experiences no hardship 150
in winning them over because suddenly all of them
will gladly unite with the state he has conquered.
He has but to see to it that they do not seize too
much power and influence; with his own forces and
the people's approval he can easily crush the 155
stronger powers so that he is master of everything
in that region. Whoever does not provide for these
matters properly will quickly lose what he has con-
quered; even while he holds it, he will have count-
less internal difficulties and problems. 160

In the regions they conquered, the Romans care-
fully attended to these matters: they sent in colonial
settlements, retained the less powerful without in-
creasing their strength, humbled the powerful, and
forbade potent invaders to gain an influential grip. 165
And I should like Greece to suffice as my sole exam-
ple. The Romans kept back the Achaeans and the
Aetolians, humbled the Kingdom of Macedonia,
and drove out Antiochus. They never permitted the

179. "Prevent" translates *ovviare*, which Machiavelli uses in its literal sense of "meet," "face," "confront," and consequently "obviate" or "prevent." In *Discourses*, I, 33 these disorders (*scandoli*) become *inconvenienti* and are considered at length.

183. Here and in what follows Machiavelli expresses his concern with foresight in terms of his medical metaphor—*fisici dello etico*, "pulmonary tuberculosis"; see Introduction, p. 82. Although the metaphor in its "scientific" sense is probably drawn from Galen, it had been used by Cicero (*Att.* 2. 1. 7) and Seneca (*Clem.* 1. 9. 6.; 1. 17); see also Aquinas, *De regimine principum* 1.2; 4.23. Allan Gilbert, *Forerunners*, p. 28, cites a lengthy passage from Philip Beroaldo, *De optimo status libellus* (printed as early as 1497), indicating that the prince should act as the physician of the state: amputate those who act contrary to the general good; cauterize and use harsh remedies on potentially malignant citizens. Guicciardini, in his *Ricordi*, twice draws on the comparison with someone gradually wasting away from pulmonary tuberculosis to explain why sieges (C. 34) and wars (B. 103) can endure so long. Machiavelli's dispatch dated July 20, 1505, during his third mission to Pandolfo Petrucci, also combines an emphasis on foresight with *remedio* (Leg. II, 906). See also notes to lines 21 and 85–89 of this chapter.

189. In *Pol.* 5. 7. 5; 1308a33–35 Aristotle notes that statesmen are needed to foresee evils that become malignant. Here "recognize" translates *conoscendo*; Machiavelli attributes the same power to Cosimo de' Medici: *cognosceva i mali discosto*, *History* VII, 5 (G², p. 459; Htb, p. 316, AG.III, p. 1343). In Chapter 13, below, Machiavelli again considers a wise and prudent prince's foresight in terms of *conosce e' mali*; he also refers to this passage at 114ff. of Chapter 13.

Achaean or the Aetolian to expand their state despite the merits of those people; nor were they ever induced by the coaxing of Philip of Macedon into an alliance with him until they humbled him; nor could the power Antiochus had make them agree to his holding any land in that region. The Romans did, in fact, what all wise princes ought to do: not only must they be on their guard for actual political disorders, but also for potential ones; they must prevent the latter with all their diligence. When provided for in advance, these disorders can be cured; but if you wait until they are upon you, medicine is too late—the disease has become incurable. It is the same with pulmonary tuberculosis: doctors say that it is easy to cure in its incipient stage, but hard to recognize; yet as time goes on, if not recognized and treated at the outset, it becomes easy to recognize and hard to cure. So it is with matters of state: when recognized in advance—a gift granted to prudent men only—illnesses appearing in a state are quickly healed; but when they are not recognized and are allowed to intensify so that everyone recognizes them, they can no longer be remedied.

Hence the Romans, foreseeing their difficulties, always provided remedies for them. They never tried to avoid war by letting those difficulties develop because they knew that war is not prevented, but only postponed—to the advantage of others. Therefore they resolved to fight Philip and Antio-

203–204. *Codere el beneficio del tempo*, a phrase—not without ironic undertones here, see note to Chapter 20, lines 50–53—quite common in the dispatches and writings of Florentine politicians; see Felix Gilbert, *JWCI*. It is possible that Machiavelli wishes to remind us specifically of the policies of Piero Soderini. In this connection it is interesting to note that Filippo Nerli, a contemporary of Machiavelli whose *Commentarii* are important for the genesis of *The Discourses* and for establishing Machiavelli's connection with the Rucellai family and the learned gatherings in the Orti Oricellari, says in Book V of that work that Soderini believed that “. . . with patience, reaping—as they say—the benefit of time, [he] knew how to overcome every obstacle that thwarted [him].” Guicciardini provides an interesting use of the same adage, with a combination of caution and action that is akin to Machiavelli; see Appendix B, 3, 8. The combination of *virtù* with “common sense” (*prudenzia*) at the end of the sentence is significant. The flexibility Machiavelli demands is in sharp contrast to the traditional theory which recommended stabler, more permanent values to direct men's souls to the good. But see Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* II, IIaeQ.58, art. 1, for an unconventional comment on the need for prudence in a political context.

207–209. Russo notes the delicate irony playing over this sentence: the apparent nonchalance and repetition pass gently over what would be catastrophic events in the career of a prince. In Chapter 25 this idea is partially related to the discussion of Fortune and opportunity.

212ff. See Introduction, p. 45, for why Charles VIII “held on to Italian territory” for only thirteen months. His cousin Louis XII, on the other hand, succeeded him as king. Coming into Italy in 1499, he retained a foothold in Italy until 1512; see Introduction, p. 55, for the effect of the Holy League on Louis XII. Nevertheless, in what follows, Louis is Machiavelli's target. He consistently pursued policies Machiavelli considers foolhardy: since Venice was a major power, Louis's policy should have been aimed at humbling, not reinforcing, her (see note to line 241, below). Nevertheless, Machiavelli goes on to say that he does not want to “censure” Louis's initial decision because for Machiavelli the crucial questions in this chapter are precisely those raised by the decision.

219. For the relations between Venice and Louis XII in 1499, see Introduction, p. 46.

223–224. Charles VIII poorly and carelessly planned, managed, and executed his Italian campaign. The official “barring” was the League of Venice, theoretically effective for twenty-five years. It was signed during March and April, 1495, for the mutual defense of the signatories: the pope, the emperor, Spain, Venice, and Milan. Although it did not remain inviolate, it helped to alert Italy and her neighbors to the need for maintaining a balance of power in the Italian states.

228–237. Genoa surrendered to Louis shortly after he entered Milan on October 6, 1499. Florence was desperately attempting to conquer Pisa, so in mid-October, 1499, they agreed to provide troops and money for Louis's expedition against Naples in return for the troops necessary to besiege Pisa. The problems this agreement produced come up again in Chapter 13; see also Introduction, p. 7. The Marquis of Mantua was Francesco Gonzaga; the Duke of Ferrara was Ercole d'Este; the Bentivogli of Bologna were Giovanni and his son Annibale; the countess of Forlì was Caterina Sforza; the lords were Astorre Manfredi (Faenza), Giovanni di Costanza Sforza (Pesaro), Pandolfo Malatesta (Rimini), Giulio Casare da Varano (Camerino), Jacopo d'Appiano (Piombino); finally, there were representatives from the republics of Lucca, Siena, and Pisa. The Introduction, pp. 48–50, describes how these cities were gobbled up by Cesare Borgia during his three campaigns in the Romagna as a result of Louis's inadequate policies.

chus in Greece so as not to have to fight them in 200
Italy. At that point they were able to avoid both
wars—but they chose not to. Nor were they ever
satisfied with what is constantly on the lips of cur-
rent sages, “reap the benefit of time”; but rather,
they reaped the benefit of their *virtù* and common 205
sense. Indeed, time does thrust everything forward
and can produce good as well as bad, bad as well as
good.

But let us return to France and observe whether
she conformed to any of the prescriptions men- 210
tioned. And I shall refer to Louis XII, not Charles
VIII. Since the former held on to Italian territory
longer, we can better see his procedures: you will
notice that he did the opposite of what should be
done to hold on to a state with heterogeneous cus- 215
toms and language.

King Louis was brought into Italy because of
Venetian ambitions: Venice sought to win half of
Lombardy through his coming. I have no desire to
censure the king’s decision. Since he wanted to gain 220
a foothold in Italy and had no allies in that region
—in fact, because of King Charles’s policies, all
gates were barred to him—he was obliged to accept
what alliances he could. The decision he made
would have succeeded had he not handled his other 225
affairs incorrectly. So when the king occupied Lom-
bardy, he immediately regained the prestige that
Charles had taken away from him: the Genoese
surrendered, the Florentines became his allies; the

237. An exaggeration of historical fact in terms of territory, but a dramatic way of calling attention to the tremendous power and influence France was to exercise over the Italian states during Machiavelli's lifetime.

238–241. Machiavelli cannot refrain from underlining the extent to which Louis used poor judgment. One virtue of showing the unwisdom of an action, obviously, is citing what should have been done instead. The cardinal rule that Louis failed to observe was that of championing the weaker powers. His aim was to conquer Milan and Naples—the only two Italian states that threatened the church and Venice in the first place. Instead of waiting until the weaker states saw his potential as an element of stability, he hastily got embroiled with Alexander VI (the pope from 1492 to 1503), and with his political ambitions for his son Cesare Borgia (1475–1507), in the Romagna. For the early relations between Cesare Borgia and Louis XII, see Introduction, p. 47. But by sending three hundred lancers and four thousand foot soldiers to the pope for Cesare's use in the Romagna, Louis alienated the Venetians, his former allies, who were anxious to check the pope's territorial ambitions.

242–243. Pope Alexander VI, through his son Cesare Borgia, was extending and asserting the church's temporal power. Venice was expanding into Lombardy, the northeastern area of the Romagna, and the port cities of southeastern Italy which were then in the Kingdom of Naples. For Guicciardini's comments on Venetian aims in the early 1490's, see Appendix B, 3, 9.

254–255. Machiavelli's poem *Decennale I* (1504) describes this "follow-through"; see Appendix B, 3, 10. It is interesting to turn to the day-by-day account of Cesare Borgia's first Romagna campaign, which Machiavelli gives in his first Legation to Louis XII, July to November of 1500. There he notes that Louis tried to postpone giving the pope the troops (dispatch of August 12, 1500; *Leg. I*, p. 110–111; Chiappelli [1971] p. 369.) On October 2 he writes that Louis is giving the pope more because his desire for Alexander's success makes Louis unwilling to thwart the pope openly (eds. cit., p. 160; p. 419). Cesare began his second campaign in the Romagna in September–October 1500, capturing Pesaro and Rimini, steadily moving against those ambassadors who sought Louis's aid. Although there is no causal connection, Machiavelli's dispatches grow more neutral when it appears that Cesare Borgia may attack Florence and Louis warns Cesare not to threaten the city. Louis gave in because the pope's appetite was "insatiable" (25 Oct., eds. cit.; p. 181, p. 438). It is true, however, that as early as August 27, Machiavelli said the French were "blinded by their own power and immediate necessity" (p. 126; p. 384). Thus Machiavelli maintains the kind of consistency which enables him to tell Georges d'Amboise, then the Cardinal of Rouen, that "the French had no understanding of statecraft" (below, p. 125).

256–258. Machiavelli forces the issue himself a bit here. Now he is referring to a later period: the situation in 1502 after the rebellion of Arezzo and the Val di Chiana when the Florentines were convinced that Cesare Borgia was going to attack them during his third campaign in the Romagna. For his rise of power, see Introduction, p. 48. The coincidence of Cesare's and Louis's desires for territorial expansion caused some of Machiavelli's contemporaries mistakenly to believe that Louis entered Italy to stop Cesare Borgia in July of 1502; see Introduction, pp. 49–50. This is not to say, though, that Louis was oblivious to the potential threat to French policies represented by the pope and his son, as Guicciardini points out (*Italy V*, 9).

Marquis of Mantua; the Duke of Ferrara; the Ben- 230
tiovogli; the Countess of Forlì; the lords of Faenza,
Pesaro, Rimini, Camerino, and Piombino; and the
people of Lucca, Pisa, and Siena—all came forth to
be his allies. The Venetians were then able to con-
template the recklessness of their decision; to ac- 235
quire two towns in Lombardy, they made the king
ruler over one-third^b of Italy.

Now consider with what little difficulty the king
could have retained his prestige if he had observed
the aforementioned rules and kept all his allies se- 240
cure and protected. Since they were numerous,
weak, and afraid—some afraid of the church, others
of Venice—they were always obliged to stick with
him, and by means of them he could easily have
protected himself against whoever remained strong. 245
But no sooner was he in Milan than he did the
opposite by aiding Pope Alexander VI so that the
latter might occupy the Romagna. Nor did he realize
that he was weakening his own position by this
decision—ridding himself of his allies and those 250
who had thrown themselves into his lap—and
strengthening the church by adding so much tem-
poral power to that spiritual power which gives her
such great authority. Having committed this initial
error, he was compelled to follow through; in order 255
to terminate Alexander's ambitions and prevent his
becoming ruler of Tuscany, the king was obliged to
come into Italy. Nor did he stop at making the
church powerful and alienating his allies; in his

260–267. That is, with Ferdinand the Catholic, the “partner” of the next sentence, by means of the Treaty of Granada (1500–1501); see Introduction, pp. 46–47 for the outcome of affairs in Naples. See Appendix B, 3, 11 for two quotations from Guicciardini on this situation. They are both similar enough to suggest Guicciardini’s direct knowledge of this passage in *The Prince*.

266. “Someone” is Frederick of Aragon, who was King of Naples from 1496 to 1501, and probably would have gladly paid Louis tribute. Ferdinand did, in fact, eventually expel Louis. Machiavelli deems the same principle to be operative in the decision of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V to release the French king, Francis I, captured at the Battle of Pavia in 1525. In fact, by the provision of the Treaty of Madrid, Francis was released and returned to France three days after Machiavelli wrote this opinion to Guicciardini on March 15, 1526 (G¹, p. 456; Gpb, p. 226; AG.II, p. 993).

268–272. These two sentences are intended to describe individual men as well as states. It is obvious that Machiavelli considers the desire for acquisition and conquest fundamental human traits. The implications of these remarks are pursued much more carefully in the *Discourses* (I, 6; II, 19), where the dynamic nature of man—here constantly moved to conquer—is generalized: “But since all human affairs are in motion and cannot remain stable, it is necessary that they either rise or fall; necessity persuades you to do many things that reason does not.” (I, 6 [B, p. 145; ML, p. 129; W.I, p. 226; Pen., p. 123; AG.I, p. 210]). The logic here would seem to imply that the best defense against being conquered is an offense. Machiavelli returns to the dynamic state of flux in *Discourses*, I, 2 on the devolution of the state (B, p. 131; ML, pp. 111–12; W.I, p. 212; Pen., p. 106; AG.I, pp. 196–97); *Discourses*, II, Preface (B, p. 272; ML, p. 272, W.I, p. 354; Pen., p. 266; AG.I, p. 322); and the introduction to *History* V (G², p. 325; Htb, p. 204; AG.III, p. 1232); see also *Ass* V, 34 ff. (G³, p. 287; Tusiani, p. 77; AG.II, p. 762). Behind these remarks may lie Polybius on the growth and decay of the state, 6. 57.1–9; but see the references in the note to lines 162ff, above, for the question of whether or not Machiavelli knew Book 6 of Polybius. Cf. also Tacitus, *Hist.* 2. 38.

280–283. The first two mistakes are interrelated: he wiped out the less powerful by his policy toward Cesare Borgia, thereby strengthening the church, and permitted Spain to gain a foothold in Italian affairs. The Italian for this sentence is free and gives the effect of being spoken: none of the auxiliary verbs are included with their past participles.

287. See Introduction, p. 54, for the League of Cambrai. With a glance back at the Roman policy in Greece mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Machiavelli condemns Louis for not realizing how important it was for his position in Italy to support a stable government in Venice—an opinion shared by Guicciardini, *Italy*, VIII, 1.

desire for the Kingdom of Naples, he divided it with 260
the King of Spain. Whereas at first Louis was master
of Italy, he now brought in a partner; thus ambi-
tious and dissatisfied men in that region might have
someone else to turn to; whereas he could have left
in Naples a king who paid him tribute, Louis 265
removed him—and installed someone who might
expel Louis himself from the area.

The acquisitive desire is certainly very natural
and common; when men who can acquire do so,
they will always be praised—or at least not blamed. 270
But when they cannot, and seek to do so anyway,
therein lies their mistake and their blame. Therefore
if the King of France could have attacked Naples
with his own forces, he should have; if he could not,
he should not have partitioned it. And although the 275
partition of Lombardy with the Venetians could be
justified—since with it he gained a foothold in Italy
—his subsequent partition deserves blame since it
was not justified by necessity.

Hence Louis XII had made these five mistakes: he 280
wiped out the less powerful men, increased the
power in Italy of someone already powerful,
brought into Italy an extremely powerful outsider,
did not go there to live, and did not establish
colonial settlements. Even these mistakes might not 285
have caused him trouble during his lifetime, had he
not made a sixth: the seizure of Venetian territory.
For if he had not aggrandized the church or brought
Spain into Italy, it would have been reasonable and

293. "The others" here and later in this sentence are Spain and the church.

304–306. After this long exposition, Machiavelli returns to the ideas of pp. 115 and 117 above and the Roman tactic of preventing war rather than postponing it. The attempt to create an air of conversational and argumentative interchange is an important stylistic characteristic of *The Prince*.

307–312. See Introduction, p. 47, for this diplomatic *quid pro quo*. Machiavelli also refers to these events in *Decennale I*, vv. 169–174 (G³, p. 242; Tusiani, pp. 157–178; AG.III, p. 1448) where he notes that it is this marriage that brought Brittany into France—see note to lines 63–67 above. "Later," in Chapter 18, Machiavelli discusses the importance of a prince respecting his word.

318. The talk "about this matter" with Georges d'Amboise took place during the First Legation to Louis XII, probably early in November of 1500; see the dispatch for November 4, 1500 (*Leg. I*, pp. 184–187; Chiappelli [1971], pp.441–444) and November 21 (*Leg. pp.* 204–205; Chiappelli [1971], pp. 457–458; see also Ridolfi, *Life*, pp.266–267, n.30.

necessary to humiliate Venice; but once he made his 290
initial decisions, he never should have consented to
her ruin. As long as Venice was powerful, she could
have always held the others off from any exploits
in Lombardy: partly because the Venetians would
not have consented unless they became rulers of 295
some territory themselves, partly because the others
would not have wanted to wrest Lombardy from
France and give it to the Venetians—Spain and the
church would not have dared to clash with both
France and Venice. And if someone were to say 300
King Louis handed the Romagna over to Alexander
and the King of Spain in order to avoid war, I would
reply with the arguments given above: to avoid war
you must never allow disorder to persist; for you do
not thus avoid war, you only postpone it—to your 305
disadvantage. And if others were to offer in evi-
dence the agreement the king had entered into
with the pope to launch the invasion of the
Romagna for him in return for the annulment of his
marriage and a cardinal's hat for the Archbishop of 310
Rouen, I would reply with what I shall say later on
about a prince's word and how he should respect it.
Therefore King Louis lost Lombardy by not com-
plying with any of those precepts respected by oth-
ers who seized territory they wanted to keep. These 315
comments are by no means fantastic; they are quite
normal and reasonable. And I talked about this
matter with the Cardinal of Rouen at Nantes when
Valentino (the popular name for Cesare Borgia,

321–322. Machiavelli refers on other occasions to this criticism of Italian soldiers: Chapter 26, lines 77–85. For his remarks in *Discourses* I, 21, see Appendix B, 3, 12.

325. See notes to this chapter, lines 242–243, and to Chapter 13, lines 27ff.

329–334. See Introduction, pp. 78–80, on “general rules.” We have come a long way to arrive at this one, but the clarity and drive of the exposition have been strong. Note that the “skill” (*industria*) and “force” (*forza*) are roughly equivalent to *virtù*. This particular “general rule,” however, seems to be familiar to Aristotle and handily applicable to the events just described; see Appendix B, 3, 13. For what Machiavelli has to say on a similar subject, see Appendix B, 3, 14. In “Castruccio” Machiavelli tells an anecdote, based on a previous life of Castruccio by Niccolò Tegrini published in 1496, concerning Castruccio’s having murdered a citizen of Lucca who had helped him to gain power. When someone berated him for killing a former friend, Castruccio replied, “You are mistaken, for I murdered a new enemy” (G², p. 39; AG.II, p. 558).

Pope Alexander's son) was occupying the Romagna. 320
Hence when the cardinal told me the Italians had no
understanding of warfare, I replied that the French
had no understanding of statecraft; for if they had
some understanding, they would not have let the
church attain such strength. Experience indicates 325
that the strength of both the church and Spain in
Italy was caused by the King of France—and that
these, in turn, caused his downfall. From this analy-
sis we extract a general rule which never, or rarely,
fails: whoever causes another to become powerful is 330
ruined because he creates such power either with
skill or with force; both of these factors are viewed
with suspicion by the one who has become power-
ful.

Why the Kingdom of Darius. . . . Note how this chapter acts as an aside in which Machiavelli develops his thought at leisure. In the first part of Chapter 3 (pp. 103, 105, 107 above), he discusses mixed principedoms which are of the same region and have the same language as the conquerer; in Chapter 3 he moves from there to the second kind of mixed principedoms, those unaccustomed to the conqueror's language, custom, and institutions; next, in discussing the policies of Louis XII, Machiavelli digresses momentarily to dig deeper into this question of divergent languages, customs, and institutions. In the early part of the present chapter he returns to the main topic of mixed principedoms and isolates a third type: absolutist states in which there are agents carrying out the ruler's will; the rest of the chapter distinguishes a fourth type of mixed principedom, one of a more feudal type in which the "agents" retain their rank because of the privilege of blood, not necessarily because of a prince's will. The final type of mixed principedom—one that is accustomed to living freely under its own laws and institutions—is not discussed until Chapter 5.

7. Alexander III of Macedon ("the Great") lived from 356 to 323 B.C. See Introduction, p. 32.

10–12. Machiavelli maintains a conversational tone. Indeed, this whole chapter operates on Machiavelli's often-used fiction that an objection has been raised: if it is so hard to set up and maintain a totally new government, then why was it so easy for the Diodochi to maintain their authority—until their own ambitions ripped them apart?

4

Why the Kingdom of Darius, Conquered by Alexander, Did Not Rebel Against Alexander's Successors After His Death

In considering the difficulties inherent in holding on to a newly acquired state, we might wonder about Alexander the Great: how it happened that when he became ruler of Asia in a few years and died shortly after his conquest, throughout the entire state there was no rebellion, as would have seemed reasonable that there be. Alexander's successors, nevertheless, retained it and had no difficulties holding on to it other than those which developed among themselves because of their own ambitions. My answer is that all those princedoms we know about are governed by one of two methods; in the one there is a prince, and all other men are his servants, who, because of his favor and permission, help as his

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18–20. Although the dating of “French Affairs” is problematical—but probably between April, 1512, and August, 1513—it offers evidence that French policy was systematically in the process of reducing the political autonomy of the nobility.

21–24. Cf. the medieval phrase “*Rex superiorem non recognoscens in regno suo est imperator*”; see Kantorowicz, pp. 273–279. The advantage of the more feudal type is obvious to Machiavelli: the “servants” merely carry out someone else’s orders while the “barons” feel directly involved with the king, so that a network of mutual self-interest results. “Territory” translates Machiavelli’s *provincia*, akin to what we mean by “nation”; see Introduction, p. 56, n. 103.

36–38. These hereditary prerogatives produce the flexible strength of the French monarchy: the Turks lack the balance between these privileges and the king’s power. For further allusions to this balance, see note to Chapter 19, lines 377–379, and *Discourses*, I, 16, 19, 58—but also see Guicciardini’s remarks, Appendix B, 4, 1.

agents to govern that region; in the other there is a prince with barons who retain their rank not because of the ruler's favor but because of their ancient, feudal lineage. Such barons have states and subjects of their own who acknowledge the barons as their lords and bear a natural affection for them. In states governed by a prince and his servants the prince has greater authority because throughout his territory nobody but he is acknowledged as a superior; if the people submit to someone else, they submit to him as to the prince's agent and representative—someone for whom they feel no^a special love.

The Turks and the King of France provide contemporary examples of these two different kinds of government. The entire Turkish empire is governed by one ruler—the rest are his servants. Dividing his kingdom into sanjaks, the ruler sends out various administrators whom he moves around and replaces whenever he sees fit. But the King of France is surrounded by a host of time-honored lords acknowledged and loved in France by their subjects: they have their vested rights which the king cannot retract without endangering his position. Therefore whoever examines both of these states will discover that it would be difficult to acquire the Turkish state, but, once conquered, it would be very easy to hold on to. So, on the other hand, you will discover that in some respects it is easier to take possession of the French state but extremely difficult to hold on

64. See the last paragraph of Chapter 5 (pp. 139, 141): “But when the cities. . . and be certain of them.” Sasso notes that Machiavelli always pays particular attention to the nature of the people governed whenever he discusses the form of government under which they live.

67ff. At this point Machiavelli uses France as a historical example. “French Affairs” begins by noting that at the end of the first decade in the sixteenth century the kings of France are “stronger, richer, and more powerful than they have ever been”; “French Affairs” was written to demonstrate why. In the past the French kings always had enough supporters to cope with any rebellious nobility; see *Guerra*, pp. 164–165. Sasso notes that the phrase “win over some of the kingdom’s barons” (line 68) is almost prophetic of The Constable of Bourbon’s desertion of Francis I to become commander in chief to the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in 1523.

73–76. Substantially what was alluded to in Chapter 3; see above, pp. 103, 105, “Hence everyone whom . . . indebted to them.”

to it.^b The reason for the obstacle in taking possession of the Turks's is that there is no possibility of being called in by the local rulers of that kingdom, and there is no hope of facilitating your attempt by means of a revolt of those men the local ruler has around him—this fact follows from the reasons given above. For, since these men are all subjected to and dependent upon the local ruler, it is harder to bribe them; indeed were they to be bribed, one cannot hope for much use of them, since, for the reasons already given, they would be unable to attract the populace. Hence whoever attacks the Turks must expect to find them completely^c united; he must rely more on his own forces than on their confusion. But once the Turks have been conquered and so devastated on the battlefield that they cannot rebuild their army, there is nothing else to be concerned about except the prince's family. Once they are wiped out, there is no one left to fear, since the rest have no influence with the populace; just as, before his victory, the conquerer could expect nothing from them, so afterwards he need not fear them. 45
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The opposite is true of kingdoms governed as France is, because you can invade them easily once you win over some of the kingdom's barons—because you always find disgruntled men and those anxious to reform. These men, for the reasons given, can open up your way into that state and facilitate your victory. Subsequently, if you want to retain your power, the situation entails countless 70

82ff. Machiavelli returns to the situation shortly before the Age of the Diadochi; see Introduction, p. 32.

93–96. Machiavelli implies that there was a similarity between the way the leaders of some of the rebellions against Rome existed with respect to their subjects and the way in which the French barons did. What is presently the northern and western part of Spain and Portugal was inhabited by the Lusitanians, whose leader, a shepherd named Viriathus, is now regarded as a Portuguese national hero; he led several rebellions and was defeated in 139 B.C. Lusitania seethed with revolts (155–154; 149–133). In Gaul Vercingetorix led the Arverni (modern Auvergne) against Julius Caesar in 52 B.C.; he was defeated at Alesia. Machiavelli refers to Antiochus and the Aetolian League in Greece, as well as to the Achaean League and the ultimate destruction of Corinth in 146 B.C.; see Introduction, p. 33. Machiavelli is also preparing for his arguments in the next chapter, where he argues that drastic measures must be taken when dealing with a conquered city accustomed to its freedom.

101–102. A reference to the civil wars in the half-century before the Roman republic collapsed. In *Discourses*, I, 10 Machiavelli considers Julius Caesar an emperor, but the empire is generally considered to be dated from 27 B.C. (see Introduction, p. 36). It should be noted, however, that strictly speaking there were no hereditary rulers in Spain, Gaul, or Greece.

difficulties with both those who have aided you and 75
those whom you have overwhelmed. Nor is it
enough to wipe out the prince's family, because
there still exist those lords who become leaders of
new insurrections; since you can neither satisfy 80
them nor wipe them out, you lose that state when-
ever the opportunity arises.

Now if you will consider the kind of government
Darius had, you will find it analogous to the Turks';
therefore Alexander first had to crush Darius com- 85
pletely and drive him from the open countryside
into fortresses. After he had won that victory and
Darius was dead, the state remained securely in
Alexander's possession, for the reasons given
above. Had they been united, his successors might 90
have thrived on it at their leisure; there were no
uprisings in that kingdom except those they stirred
up themselves. But states organized as France is are
impossible to occupy with so little trouble. This fact
explains the numerous revolts against the Romans 95
in Spain, Gaul, and Greece—all due to the many
princedom that existed in those states: as long as
people continued to remember those princedom,
the Romans were always uncertain of their hold on
those states; once that memory was eradicated, with
the power and permanence of the empire, their hold 100
became secure. Subsequently, when the Romans
were fighting among themselves, each Roman
leader could draw support from those territories,
according to the power he had gained within them;

110. Pyrrhus (319–272 B.C.), was the most celebrated of the kings of Epirus, the northwestern region of Greece. In 280 he began to interfere with Roman power because he agreed to help Tarentum, one of the richest of the Greek cities in Italy; he defeated the Romans at the battle of Heraclea in 280. He fought them again, was at the battle of Asculum in 279, and moved south with his troops until he conquered most of Sicily—only to lose it because he was unable to control the numerous rebellions that occurred. Machiavelli believes that Pyrrhus lost the Greek city-states in Sicily because they were not under total and direct control, as were the kingdoms of Darius and the Turks.

114. “Conquered territories” translates and makes more specific Machiavelli’s word *subietto*.

since the families of their former lords had been 105
wiped out, they acknowledged none but the Ro-
mans.

Bearing all^d these matters in mind, then, no one
should be astonished at how easily Alexander held
on to Asia and at how hard others—like Pyrrhus 110
and many more—worked to preserve what they had
acquired. This distinction does not result from the
conqueror's greater or lesser *virtù*, but rather from
the heterogeneity of the conquered territories.

How One Should Govern. . . . To the extent that Chapter 26, the last chapter of *The Prince*, governs the drift of the argument of the whole work, this chapter can be seen as a very important and original one (for challenges to this idea, see the first note to ch. 26). For if there is to be a prince who will unite all of Italy, he must know not only how to conquer and govern other princedoms but also how to handle the more ticklish problem of administering republics accustomed to living freely under their own laws. Machiavelli discusses this question in *Discourses*, I, 16, although II, 4 is more immediately relevant. In the latter passage he focuses on how governments can enlarge or aggrandize their territory—a less blunt means of talking about conquest. Sasso, pp. 45–46, is helpful on this chapter, and on how it is related to similar material in the *Discourses*. The idea of a league, used by the Etruscans, is one means, but the one Machiavelli prefers is that which was practiced by the Romans. See Introduction, p. 34.

7. This was mentioned in the second sentence of Chapter 3 as something “like an appendage,” with the idea of it being grafted on to the state the prince already possesses.

4. “Devastate” translates *ruinare*, destruction of the political and social structure first; but, as Sasso points out, that this devastation implies physical destruction can be seen when he goes on to say that “unless the inhabitants are dispersed or scattered, they will forget neither that name [of freedom] nor those [traditional] institutions” (below, lines 36–38).

5–9. As Sasso notes, there is some irony in the wording of this third alternative. The coexistence of the city’s previous laws and an oligarchy of men whose fortunes are linked to the conqueror is virtually impossible. What is probably intended is the creation of a fiction: the old laws remain in operative existence but, in fact, they are really the oligarchy’s effective means of control.

15–16. “Keep your hold” as opposed to “devastating” it. But obviously in such cases the question of “choice” or “desire” is problematical.

5

How One Should Govern Cities or Princedomes That Lived Under Their Own Laws Before They Were Conquered

As I have said, when the acquired states are accustomed to living under their own laws and in freedom, there are three methods available for holding on to them. The first is to devastate them; the second is to go personally and live in them; and the third is to let them live under their own laws, exacting tribute and creating within them a government consisting of a few men who keep the state well disposed toward you. For the last type of government, having been created by the new prince, knows that it is unable to survive without his good will and power and that it must do everything possible to keep him on. A city used to living as a free community can be held on to more easily by means of its own citizens—provided you want to keep

18. At the end of the Peloponnesian War (431–404 B.C.), Athens—at the direction of the victorious Spartans—established a group of thirty men to rule the city. They quickly exercised despotic, pro-Spartan power and became known as the Thirty Tyrants. The Athenian military commander and statesman Thrasybulus was banished to Thebes, where he gathered a force of seventy men and conquered Phyle. After his number had swelled to one thousand, he won Piraeus and defeated the army of the Thirty Tyrants in 404–403; democratic rule was restored shortly thereafter. The reference to Thebes recalls the Spartan victory over Thebes in 382 B.C., after which they installed another ruling oligarchy to rule it. The democratic exiles rallied around Pelopidas, who led a successful revolt during the winter of 379–378. Possible sources for these allusions are Plutarch, *Pel.* 17. 9; Diodorus Siculus 15. 88. 4; Justin 6. 8–9 (Thebes).

20–21. Capua, famous for its luxury and prosperity, was one of the few Italian cities to desert Rome and go over to Hannibal's side early in the Second Punic War (218–201 B.C.) after one of the most humiliating defeats Rome ever experienced at Cannae (216); Rome recaptured it in 211 and punished it severely. At the end of the Third Punic War (149–146), Carthage was captured and destroyed by Scipio Aemilianus in the spring of 146. Numantia, in north central Spain, surrendered to the same Scipio in 133, thus effectively terminating the resistance to Rome in Spain.

26. See Introduction, pp. 33–34.

30. translates *vivere libera*; see note to Chapter 3, lines 57–58.

37–33. There is a famous passage on “freedom” in *History* II, 34. The King of England, Edward III, repudiated his debts to the major banking families of Florence and thus precipitated an economic crash that lowered the prestige of the government and ended in a civil war. The Signoria called on a French knight errant, Walter of Brienne, the Duke of Athens, to rule. Although he instituted reforms, his regime was tyrannical. See Appendix B, 5, 1 for the remarks Machiavelli has one member of the Signoria make to the duke. Many commentators cite the following passage as an example of Machiavelli's republican sympathies, turned rather epigrammatically in the final clause: “It is also no wonder that the people take extraordinary revenge upon those men who have deprived them of their freedom” (*D.*, II, 2 [B, p. 281; ML, p. 284; W.I, p. 363; Pen., p. 276; AG.I, p. 330]).

40–41. Florence bought Pisa from the Visconti in 1405, conquered it in 1406, and lost it when Charles VIII invaded Italy in 1494. Therefore Florence actually controlled her fortunes for 88 years, not a hundred. Florence and Pisa were at odds for fifteen years. See Introduction, p. 13, for Machiavelli's involvement in the negotiations that “recovered” Pisa.

42. “Regions” translates *provincie*; see note to Chapter 4, lines 21–24, and Introduction, p. 56 and n. 103.

your hold on it—than by any other means.

The Spartans and the Romans provide examples. The Spartans held on to Athens and Thebes by creating oligarchies there, yet they lost both cities. The Romans, in order to hold on to Capua, Carthage, and Numantia, destroyed them—so as not to lose them. They wanted to hold on to Greece almost as the Spartans had done, by making her free and leaving her with her own laws; but they did not succeed, so they were compelled to destroy many cities in that region in order to hold on to it. Hence there are actually no sure methods to keep possession of such states except devastation. Whoever becomes master of, but does not destroy, a city used to living as a free community may expect to be destroyed by it, because during an insurrection the city can always take refuge in invoking the name of freedom and its traditional institutions, which are never forgotten, whatever the course of time or whatever favors be accorded. No matter what one does or provides for, unless the inhabitants are dispersed or scattered, they will forget neither that name nor those institutions; to these, during all unforeseen events, the inhabitants immediately resort, as did the Pisans a hundred years after their town had been reduced to slavery by the Florentines. But when the cities or regions are used to living under a prince and his family is wiped out, they are unable to reach an agreement among themselves about someone else since on the one hand they are used

47ff. Machiavelli elaborates these points more fully in *Discourses*, I, 16–17, where he discusses the transitional stage from slavery to freedom. For this sentence and the following see note to Chapter 4, line 64. In his commentary on the *Discourses*, Guicciardini notes that the Florentine love of liberty has caused the city to be hostile to tyrants who were unable to eradicate that love or to trust the people (*Considerations* [Pal., p. 27; Grayson, p. 86]).

57. Again this sentence can be glossed by Machiavelli's discussion (*D.*, II, 2) of Rome's encounter with people anxious to maintain their freedom. Russo draws attention to this sentence and the beginning of the aforementioned discussion in the *Discourses* as examples of the dichotomy present in Machiavelli: he is the passionate defender and admirer of republics and "the memory of their ancient liberty," but also the cool adviser to a prince aware of the rightful, necessary means to mitigate the threat this memory can present to a new ruler whose problems he will begin specifically to consider in the next chapter.

to obedience, and on the other they no longer have their former prince—they are unable to live as a free community. Hence they are slower to take up arms, and a prince can more easily win them over and be certain of them. But in republics there is more vitality, more hatred, and a greater desire for revenge; the memory of their ancient liberty neither does nor can let them rest. So the safest method is either to wipe them out or to live there. 50

Concerning New Princedoms. . . . Machiavelli now moves into the heart of his discussion. The problem of a new prince in a new princedom forms the context for Chapters 6 through 9, recurs in Chapters 13, 19, and 20, and sets the stage for the final chapter of *The Prince*. The present chapter, about the prince who uses his *virtù* and his army to conquer, is in direct contrast with the next, which considers the prince who depends for conquest upon Fortune and his army. Ever since Chapter 1 the question of Fortune versus *virtù* has been held in suspension, but it now comes to the fore: the opposition is again made early in the second paragraph of this chapter. What really is at issue is “extraordinary” *virtù*—that kind which can control Fortune. As in the schism between Machiavelli’s republican fervor and his cool, pragmatic outlook as observer and adviser (see note to ch. 5, line 51), the double direction of his thoughts and feelings is apparent here as well. We see his objective desire to achieve comprehensive, analytical coverage of the problems at hand; but also present is the passionate yearning for a new prince to achieve a new princedom on a grand scale, despite the contemporary political scene in Italy. In the letter to Vettori of January 31, 1515 (G¹, pp. 374–375; Hale, p. 155–156; Gpb, p. 185–186; AG.II, pp. 962–963), he is aware that the new governments Giuliano de’ Medici acquired in 1515 present Giuliano with *infinite difficoltà* if he is going to hold on to them. Machiavelli urges that Giuliano should consider consolidating them into one large body, either by going to live there himself or by sending a personal emissary to rule them.

5–12. In political affairs as well as in poetry and art, imitation of the ancients is the guiding principle. See Introduction, pp. 58–60, for more of the philosophic assumptions behind this theory. In the Introduction to *Discourses*, I, Machiavelli also explains why some who govern do not resort to ancient examples: “people do not have a true understanding of history so that reading it they do not extract from it that sense—or taste that flavor—which it possesses” (B, p. 124; ML, p. 104; W.I, p. 206; Pen., p. 98; AG.I, p. 191). Note that he uses a sensory metaphor; my rendition of *renda qualche odore* attempts to emphasize this concretely imagistic side of Machiavelli’s style. What is even more significant is he believes that people who will respond to these “senses” are few in number. Furthermore, the desirable response is an active one: not merely reading and knowing these examples, but applying them to daily life, as with the image of the archers in lines 12–17. Similarly, medieval and Renaissance literary critics advocated the imitation of ancient models and asserted that the external shell of fiction contains an inner core of truth to be appreciated only by the *cognoscenti*—see Boccaccio, *Genealogia deorum gentilium*, XIV. 9; (Boccaccio on Poetry, ed. Osgood, pp. 47–51) and Kantorowicz.

15. See note to Chapter 26, line 57 for an allusion to this metaphor at a crucial point in *The Prince*; also, see Introduction, p. 84, for the relation between Machiavelli’s figurative language and his method.

6

Concerning New Princedoms Acquired by One's Own Arms and Virtù

No one should wonder that in the discussion that follows of entirely new princedoms—those which have both a new prince and a new governmental organization—I shall cite the very greatest of examples. Since men almost always walk along paths beaten by others and base their actions on imitation—even if it is impossible to remain on that path all the way or to acquire the *virtù* of those you imitate—a prudent man ought always to go along paths beaten by great men and imitate the most pre-eminent so that if his own *virtù* does not measure up to theirs, at least it may smell like it. He should act as prudent archers do, knowing precisely the *virtù* of their bow: when the target is too far away, they elevate their sights, not so that their arrow will go

33. The specific allusion here is to Moses's leading the Israelites out of their bondage in Egypt. Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire, died in 529 B.C. He is the only truly "historical" man in this list (but Machiavelli may have known him only through Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, in which Cyrus is a "created" figure; see note on Chapter 14, line 92). Romulus, with his brother Remus, was the legendary founder and first king of Rome. Theseus, legendary hero of Attica, subsequently became king of Athens. Machiavelli presumably believed that each man was genuinely historical; but whether he did or not is less important than the symbolic, allusive value this list represents for him: each man was a new prince who established a new principedom.

35–37. Machiavelli may be somewhat wry here, but we should never lose sight of one fact: this mere "executor" did have *grazia* in the first place, and Machiavelli seems to suggest that this "grace" is tantamount to a pre-existing *virtù*: despite the special, providential context peculiar to Moses's situation, that *virtù* caused him to be selected for his role. Granted, Machiavelli can be heavily ironic about ecclesiastical principedoms (see ch. 11 below); but Moses comes up rather neutrally not only here but several times in *The Discourses* (I, 1; I, 9; II, 8); but see note to lines 88–96 below. For a juxtaposition of Moses with Savonarola, who is mentioned below in this chapter, see Machiavelli's letter to Ricciardo Becchi, March 9, 1498 (G¹, pp. 29–33; Gpb, pp. 85–89; AG.II, pp. 886–889).

45. The idea of the prince as statesman molding his "raw material" (*materia*) establishes an interesting connection between Machiavelli as creator and the Aristotelian notion of the potential form inherent in matter. See Introduction, pp. 72–73.

that high, but—with the help of their raised sightings—so as to hit the target.

I submit, then, that one discovers that entirely new principedoms, with a new prince, can sustain themselves with greater or lesser difficulty depending upon the greater or lesser *virtù* of the man who acquires them. And since this transformation from being an ordinary citizen to being a prince presupposes either *virtù* or Fortune, it appears that one or the other may partially alleviate many of the difficulties; nevertheless, whoever is the less indebted to Fortune survives longer. Matters are also made easier when the prince who has no other state is forced to come and live personally in the new one. But to touch on those who became princes because of their *virtù* and not because of Fortune, I submit that the most outstanding men are those such as Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, and Theseus. We should not consider Moses, since he was merely an executor of matters decreed to him by God; still, we ought to admire him if only for that grace which made him worthy of conversing with God. But let us consider Cyrus and the others who have acquired or built realms; you will find each admirable. If we consider their particular actions and methods, they will appear no different from those of Moses—even though the latter had so great a tutor. By examining their actions and lives, we realize that they received nothing else from Fortune but the opportunity which gives them the raw material that they could

47. Considerations of the “spirit” (*animo*) were more germane to medical lore in Machiavelli’s times than they would be today. Thus, the phrase serves to remind us of the imagistic continuity in these early chapters; see Introduction, p. 82, for more on Machiavelli’s use of medical metaphors.

50ff. The example of Moses continues to play with the question of Fortune and *virtù*. Each of the first four sentences of this paragraph emphasizes necessity. Yet because Machiavelli uses flippancy to play down the importance of Moses’s relation to his “great tutor,” what he seems here to imply by the end of the paragraph is that Moses acted on his own initiative to free his people. Instead of being goaded into action by providential intervention, he used Providence as the occasion for action. The people, furthermore, were “prepared” to follow him because they *wanted* to be free (Sasso). Three of these four examples (Moses, Cyrus, Theseus) are cited almost verbatim at the beginning of Chapter 26 (p. 373 below); for the use that Whitfield makes of all four, see note to Chapter 13, line 141.

54. The volitional cast that Machiavelli imposes upon “necessity” here is an interesting example of how the force of his thinking overrides the details of traditional myth. According to the mythological account, Amulius, the younger brother of Numitor, the rightful king of Alba, deposed him. To avert the possibility that Numitor’s children, Romulus and Remus, might seek revenge, Amulius had them thrown into the Tiber; but a flood carried them to shore. There they were suckled by a she-wolf and found by a royal herdsman, Faustulus, who with his wife brought them up. Hence the “necessity” that aided Romulus was entirely circumstantial—hardly an example of the initiative and industry of Machiavelli’s legendary exemplar. It is useful to compare Machiavelli’s assumptions about Romulus here and in *Discourses*, I, 9 with St. Augustine’s (*De civitate dei*, III, 6). The latter argues that Romulus’s cruelty, including the murder of his brother, taints all the glory of Rome. Machiavelli does not deny the cruelty, but believes that the results of Rome’s greatness may have necessitated these measures at the outset. Thus, Augustine’s appeal is to morality; Machiavelli’s, to history (see note to ch. 18, lines 96ff.).

56–58. The Medes were unified around the middle of the seventh century B.C. and did not fall until Cyrus the Great, one of the Median king’s vassals, rebelled and entered the Median capital city of Ecbatana in 549 B.C. Thus he launched what became the Persian Empire, which lasted until Alexander the Great and the events referred to in the Introduction, pp. 31–32.

59–61. An allusion to one of Theseus’s first acts as King of Athens upon his return from conquering the Minotaur and abandoning Ariadne on Naxos. He federalized the numerous, scattered Attic communities and made Athens their capital.

72–75. The Italian is as beautifully forceful here as the point it asserts. Allan Gilbert (*Forerunners*, 40–41) feels Erasmus would probably have agreed with Machiavelli, and cites as evidence his *Institutio principis* (6.599 B–C), which begins by arguing that a prince new to a state should recall that, as with diseases for which new cures are to be avoided, new laws are not to be introduced if the old ones can heal the republic’s diseases. The word *ordini* can mean laws, regulations, or, as I have chosen to render it here, institutions. The real problem, however, lies in the innovations involved and precisely when, why, and how they are to be applied. See Introduction, pp. 63–64, and the beginning of *Discourses*, III, 35.

75–79. But compare Chapter 3 above: “men are willing to change their leader if they expect improvements” (lines 5–7).

shape into whatever form pleased them. Without this opportunity, the *virtù* of their spirit would have been quenched; without that *virtù*, the opportunity would have come in vain.

Thus it was necessary for Moses to find the Israelites in Egypt, enslaved and oppressed by the Egyptians, so that they might be prepared to follow him in order to escape from slavery. It was essential for Romulus not to remain in Alba, and for him to be exposed to die when he was born, so that he might become the king and founder of Rome. It was necessary for Cyrus to find the Persians discontent with the rule of the Medes, the latter having been made soft and effeminate by a long peace. Theseus could not have proven his *virtù* had he not found the Athenians scattered. Consequently, the opportunities of these men made them successful; their outstanding *virtù* made them realize their opportunities. Hence, because of them, their native lands became renowned and very prosperous.

Like these men, those who become princes by reason of their *virtù* acquire a principedom with difficulty, but hold it with ease; the obstacles they meet in acquiring a principedom result partially from the new institutions and procedures they have been obliged to initiate in order to establish their regime and security. We ought to ponder the fact that there is nothing more difficult to manage, more dubious to accomplish, or more dangerous to execute than the introduction of new institutions; for the in-

88–96. We are rapidly leading up to the famous distinction between armed and unarmed prophets. But lest we too readily assume that “innovators”—here, the new princes that are the subject of Machiavelli’s concern—are all armed and are all prophets, note that unarmed prophets cannot force an issue and will necessarily fall, since they cannot nudge fortuitous circumstances with military might. New princes may be in a disadvantageous position, but they are at least armed—even if it is with someone else’s men. In this passage Machiavelli is concerned with the moral question of weighing the severity of the measures needed to secure a government against the need the state has for a safe, secure government at helm. In connection with “forcing the issue,” *Discourses*, III, 30, contains a final allusion to Moses; interestingly enough, it is juxtaposed with comment on Savonarola (and Piero Soderini). Referring to Exodus 32:25–28, Machiavelli says that a judicious study of the Bible will show that before Moses could set up his regime and live under his laws, he “was obliged to murder numerous people who, motivated by nothing more than envy, were opposed to his projects” (B, p. 468; ML, pp. 498–499; W.I, p. 547; Pen., p. 486; AG.I, p. 496). This sentence also brings up the emphasis on self-reliance, basic to Machiavelli’s conception of a strong prince; see Chapter 7, lines 108–110; Chapter 10, lines 3ff.; Chapter 17, line 121; note to Chapter 24, lines 61–63; and Introduction, pp. 68–69.

97. Ridolfi closes his biography of Machiavelli by applying the epithet “unarmed prophet” to Machiavelli himself. This was perhaps the case in his own times. But if it is true, as I have argued earlier, that Machiavelli’s appeal was partly directed to history, it can be said that, considering his influence on future generations, Machiavelli’s pen was a very effective weapon indeed.

99. Many such statements on human inconstancy appear in Machiavelli’s work. In Chapter 9 Machiavelli quotes the adage “whoever builds upon the common people builds upon mud” (p. 197), calls it trite, and seeks to counter it. His position on “the people” crops up, not always consistently, at various points. In *Discourses*, I, 4, he writes: “The people, as Cicero says [*Amic.* 15–16. 95–97], though they be ignorant, are capable of grasping the truth and readily yield when told the truth by a man worthy of trust” (B, p. 138; ML, p. 120; W.I, p. 219; Pen., p. 115; AG.I, p. 203). See also Introduction, p. 65, and the discussion in *Discourses*, I, 16 for a prince’s relations with a hostile populace. The title of *Discourses*, I, 58 states that the people (*moltitudine* throughout most of the chapter) have greater wisdom and constancy than a prince. For the rest of the argument, see Appendix B, 6, 1. In *Discourses*, I, 47 Machiavelli notes that popular opinion should be consulted in the dispensing of offices and honors because the people rarely deceive themselves about such matters (B, p. 240; ML, p. 237; W.I, p. 320; Pen., p. 228; AG.I, p. 294). Finally, in *History* VIII, 19, Machiavelli notes that “the mass of the people of Florence [*popolo universale*] [are] subtle interpreters of all matters” (G², p. 545; Htb, p. 383; AG.III, p. 1410). See also Introduction, p. 63, and notes on ch. 19, lines 104–107 and 119.

novator makes enemies of everyone who is well off under the old order, and has unenthusiastic supporters among those who would be well off in the new order. This lack of enthusiasm comes partly from fear of one's opponents, who have the law on their side, and partly from men's skepticism about the legitimacy of innovations until they see them tested by experience. Hence whenever the opponents of innovation have an opportunity to attack, they do so fanatically, and the supporters defend unenthusiastically: both the innovator and his allies risk danger. 80

Therefore anyone who wishes to deal thoroughly with this question must find out whether the innovators stand on their own or are dependent upon others—in particular, whether they need to request help to carry out a mission or else whether they can force the issue. In the first case, matters will always turn out badly and lead to nothing; when they depend on themselves alone and can force the issue, they rarely risk danger. This is the reason why all armed prophets have triumphed and all unarmed prophets have fallen. In addition to what has been said, people are fickle by nature; it is easy to persuade them of something, but it is hard to fix that persuasion in them. Therefore it is useful to arrange matters so that when they no longer believe, they can be made to believe by force. 85 90 95 100

Moses, Cyrus, Theseus, and Romulus would

107. See the Introduction, pp. 4–5 and especially pp. 43–44 for more on Savonarola. As Sasso notes, Machiavelli ignores the fact that Savonarola believed his spiritual power was stronger than temporal power in the Italy of 1498. Thus the analogy between a prince who depends upon fortune and an unarmed prophet is rather strained.

123. Hiero (or Hieron) II of Syracuse (ca. 306–215 B.C.), born of an ordinary family from Greek Sicily, was one of Pyrrhus's lieutenants (see note to ch. 4, line 110); he was made commander in chief of the Syracusan army in 275. About ten years later he seized power and became a tyrannical king. The events were set in motion partially because the Romans supported the Mamertines, a group of mercenaries originally backed by Agathocles and known as the "oppressors" of Syracuse, and partially by the Roman seizure of Messina (now Messina). Rather than ally himself with Rome, Hiero sought out the Carthaginians as allies against Rome during the first Punic War (264–241 B.C.).

129. "Ordinary citizen" translates *privata fortuna*; here *fortuna* means something as neutral as "a state of being". This usage recurs often.

130–131. The precise source for this information is somewhat in doubt. The "someone" is obviously the third century A.D. historian Justin, who made a Latin epitome of Pompeius Trogus's *Historiae Philippicae*. Justin's *History* was a book that introduced most Renaissance schoolchildren to history. The final phrase of 23. 4. 15, "*prorsus ut nihil ei regium deesse praeter regnum videretur*," is the passage Machiavelli alludes to; he mentions it again in the last paragraph of the Dedicatory Epistle to the *Discourses* (B, p. 122; ML, p. 102; W.I, p. 202; Pen., p. 94; AG.I, p. 189)—see also the application of the phrase to the Duke of Athens, *History*, II, 34 (G², 191; Htb, p. 90; AG.III, p. 1123). Early in Justin, 23. 4. 2 there is the passage: "*ut consentiente omnium civitatum favore dux adversus Carthaginienses primum, mox rex crearetur*," the source for "they elected him commander . . . become their prince" (lines 127–128). Whether or not "received nothing from Fortune except an opportunity" (lines 125–126) is based on Polybius 7. 8. 1–2 is disputed. Burd feels that it is. Sasso, who remains consistently dubious about Machiavelli's knowledge of Greek and especially Polybius, points out that the text of Polybius was rare in early sixteenth-century Italy and that the emphasis on how little violence Hiero needed to become King of Syracuse, though stressed in Polybius, is ignored by Machiavelli—and is not brought to light in Justin.

132. A fact alluded to in Chapter 13, p. 241 below. The source for this fact is generally assumed to be Polybius 1. 9. 3–8. See Introduction, pp. 86–87, and note to Chapter 13, line 80.

have been unable to have their decrees obeyed for 105
long had they been unarmed, as has happened in
our times with Fra Girolamo Savonarola, who was
destroyed together with his new institutions when
the mob ceased to believe in him and he did not
have the means to be able^a to hold on firmly to 110
those who had believed or to make the skeptics
believe. Such men, however, have a great deal of
trouble with their procedures; since all their dangers
happen along the way, it is advisable that they
overcome them with their *virtù*. But once they have 115
overcome them and are starting to be revered—hav-
ing destroyed those envious of their accomplish-
ments—they are powerful and secure, respected
and prosperous.

To these great illustrations I want to add one that 120
is more obscure; yet it will have some connection to
the others, and I want it to suffice for all of its kind:
that of Hiero II of Syracuse. He became the prince
of Syracuse after being an ordinary citizen; he too
received nothing from Fortune except an oppor- 125
tunity. Since the people of Syracuse were op-
pressed, they elected him commander; from that
position he earned the right to become their prince.
Even while he was an ordinary citizen, his *virtù* was
so great that someone wrote of him that “the only 130
thing he lacked to be a king was a kingdom.” He
disbanded the previous militia and organized a new
one; he terminated former alliances and made new
ones. With such a foundation, once he possessed his

own alliances and soldiers, he could build any struc- 135
ture; thus he endured some hardships in acquiring,
but few in retaining.

7. "Ordinary citizens" translates *privata*, here and below; the interplay is between the public and the private.

70. Not Darius III of Chapter 4, but Darius I (521–486 B.C.), King of Persia; he was the most significant Persian ruler after Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire. See Introduction, pp. 31–32.

73. Machiavelli will examine most of "those emperors" at greater length in Chapter 19, pp. 295ff. below.

76. "Fortune" here is not so much of an abstraction as it is a means of implying the dependency on the whim and the potentially fickle nature "of those who put them in power."

7

Concerning New Princedoms Acquired by Other Men's Armed Forces and Fortune

Those ordinary citizens who become princes simply by means of Fortune do so without much effort, yet it takes a great deal of effort for them to maintain their position. They meet no obstacles in getting there because they soar to their positions: all the difficulties arise when they have settled. These are the kinds of princes who either buy their way into power or are accorded it through the good graces of whoever gives it, as happened to many in Greece in the cities of Ionia and the Hellespont, where Darius made men princes so that they might hold on to those cities for his own security and glory. Such was also the case with those emperors who, though ordinary citizens, gained the imperial throne by bribing soldiers. Such rulers depend solely upon the consent and upon the fortune of those who put

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25–35. The metaphorical cast of the last two sentences in this paragraph is significant; see Introduction, pp. 83–84. The idea of Fortune dropping an opportunity into one's lap is an extraordinarily apt way to allude to the arbitrariness and lack of determinism inherent in Fortune. The *virtù/Fortuna* polarity is so fundamental that it controls Machiavelli's choice of figurative language.

36–39. See Introduction, p. 39. Sforza died in 1466, which stretches the phrase "living memory" somewhat, but his exploits and achievements were common knowledge. The "proper means" (line 41) may possibly refer to those discussed below in Chapter 18. See Appendix B, 7, 1, 2, and 3 for more on Francesco Sforza. The first two passages in the Appendix are from Machiavelli and qualify the propriety of Sforza's "means." But in Chapter 14 Sforza's success is said to be a result of his being a "soldier," an attribute consonant with Machiavelli's argument in that chapter (line 14).

43ff. Here "fortune" to de-emphasize Cesare's private resources and to stress the role of dependency and the absence of absolute control. Ironic or not, the point obviously is that Sforza independently exercised his skill, whereas Cesare Borgia was more dependent on circumstances. There may be some irony intended here, if we see it in the light of a statement in "Remarks": "Let us continue with the pope and his duke. This faction needs no comment. Everybody is aware of precisely what their nature and their ambition are, how their procedures are carried out, and what credence can be given or received. . . . I have argued that these princes will be your allies when they are unable to do you harm" (*Guerra*, p. 60; AG.III, pp. 1441–1442). See Appendix B, 13, 1 for a discussion of the problems raised by "Remarks." If Allan Gilbert is correct, this is a significant assessment of Cesare Borgia made by the older Machiavelli.

"On the other hand, Cesare . . . armed forces and Fortune" (lines 43–51) is a rather pivotal sentence at this early point in the narration of Cesare Borgia's "tragedy." Here he won and lost everything because he was dependent upon his father's fortune. The last sentence of this paragraph states the reason for his fall even more exaggeratedly: "the singular and inordinate malice of Fortune" (the wording echoes the last sentence of Machiavelli's Dedicatory Letter, p. 95 above); see Introduction, p. 75. Thus the foundations for an argument in terms of a "tragic fall" are delicately laid. What we do not find here, however, are the closing remarks of this chapter. It is not, after all, arbitrary chance, but faulty judgment (*mala elezione*) that destroys Cesare Borgia. Such an error is one that those "prudent archers" (p. 143 line 13) would never have permitted themselves to commit. Numerous interpretations have been offered about why Machiavelli chooses to give two so clearly contradictory explanations for Cesare's fall, an example generally (but not always correctly) assumed to be dear to Machiavelli's heart. I submit that the reason for the apparent contradiction involves Machiavelli's artistic and creative motives. Machiavelli is, after all, writing a structured narration. Some commentators even feel that Cesare Borgia is so idealized here that he is almost the hero of *The Prince* and that to view Machiavelli's treatment as one befitting tragedy is highly reasonable. I do not feel that to make this contention is as valid as merely to accept the fact that Machiavelli is taking some artistic license. By pivoting the sentence concerning Cesare's career (lines 43–51) upon two contexts of an impending fall (the dual referents of "roots" and "Fortune"—placed more closely together, in the Italian original, than in the translation), Machiavelli creates an aura of suspense and dramatic effect which will later bring into higher relief the "bad choice" Cesare exercised when the College of Cardinals gathered to elect a new pope; see Introduction, pp. 51–52. The 26-day rule of Pius III solved nothing. Furthermore, since Machiavelli does not tell us until much later in this chapter that Cesare was close to dying of malaria fever (which had killed his father), it is almost as if Machiavelli were trying to draw in a thread of suspense—based on associations with chance and Fortune—precisely at the point when he is preparing to launch his most

them into power—two very volatile, unstable bases; they have neither the knowledge nor the ability to maintain their position. They do not have the knowledge because if a man does not possess very special talents or *virtù*, it is unreasonable that he should know how to command when he has always lived like an ordinary citizen; they have not the ability because they lack devoted and loyal troops. Moreover, states that are formed rapidly, like all things in nature that are quick to sprout and grow, cannot have roots and branches fully enough developed so that the first spell of bad weather does not tear them up. This situation is inevitable unless, as I have mentioned, those men who become princes unexpectedly possess such great *virtù* that they know immediately how to get ready for, and keep hold of, what Fortune has put in their laps; unless they can lay those foundations, after the fact, which others laid prior to becoming princes.

I should like to cite two examples from living memory, respectively illustrating these aforementioned methods of becoming a prince—through *virtù* or Fortune: Francesco Sforza and Cesare Borgia. Francesco Sforza, an ordinary citizen, became Duke of Milan with proper means and with great *virtù*; what he had acquired with enormous exertion he maintained with little effort. On the other hand, Cesare Borgia (called Duke Valentino by the people) acquired his power through the fortune of his father Pope Alexander VI, and lost it through the

severe criticism of Cesare—namely, his failure of intelligent *virtù*. We should remember that as early as November 14, 1503—three months after the death of Alexander VI and two weeks after Julius II was declared pope—Machiavelli noted that Francesco Loriz, the Bishop of Perpignan and a confidant of Cesare's, had told Machiavelli that "the duke seemed to him to have lost his head, for he did not know himself what he wanted to do, so bewildered and irresolute was he" (dispatch of November 14, 1503; *Leg.*, II, 632)—hardly the resolute hero full of *virtù*. Machiavelli frequently uses this technique of holding in reserve facts that we know he has at his fingertips; see Introduction, pp. 85–87. Restraining any emphasis on Cesare's lack of resolve until the end of the narration is an excellent means of heightening that basic lack of *virtù* which, as far as Machiavelli is concerned, is an unforgivable inadequacy. All this is to suggest that the subsequent narration is a beautiful example of the fusion of form and content.

52–55. The statesman as architect—as in the word "statecraft"—is a striking metaphor indicative of the drift of Machiavelli's thinking; see Introduction, pp. 82–83.

59. I think it is important to see in this "example" less of an emphasis on a result of Fortune—as Machiavelli goes on to say for dramatic effect—than a stress on poor judgment, as Machiavelli will eventually demonstrate even more dramatically as he proceeds to narrate the ultimate effect of "the example of his actions." See note on lines 43ff. and Introduction, pp. 85–87.

68. For the Duke of Milan, Ludovico Sforza, and Venice's interest in the Romagna, see Introduction, pp. 47–48.

76. See Introduction, p. 48, for the Orsini and Colonna families.

same fortune—despite the fact that he used every method and did everything a man with prudence and *virtù* ought to in order to put down roots in those states bestowed upon him through other men's armed forces and Fortune. For, as mentioned before, whoever does not first lay his foundations could—with great *virtù*—do so later, although causing trouble for the architect and danger to the building. So if we examine the duke's development as a whole, we see that he laid strong foundations for his future power. I do not think it redundant to discuss these foundations, because I know of no better precepts to give a new prince than the example^a of Cesare's actions: if his methods did not work to his advantage, it was not his fault but a result of the singular and inordinate malice of Fortune.

Pope Alexander VI, in his desire for his son the duke's aggrandizement, faced many problems, actual and potential. First of all, he saw that there was no way of making Cesare ruler of any state that did not already belong to the church; he knew that the Duke of Milan and the Venetians would not yield to his desire and let him appropriate any territory belonging to the church, because Faenza and Rimini were already under Venetian protection. He saw, besides, that Italian armed forces—particularly those he might be able to utilize—were controlled by those who had reason to fear papal aggrandizement; hence he was unable to rely on them since they were all controlled by the Orsini and Colonna

77. "Therefore he had to" (*era, adunque, necessario*). Presenting the fabrication of a pretext as "necessary" is an interesting way of phrasing it; recall the "necessity" of p. 147, as well as the note to the text there. In that case, "necessity" is used to underline the *virtù* of the initiatives used by Machiavelli's models. But note that here the initiative soon switches from the pope to Cesare Borgia; perhaps some irony is therefore intended. The facts have already been prepared for in Chapter 3; for Louis XII's descent into Italy in 1499, see Introduction, p. 46.

83ff. See Introduction, p. 47, for a gloss for this sentence and the next; "the papal campaign in the Romagna" was actually led by Cesare Borgia. The final clause in the next sentence probably refers to "the agreement the king had entered into with the pope to launch the invasion of the Romagna for him in return for the annulment of his marriage and a cardinal's hat for the Archbishop of Rouen" (ch. 3, lines 307–311). The last clause in the sentence (lines 89–91) is sometimes construed to mean that the Romagna yielded because of the high military reputation of the French.

86ff. For the ensuing events during Cesare Borgia's first campaign in the Romagna, see Introduction, p. 48 and note to Chapter 13, lines 55ff; see also the quotation in Appendix B, 3, 10 and the cross-references in the note to Chapter 20, lines 160–162. The list of emissaries to Louis XII in the note to Chapter 3, lines 228–237, gives some indication of how high his prestige really was.

92. In the Italian, Machiavelli uses "*Colonesi*" almost as a synecdoche for several Roman families. In addition to the Orsini and Colonna families, the Gaetani, Conti, and Savelli were important baronial families opposed to papal aggrandizement. Whipping this group involved effort on the part of both Alexander and Cesare Borgia. The Colonna family backed Frederick of Aragon, King of Naples, and fought the combined French and papal armies that invaded Naples in 1501 (see Introduction, pp. 46–47). When Naples soon fell to the French, the Colonna family was excommunicated. Cesare received Subiaco and its neighboring towns *in commendam*, and all the major fortresses of the Colonna family (Genzano, Marino, and Rocca di Papa) became Borgia possessions.

96–101. Machiavelli uses his example as a further argument that a new prince must have his *own* army. On November 8, 1502 (*Leg.*, I, 419; AG.I, p. 130), he regarded the information given by one of Cesare's secretaries as important enough to report to the Florentine Dieci: after Louis XII, Cesare's own army was his main source of support. These two basic supports were as necessary in 1500 as in 1502.

103ff. For Cesare's second campaign, see Introduction, pp. 48–49.

104–108. For the interaction among France, Florence, and Cesare in 1502, see Introduction, pp. 49–50. On June 22, 1502, Machiavelli and Piero Soderini's brother Francesco, the Bishop of Volterra, were appointed to confer at Urbino with Cesare regarding his potential threat to Tuscany (*Leg.*, I, 255–320; Machiavelli wrote only two letters: pp. 256–257; 260–268). Writing about Cesare's rabbit punch at Urbino, Machiavelli tells the Signoria that they "ought to note this strategem; such great speed joined with most excellent success" (I, 257). *The Prince* goes on to argue that this combination of events was decisive in Borgia's career. Since history does not bear Machiavelli out on the decisiveness of this point of cause and effect, we have an important indication that even in 1502 Machiavelli was at least capable of "creating" a fiction concerning Cesare Borgia. See Appendix B, 7, 4 for Machiavelli's portrait of Cesare at this point in his career. Even this early description, then, is not neutral, conveying, as it does, an untarnished picture of Cesare's surpassing excellence. But to admit that Machiavelli creates and polishes the image of Cesare is not to assert that he is the "hero" of *The Prince*. It perhaps confirms that idea that Machiavelli consistently found in Cesare's career fascinating aspects to shape and mold.

families, and by their followers. Therefore he had to break up these arrangements and throw the Italian states into turmoil so that he could safely make himself ruler over a part of them. Doing this proved easy: the pope found that the Venetians, driven by other motives, were devoting their efforts to making the French return to Italy. Not only did he not oppose their return, he facilitated it by annulling King Louis's first marriage. So King Louis XII marched into Italy with the help of the Venetians and the consent of Alexander; no sooner was he in Milan than the pope received troops from him for the papal campaign in the Romagna, which Alexander was permitted to undertake for the sake of the king's prestige. Once Duke Valentino had conquered the Romagna and whipped the Colonna family, two things interfered with his desire to hold on to the Romagna and advance farther: French policy and the thought that his own troops were disloyal. That is, it appeared that the troops of the Orsini, of which he had availed himself, might let him down and not only might prevent his acquiring more land but might take from him what he already had; and it also appeared that the King of France might treat him similarly. The duke had one corroborating experience with the Orsini troops when, after the seizure of Faenza, he attacked Bologna and saw them enter into the attack apathetically. As for the king, the duke realized what was in his mind when, after capturing the duchy of Urbino, Valen-

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108–110. In other words, he decided to be self-reliant; see ch. 6, lines 88–96, and cross-references in the note to that passage.

121–122. Irony permeates the phrasing of this evaluation as well as its echo in the last sentence of *History*, II, 32 (C², p. 188; Htb, p. 88; AG.III, p. 1120).

122ff. Most of the rest of this paragraph concerns the remaining events in Cesare Borgia's third campaign, which terminated with the Diet of Magione and Senigallia; see Introduction, pp. 49–51. In Machiavelli's "Description," highly apposite at this point, the remark below "he knew how to mask his intentions so perfectly" is accompanied by the remark that Cesare is "an extremely great hypocrite" (*grandissimo simulatore*; *Guerra*, p. 43; AG.I, p. 165). See below in Chapter 18: "a prince must know how . . . to be a liar and a hypocrite" (lines 42–44). He also describes Cesare in his current headquarters at Imola—closer to Bologna than the normal administrative center at Cesena—as being "full of fear . . . because suddenly and against all his expectations his troops had become hostile to him and he found himself unarmed with a war on his hands" (*Guerra*, p. 43; AG.I, p. 164). This treatment contrasts sharply with what we have here, where there is strong emphasis on Cesare's judgment ("awaited the opportunity") and the allusion to the ripeness for rebellious action. Sasso explains this contradiction as a function of Machiavelli's idealization of Cesare, but I would see it more as a deliberate attempt to sharpen—for purposes of dramatic effect, not personal idealization—one aspect of Cesare's character, his foresighted *virtù*. Furthermore, I think it is a mistake to hold Machiavelli to a consistent appraisal of Cesare—that is, to be thrown off by the less than adulatory remarks in *Decennale I* or in the letters written from Rome in 1503 during all the machinations surrounding the papal elections after Alexander VI died. Such striving for consistency overlooks the possibility I have argued for, that of a "fictive creation" of Cesare. That Machiavelli attributed foresighted *virtù* to Cesare precisely at this period can be seen in a dispatch he wrote October 11, 1502. Borgia had just shown Machiavelli a letter from Juan Ferriere—Archbishop of Arles, Alexander VI's French ambassador, and the governor of Cesare's French possessions—which stated that Louis XII would send him as many as six hundred lances. Since a lanceman was a heavily armed horseman generally accompanied by other soldiers, in some cases lightly-armed cavalry, that could mean a total of as many as three thousand men. Secure in his knowledge, Cesare told Machiavelli that he would consider a revolt to his advantage at this time: "to make my states stronger I could not wish for anything that might be more useful to me because this time I shall know whom I shall have to protect myself against and I shall be aware of my friends" (*Leg.*, I, 345; AG.I, p. 124). Machiavelli notes on October 23 that Borgia's power seems quite secure; in addition to Louis XII's troops and Alexander's money, his enemies' "laziness" was a significant factor—see Appendix B, 7, 5 for a quotation from Machiavelli's dispatches and one from Guicciardini, whose remarks about Cesare, as Sasso notes, are frequently similar to, and often verbal echoes of, Machiavelli's expressions. The "laziness" or "apathy" was perhaps the real reason for the failure of what Cesare called "the assembly of bankrupts." Although some of Borgia's troops were defeated in mid-October (Machiavelli's "countless dangers," lines 127–128), Cesare eventually was in a position to come to terms with the conspirators. "Deception" won out over the "strength" of "outside forces" (but see note on lines 180–182, below) at the point when Cesare Borgia was prepared to deal with the conspirators. Although the account differs slightly, see Appendix B, 7, 6 for Paolo Giovio's equally graphic description. Thus Machiavelli lets the 1502 phase of Cesare's third campaign in the Romagna end with an appropriate reference, at the close of this paragraph (lines 139–146), to the prosperity of duke and people alike. The suppression of the incredibly bloody events that "really" occurred at this point in the narration I regard as a master stroke in Machiavelli's creation of a suspenseful and exemplary tale. The extremely gory situation is condensed into the word *spenti*, "wiped

tino attacked Tuscany; the king made him call that campaign off. Consequently the duke decided to rely no longer on other men's armed forces and fortune. His first act was to undermine the Orsini and Colonna factions in Rome by winning over to his side all their partisans who were noblemen—making them his own noblemen, and paying them large salaries. With military and political appointments he gave them the respect due to their social standing, so that within several months their devotion to the factional parties died in their hearts. All their devotion reverted to the duke. Next he awaited the opportunity to wipe out the Orsini leaders, having already put to flight those of the Colonna family. The opportunity that arose was a good one; the use he made of it even better. When the Orsini realized—belatedly—that the aggrandizement of the duke and the church spelled their ruin, they called a meeting at Magione, in Perugian territory. This meeting resulted in the revolt of Urbino, uprisings in the Romagna, and countless dangers to the duke—all of which he overcame with the help of the French. His prestige was restored, but he no longer had confidence in France or in other outside forces; in order not to have to test their strength, he turned to deception. He knew so perfectly how to mask his intentions that the same^b Orsini, through the mediation of Paolo Orsini, made peace with him; as to Paolo, the duke employed all sorts of generous acts to reassure him—

out." By relying on the reader's prior knowledge of the details to fill in the suggestive gap, Machiavelli enables us to reflect upon why this "method" was deemed efficacious. The reader's intellect is pricked, his emotions abated; this is an integral part of Machiavelli's own method in this chapter. See Introduction, pp. 85–86.

146. See note to Chapter 17, line 6, for several interesting ramifications of this passage.

152. In this last clause, Machiavelli uses *materia*; by translating it "cause" I have lost an important Aristotelian overtone—see Introduction, pp. 72–73. See the next note for Machiavelli's beliefs about the quality of the rule given by the princes of the Romagna before Cesare Borgia's conquest. He goes on to say that the people truly suffered from a set of princes who taxed them heavily and punished them indiscriminately. Compare ch. 19, lines 130–134, with this section.

155. The reason for this "necessity" is explained in III, 29 of the *Discourses*: "Before the princes who governed there were done away with by Alexander VI, the Romagna exemplified every atrocious way of life because it was apparent to everyone that the slightest cause led to the most extreme kinds of slaughter and rapine" (B, pp. 464–465; ML, p. 495; W.I, p. 544; Pen., p. 483; AG.I, p. 493–494). Later in this chapter Machiavelli describes the situation in 1503 after the election of Pope Julius II: "the Romagna waited for [Cesare Borgia] over a month," according to Machiavelli's thesis, because they respected his good government. But Guicciardini points out that Cesare counted on the pope to "help him recover the cities of the Romagna, all of which . . . were estranged from submission to him," and that later the pope, alarmed at Venetian expansion in that region, decided not to send Cesare into the Romagna "fearing that his journey, which once would have satisfied the people, now would be very distasteful since they already all were in rebellion against him" (*Italy*, VI, 5, 6 [Pan., II, 109, 112; Alexander, pp. 174–175]). Although Guicciardini seems to contradict Machiavelli here, see also note to Chapter 17, line 6.

158. Don Ramiro de Lorqua, one of Cesare's Spanish captains and his major-domo, was made governor (*presidente*) of the Romagna in 1501. In a letter to Vettori, January 31, 1515, Machiavelli says this decision gave Cesare, "whose deeds I should imitate always were I a new prince," power, trust, and love among the people (G¹, p. 375; Hale, p. 156; Gpb, p. 186; AG.II, p. 962). But, as Machiavelli goes on here to point out, Cesare feared that Ramiro would get too powerful; therefore he established a series of circuit courts presided over by Antonio da Monte Sansavino Ciochi, a man whom Machiavelli respected. Machiavelli continues his use of medical metaphors here when he says that Cesare wanted to "purge the minds [souls] of the people" (*purgare gli animi*). Evidence indicates that the people had much to purge and that Ramiro's policies almost led to a popular revolt. In his dispatch describing this affair, Machiavelli writes that once Ramiro had been imprisoned, most people assumed he would be "sacrificed to the people who are extremely anxious for it"; of Ramiro's death, he says: "People are not quite sure of the cause of his death except that it thus pleases the prince, who shows that he knows how to make and unmake men at will—according to their merits" (December 23 and 26, 1502 [Leg., I, 501, 503; AG.I, pp. 141, 142]). See Appendix B, 7, 7, for a parallel between Machiavelli's remarks about Cesare and Ramiro and Bacon's interpretation in *De sapientia veterum* (1609) of the Cyclops fable.

165. "Civil suits" translates "iudico civile." "Circuit court" expands the text in accordance with Machiavelli's remarks in his dispatch of November 28, 1502 (Leg., I, 458; AG.I, p. 137) where it is called a "Ruota."

giving him money, apparel, and horses—so that the naïveté of the Orsini led them to Senigallia, right into the duke's hands. Having thus both destroyed these leaders and compelled their partisans to be his allies, the duke had laid excellent foundations for his power, controlling all of the Romagna together with the Duchy of Urbino; more importantly, he felt that he had built up some good will in the Romagna and won the support of the entire populace, which had begun to prosper under his rule. 140
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And since this point deserves to be known and imitated by others, I do not want to omit it. Once the duke had occupied the Romagna, he found it under the control of ineffective rulers who were quicker to extort their subjects than to govern them; these rulers gave their subjects cause for discord, not harmony, so that the entire region was rife with thieving, brawling, and all other sorts of lawlessness. The duke decided that he must of necessity give the Romagna good government if he desired to pacify it and make it obey his sovereign power. Hence he placed in control Ramiro de Lorqua—a ruthless, efficient man, to whom he gave absolute power. Ramiro quickly pacified and unified the Romagna, thereby acquiring enormous prestige. The duke later deemed such immoderate power to be unnecessary, fearing that it might become intolerable. In the heart of the region he established a circuit court for civil suits with an outstanding judge presiding; each city was represented by its 150
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180–182. It is important for Machiavelli that Cesare Borgia relied upon his own troops: see Chapters 12–14 below. Machiavelli wrote to Florence on November 26, 1502: “I have written freely to your lordships about this matter so that you may understand that . . . whoever is well armed, and with his own arms, obtains similar results wherever he may turn” (*Leg.*, I, 455; AG.I, p. 137). Later, on December 20, Cesare Borgia dismissed the French troops before his assault on Senigallia.

188. Thus recalling what he considers one of Louis XII’s “five mistakes,” that of aggrandizing the church; see Chapter 3, line 288 above.

190–192. The French lost two consecutive battles in April of 1503 to the Spaniards in their struggle over the Kingdom of Naples; see Introduction, pp. 46–47. In July Gonzalo de Córdoba moved on to besiege the French holed up at Gaeta. The pope hoped to draw the Spaniards into his net and to lead a campaign against the French in Tuscany and Lombardy, but he died on August 18.

own lawyer. Since he realized that past severities had generated some hatred against Ramiro, and since he wanted to purge the minds of those people and win them entirely over to his side, he decided 170 to show that if there had been any ruthlessness, it had proceeded not from him but from the harsh actions of his minister. So, once he got the opportunity, he had Ramiro's body laid out one morning in two pieces on the public square at Cesena with 175 a block of wood and a bloody sword beside it. The brutality of this spectacle left those people simultaneously gratified and terrified.

But let us return to the point from which we digressed. I submit that the duke had become very 180 powerful and relatively safe from actual danger because he was reinforced with his own troops and had defeated a major portion of those neighboring troops which could have given him trouble. Since he was anxious for further expansion, he had to 185 consider the King of France; for he knew that the king, who had belatedly become aware of his own mistake, would not back him. He therefore began to seek new allies and to draw out negotiations with the French during their expedition into the King- 190 dom of Naples against the Spanish, who were besieging Gaeta. He intended to secure his position against the French; had Alexander lived, he would have been immediately successful.

And these were his methods concerning actual 195 problems. As to potential ones, his primary fear was

196–199. On November 8, 1502, Machiavelli wrote back to Florence that “This prince knows full well that the pope can die any day and, if he wants to hold onto the states he has, that he needs to think about creating some other foundations for himself before the pope’s death” (*Leg.*, I, 419; AG.I, p. 130). These “foundations” are Louis XII, Cesare’s own army, and potential alliances Machiavelli feels Cesare will try to form with Florence, Bologna, Mantua, and Ferrara.

199ff. Machiavelli proceeds to tick off four nicely turned, concise, intelligent plans. He obviously takes as much delight in setting them forth as Cesare Borgia had in conceiving them.

201–202. The implication being those families which any pope antagonistic to Cesare would count on for support in any proposed attacks against him.

203. This second plan was a careful and quiet preoccupation of Borgia policy; indeed the election of Pius III was a victory for them. But he ruled from September 22 to October 18, 1503—his reign lasted less than a month.

215–216. As was pointed out in the note to lines 196–199 above, Machiavelli felt that Cesare was aiming at an alliance with Florence as early as 1502. Here he seems not to doubt Cesare’s intention to overrun Tuscany. In 1503 Machiavelli could write that it was possible Cesare “aspired to power in Tuscany, since it is closer to the other states he possesses and more suitable to create a realm together with them” (“Method” [*Guerra*, p. 75; AG.I, p. 161]). See Introduction, p. 51, for the post-Senigallia results of Cesare’s third campaign.

216–217. Cesare drove Giampaolo Baglioni out of Perugia. Piombino was the last conquest in his second campaign (1501). As for Pisa, in early August of 1503, that city and the Borgias reached an accord whereby Cesare became prince.

218ff. “And as soon as . . .” In this and the next sentence Machiavelli emphasizes the idea of hypothesis and probability, although he leaves aside the probable French reaction to these possibilities: that of intervention to thwart Cesare Borgia.

that a new successor to the papacy might not be friendly toward him and might try to take back what Alexander had given him. He thought of four plans to protect himself: first, wiping out all the families of those lords he had dispossessed so as to deprive the pope of that opportunity; second, winning over to his side all the Roman nobility, as I have said, so as to have their help in checking the pope; third, converting the College of Cardinals to his own ends as much as possible; and fourth, acquiring so much power before Alexander died that Cesare might resist an initial attack on his own. Before Alexander's death he had implemented three of these four plans, and the fourth was almost fulfilled: he had murdered as many of the dispossessed lords as he could reach—and very few escaped; he had won over the Roman nobility to his side; he had the largest faction in the College of Cardinals; and, as for increasing his power, he had planned to become the ruler of Tuscany—he already possessed Perugia and Piombino—and had become the protector of Pisa. And as soon as he no longer had to take the King of France into consideration—no longer had to, because the French had already been deprived of the Kingdom of Naples by the Spanish, making it necessary for both countries to buy his friendship—he was about to leap into Pisa. After that Lucca and Siena would be immediately surrendering, partly out of hatred for the Florentines and partly out of fear; the Florentines would

229–233. Machiavelli dates the beginning of Cesare Borgia's ascendancy from 1498, when Alexander made him Gonfaloniere of the Church.

236–237. The two armies were the French and the Spanish ones. For the situation in the summer of 1503, see Introduction, p. 51. These events are also alluded to in *Decennale I*, vv. 466–468 (G³, p. 253; Tusiani, AG.III, p. 168; p. 1455).

238–239. "Fierceness" translates *ferocia*, generally assumed to have a connotation related to its Latin root *ferox*—"indomitable," "high-spirited," "unbridled," "warlike." The connection with *virtù* is obviously close. Professor Quaglio (in a private communication; see Appendix A) indicates that, at the present state of his research, he is unsure whether the word is *ferocia* or *ferocità*; but this textual puzzle does not alter the translation of the word.

239. An important formulation of a kind of "understanding" basic to a prince's efficient, effective action. Bear in mind who and what were won and lost at Senigallia and with Ramiro's execution.

241–243. I believe the emphasis on the hypothetical here is an attempt deliberately to reduce the sense of an historical Cesare Borgia and dramatically to heighten the element of Fortune.

244–245. For the situation in the Romagna, see note to line 155 above.

253–258. This sentence reverses the historical situation somewhat. Machiavelli and others assumed that Cesare Borgia had enough power in the College of Cardinals to control the outcome of the election—i.e., that the Spanish cardinals would be decisive. See Appendix B, 7, 8 for Machiavelli's initial thoughts, when he was unaware of the October 28 agreement with Giuliano della Rovere; for this agreement and the background to this situation, see Introduction, p. 52. On November 4, 1503, Machiavelli indicates that Cesare runs a great risk of being deceived by Giuliano della Rovere, the man soon to be elected Pope Julius II (*Leg.*, II, 599–600; AG.I, pp. 143–144). The sentence at the end of this chapter, "In preference . . . della Rovere" (lines 298–302 below), is a much less "creative" statement and a more accurate piece of "advice." Yet given the narrative stance, such "advice" is inapplicable at that point in the narration. Machiavelli's creativity here involves shaping the narration so the reader suddenly realizes the damning ineffectiveness of Cesare's having "erred in this choice" (line 304 below). Indeed, by emphasizing a control in the College of Cardinals that Cesare in fact did not have, Machiavelli colors the narration so as to force his readers to see his point. To borrow metaphor from Ridolfi, who does not believe Machiavelli idealized Cesare, the portrait here is a composite of certain traits painted from life in order to add verisimilitude to the depiction of a nonexistent prince whose image was more accurate as a model than any living—or dead—prince (*Life*, p. 64). Nevertheless, Machiavelli's is basically a narrative art, but one in the service of a pragmatic, political reminder: foresighted *virtù* is a prince's basic weapon; he can never let down his guard. For more on the rapid fall of this particular prince, see Introduction, pp. 51–52, and the final facts of Cesare's career.

257–258. The last two sentences of this paragraph are somewhat fatuous; there is no record of such a specific conversation, although Machiavelli did have numerous interviews with Cesare after Alexander's death. The last sentence is important, however, since it furthers the notion of foresight, and sees Cesare's career in terms of the ideal of "control," one of Machiavelli's basic precepts in this part of *The Prince*. These thoughts are again echoed by Guicciardini; see Appendix B, 7, 9.

be helpless. If he had succeeded with these plans—
as he was succeeding in the very year that Alex-
ander died—he would have acquired such strength
and prestige that he would have been able to stand 230
by himself and no longer be dependent upon other
men's fortune and armed forces but on his own
power and *virtù*. But Alexander died five years after
Cesare began to unsheathe his sword. He left Cesare
with only his control of the Romagna consolidated 235
—with all the others in the air between two ex-
tremely powerful, hostile armies—and sick unto
death. Yet the duke was a man of such great fierce-
ness and *virtù* that he understood full well how men
were won and lost; and the foundations he had laid 240
in so short a time were so sound that had those
armies not been on his back, or had he been in good
health, he would have withstood every onslaught.
That his foundations were good is evident: the
Romagna waited for him over a month; in Rome, 245
though half dead, he was secure; although the Bag-
lioni, Vitelli, and Orsini entered Rome, they were
unable to do anything against him; and even if he
were unable to elect the pope of his choice, he at
least could ensure that it would not be someone 250
whom he did not want. If he had been in good
health when Alexander died, everything would
have been easy for him. And on the day Julius II
was made pope, he himself told me that he had
considered what might happen when his father died 255
and that he had found a remedy for everything—

264–265. The mid–sixteenth-century Italian historian Paolo Giovio writes: “But not long ago Fortune favored this scoundrel who uprooted the lines of the Italian nobility and sought to rule Italy” (headnote, Book VIII, *Historie*; see Appendix B, 7, 6). Sasso argues that there is no hint in Machiavelli, at least, that Cesare aimed at becoming the ruler of all Italy. That Machiavelli might have wished him to be may be hinted at in Chapter 26; see the note to lines 24–29 of that chapter.

268–280. It would be something of an evasion to call this long sentence a “definition” of *virtù*, but it does constitute a concise description of the effective action a new prince must execute. It also includes several phrases that will recur in subsequent elaboration of the concept of *virtù*: “to conquer either by force or by fraud” looks ahead to the discussion of the fox and the lion in Chapter 18; “to make himself loved and feared by the populace” is related to topics covered in Chapters 17 and 19; “magnanimous and generous” hints at Chapter 16. The wording of the sentence is also noteworthy. The pronoun shift “gives *you* trouble” is in the Italian and serves to make the “advice” more personal and direct; the Italian *possono o debbono* in the same phrase also consolidates both the abstractly potential and the acutely actual aspects of “necessity.” Furthermore, “more vigorous examples” (*più freschi esempi*)—most literally translated as “fresher” or “more recent examples” can also allude to a sense of growth or health which justifies the present translation in terms of imagistic consistency of this chapter. Yet for all the positive remarks, the next sentence, with its condemnation of Cesare’s “bad choice” (*mala elezione*), qualifies his excellence as an example worthy of emulation. See Introduction, pp. 75–76.

except he had never considered that when his father was about to die he too would be close to death.

Having reviewed all the duke's actions, then, I should be unable to criticize him. It seems to me, rather, that he should be put forward, as I have done, as a model for all those who have risen to power through Fortune and other men's armed forces. Because he was a man of great courage and lofty intentions, he was unable to act differently; his plans were frustrated by only two circumstances: Alexander's short life and his own illness. Therefore any new prince who deems it necessary to safeguard himself against his enemies; to win allies over to his side; to conquer either by force or by fraud; to make himself loved and feared by the populace and followed and respected by the soldiers; to wipe out those who can and must give you trouble; to replace outdated institutions with new ones; to be both severe and kind, magnanimous and generous; to wipe out disloyal troops and form new ones; to keep up alliances with kings or princes so that they must either aid you graciously or give you trouble reluctantly—such a prince cannot find more vigorous examples than the duke's actions. The sole act we can criticize him for is the election of Julius as pope: he made a bad choice; for, as I have said, if he was unable to create a pope to suit him, he was able to prevent the papacy from going to someone who did not. The duke ought never to have allowed the papacy to go to any cardinal to whom he had

288–289. Machiavelli frequently implants brusque aphorisms into the middle of his exposition. Surely Cesare's failure to realize this human tendency lies at the heart of his poor judgment, and is the real reason for his fall.

291–292. This list of cardinals who were potential popes is rife with enmity toward Cesare. Giuliano della Rovere was one of the chief contenders for papal election in 1492 when Alexander VI was chosen. The translation simply says "Giuliano," but Machiavelli ironically refers to him, in this sentence, as "San Piero ad Vincula" to remind us that Giuliano was indebted for his position to his uncle, Pope Sixtus IV, who started him on his rise to power by making him cardinal of San Pietro in Vinculi—a church reconstructed by Sixtus, for which Giuliano had commissioned Michelangelo to build his own tomb—that is, the tomb of the future Pope Julius II. (Today the church houses Michelangelo's statue of Moses.) Once exiled and dispossessed, Giuliano della Rovere tried to get French support in overthrowing Alexander. His hatred for the Borgias was boundless: it was he who began the papal tradition of ostentatiously leaving the Borgia apartments in the Vatican unoccupied, hence doing all in his power to minimize any record of Borgia accomplishment. Twice, in this passage, Machiavelli refers to him as "St. Peter in Chains"—but once Julius became pope, there was nothing "fettered" about the way in which he checked Cesare Borgia and aggrandized papal power. Giuliano's nephew, Francesco Maria, was the man Cesare drove out of Senigallia when he captured it. Giovanni Colonna, a "Roman" cardinal, and his family had consistently opposed every Spanish incursion into what Colonna considered to be his territory and power base. Raffaello Riario was related to both Giuliano della Rovere and Caterina Sforza, whom Cesare had driven out of Forlì in 1500. Ascanio Sforza was the only other potentially strong rival for pope in the 1492 conclave which chose Alexander VI. The Borgia ally Louis XII had driven his brother Ludovico out of Milan. Louis also arrested and imprisoned Ascanio, whose lands and possessions reverted to the Borgia pope.

302–304. Tangentially related to this generalization is the observation Machiavelli makes about Cesare right after the election of Julius II; see Appendix B, 7, 10. In a letter to Vettori, August 19, 1513, Machiavelli contradicts the remark here, saying that "new favors usually cause old injuries to be forgotten" (G¹, p. 277; Gpb, p. 126; AG.II, p. 917). For passages more consistent with this, see Machiavelli's letter to Vettori, April 29, 1513, where he says that King Ferdinand V of Spain signed the Treaty of Orthez with Louis XII, fully aware that he was giving power to a man who "must remember more about old injuries than about new favors" (G¹, p. 255; Gpb, p. 114; AG.II, p. 908). In *Discourses*, III, 4, "old injuries" were never canceled out by "new favors"; all the less so when the new favor is smaller than the previous injury (B, pp. 387, 388; ML, p. 407; W.I, p. 467; Pen., pp. 394–395; AG.I, p. 426). See notes on pp. 186 and 188 below. Cf. Guicciardini, *Ricordi* (C.25 [Pal., pp. 247–248; Domandi¹, pp. 47–48; Grayson, p. 12], B.41 [Pal., p. 289; Domandi¹, p. 106]). Cf. Isocrates, *Philip*. 37.

304–305. After all is said and done about the role of Fortune and judgment in these textual notes, it is significant that Guicciardini is equally ambivalent; see Appendix B, 7, 11.

given trouble or who—once having become pope—
might have had reason to fear him. For men cause
trouble either out of fear or out of hate. Those to
whom Cesare had given trouble were, among oth- 290
ers, Giuliano della Rovere, Giovanni Colonna,
Raffaello Riario de Savona, and Ascanio Sforza.
Had any of the other men (except the Cardinal of
Rouen and the Spanish cardinals) become pope, he
would have had reason to fear Cesare. The Spanish 295
cardinals were allied and indebted to his family; the
Cardinal of Rouen was powerful because he had
close connections within France. In preference to
everything else, therefore, the duke ought to have
made a Spaniard pope; failing that, he ought to have 300
agreed to the Cardinal of Rouen—not to Giuliano
della Rovere. To trust that new favors cause great
men to forget old injuries is to deceive oneself. The
duke, then, erred in this choice and it caused his
ultimate downfall. 305

7. Here Machiavelli further subdivides the premise stated originally in Chapter 6, lines 22–24: “. . . this transformation from being an ordinary citizen to being a prince presupposes either *virtù* [ch. 6] or Fortune [ch. 7]. . . .” The first method is considered here; the second in the next chapter, as well as in *Discourses*, I, 52, 54; III, 8, 34.

12–15. There is a kind of cool objectivity about the second half of this sentence which rests on a tacit assumption that such a discussion can occur with moral obligations temporarily suspended. Thus a hypothetical intellectual construct can be entertained and contemplated, allowing moral obligations to color the discussion at the end of each paragraph in the “case studies,” as well as the final paragraph of the chapter.

16ff. Agathocles (361–289 B.C.) was the tyrannical king of Syracuse who overthrew the ruling oligarchy in 317 and relied—as Machiavelli felt all new princes must—upon the people, not the rich and powerful, to support his rule as tyrant; he became king in 304. The iniquity of his career is characterized more by cruelty than by fraud; in *Discourses*, II, 13 Machiavelli uses him to allude to “men who rise from low to high fortune more by means of fraud” (B, p. 311; ML, p. 318; W.I., p. 392; Pen., p. 310; AG.I, p. 357). In addition to Agathocles’ “agreement” with the people, Machiavelli was also interested in the African campaigns which he carried out from 310 to 307 B.C. with the aid of Ophellas, governor of Cyrene (now eastern Libya). As Sasso points out, it seems clear historically that Agathocles’ attacks on Africa were motivated less by an imperialistic policy than by a strategic desire to divert the Carthaginian forces threatening Syracuse. He abandoned his badgering of Carthage and returned to quell revolts in Sicily in 307, once he had arranged a non-aggression pact with Carthage which gave him power in the eastern, or Greek, area of Sicily—not all of Sicily, as Machiavelli would imply. The career of Agathocles is also mentioned in *Discourses*, II, 12 (invasion of Africa); III, 6 (his “conspiracy” against his country, referred to here).

8

Concerning Those Who Became Princes Through Iniquity

But since there are still two methods for an ordinary citizen to become a prince, which cannot be ascribed either to Fortune or to *virtù*, I do not think I should refrain from discussing them even though one of them may be gone into at greater length in a treatise on republics. The two methods are these: either a man rises to the principedom through iniquitous or nefarious means, or else an ordinary citizen becomes prince of his native region with the backing of his fellow citizens. I shall illustrate the first method with two examples—one from the ancient world and one from the modern—without otherwise entering into the merits of this method because I think these examples suffice for anyone who might find it necessary to imitate them.

Agathocles the Sicilian, not only an ordinary citizen but also of the most lowly and abject condition, became king of Syracuse. At every stage of his ca-

24. The word "resolved" (*deliberato*) emphasizes the exercise of will and the marked decision-making element in Agathocles' character that make him "suffice" as a model to imitate. If the allusion is specifically to Agathocles' maintaining a delicate balance in his power base, then Machiavelli approves of this tactic; see Chapters 9 and 19 below, and *Discourses* I, 16. This aspect of *virtù*, moreover, can be noted as an example of Machiavelli's molding of his source. His examination of Agathocles is based on Justin's *History* 22. 2. 12, although Diodorus Siculus and Polybius also wrote about him.

45ff. Within the scheme that Machiavelli has established, the careers of Francesco Sforza and Agathocles are similar. But there is one major difference: the former conquered "with enormous exertion," but once gained, his power was maintained "with little effort" (ch. 7, line 43); Agathocles' career, on the other hand, was constantly fraught with "thousands of hardships and dangers" (line 50).

reer^a this man, the son of a potter, constantly led an
iniquitous life; nevertheless he matched his iniquity 20
with such great *virtù* of mind and body that, enter-
ing the army, he rose through the ranks to become
the military commander of Syracuse. After he had
been appointed to that position, he resolved to be- 25
come prince and retain, by force and without in-
debtedness to anyone else, what had been conceded
to him by agreement. He informed Hamilcar the
Carthaginian—then campaigning in Sicily with his
troops—of his ambition. One morning Agathocles
assembled the people and senate of Syracuse as if he 30
were about to go over matters pertaining to the
republic with them; at a prearranged signal he had
his soldiers murder all the senators and the richest
citizens. When they were dead, he seized and re- 35
tained jurisdiction over that city without any civil
discord. Although the Carthaginians twice defeated
and finally besieged him, not only was he able to
defend his city but, leaving some of his troops be-
hind to protect it against siege, he also attacked 40
North Africa with his other troops. In a brief span
of time he thus lifted the siege of Syracuse and
brought the Carthaginians to dire straits: they were
compelled to make a pact with him, to be satisfied
with possessing North Africa, and to leave Sicily to 45
Agathocles. So whoever considers this man's ac-
tions and life will notice little or nothing that can be
ascribed to Fortune; for, as I said above, it was not
through anyone's help but rather through his own

54–55. For deception and fraud, see Introduction, p. 65; see also introductory note to Chapter 18, “How Princes Should Keep Their Word.”

57–59 Machiavelli’s emphasis on Agathocles’ foresight and courage in adversity ignores the disastrous end that befell Agathocles’ North African Campaign: in 307 B.C. his army mutinied and he was forced to flee to Sicily in order to save his life. Even Justin’s account, less complete and trustworthy than that written by Diodorus Siculus, gives adequate evidence for Agathocles’ poor leadership and for his inability to surround himself with reliable subordinates. Perhaps by resorting to a device Machiavelli used in “Description,” namely, suppressing historical facts and assuming his readers would supply them, he is giving his ironic imagination full rein in order to undercut the “ideal” nature of his exemplum.

60–64. “Outstanding commanders. . . . outstanding men.” Machiavelli wavers between a rather tenuous distinction here: that of *eccellentissimo capitano* and *eccellentissimi uomini*; what he has in mind in terms of how ruthlessness is practiced by a leader—namely, for the common good—is clearer in the last paragraph of this chapter. What Machiavelli seems to be saying is that although Agathocles does have “*virtù* of mind and body,” *virtù* is not a sufficient cause by which to explain his career.

67ff. In the main, Machiavelli stayed very close to Justin’s straightforward, rather stylistically austere account of Agathocles’ career. When we contrast that with the flexible, fluid style Machiavelli now uses to describe Oliverotto, we can feel a little closer to the way *The Prince* fuses style and meaning. The chapter proceeds steadily from the “ancient” precepts—incisively, astutely described and clearly outlined—to the “modern” object lesson for which Machiavelli can rely on his readers’ own familiarity with the facts, and therefore can allow his prose to move freely and allusively over them.

68. Oliverotto Euffreducci seized power and became the prince of Fermo, on the outskirts of the Romagna, on December 26, 1501; he was strangled at Senigallia by Cesare Borgia—see Introduction, pp. 8, 50–51.

71. Paolo Vitelli, whose power base was Città di Castello, was a famous *condottiere* hired by the Florentines in June, 1498, to win their war against Pisa (Introduction, p. 6). He started out vigorously but later refrained from attacking. In *Decennale I*, v. 228, Machiavelli refers to Vitelli’s “weariness” (G³, p. 244; Tusiani, p. 160; AG.III, p. 1450). This reluctance initiated a series of actions that made Florence suspect him of double dealing—particularly in 1499, when Vitelli failed to send in support troops for a major attack on Pisa. He was captured by the Florentines, and on October 1, 1499, he was beheaded. Machiavelli discusses the question of Vitelli’s guilt in a letter written early in October (dated October 1 in G¹, pp. 48–51; Ridolfi, *Life*, p. 264, n. 15 dates it around October 5), in answer to an official from Lucca whose condemnation of the Florentine decision had been intercepted. In his letter, Machiavelli defends Vitelli’s execution because it increased Florentine prestige. (It should be added that Machiavelli was acting in an official capacity.) Vitellozzo Vitelli, Paolo’s brother, was one of Cesare Borgia’s most outstanding generals and extremely adept at artillery maneuvers. Because of his brother’s murder, he constantly urged Cesare to invade Florence; he was the one who occupied Arezzo in 1502 (Introduction, pp. 7, 49). A conspirator at Magione, Vitellozzi was among those who were strangled at Senigallia. He was Oliverotto’s brother-in-law; hence his followers could be expected to support Oliverotto’s exploits.

advancement in the ranks of the army—won at the
cost of thousands of hardships and dangers—that 50
he attained the power which he then held on to
with many courageous and dangerous exploits. Yet
it cannot be termed *virtù* to murder one's fellow
citizens, to betray friends, and to be without loy-
alty, mercy, and religion; such methods can cause 55
one to win power, but not glory. Hence if we con-
sider the *virtù* of Agathocles in confronting and es-
caping dangers, and his courageous spirit in endur-
ing and conquering adversities, we cannot see why
he must be deemed inferior to any of the most out- 60
standing commanders. Nevertheless his savage
ruthlessness and inhumanity plus his boundless
iniquity forbid his being honored among the most
outstanding men. We cannot therefore ascribe
either to Fortune or to *virtù* what he achieved with- 65
out one or the other.

In our own day, during the papacy of Alexander
VI, Oliverotto da Fermo—who had been left father-
less many years earlier—was raised by his maternal
uncle Giovanni Fogliani. When he was a young man 70
he was placed in military service under Paolo Vitelli
so that he might attain an excellent military posi-
tion once he was trained in the discipline. Then
when Paolo died, he served under Paolo's brother
Vitellozzo; in a very short time, because he was 75
resourceful and bold in both thought and deed, he
became the leader of Vitellozzo's troops. But since
he considered it servile to obey others, he contrived

82–94. One long sentence in the Italian runs from “He wrote to Giovanni . . .” down to “. . . also for himself.” The Italian sentence is a very supple one, insinuating itself beautifully through the very emotions Oliverotto hopes to play on. Similarly, the subsequent narrative of the events after the banquet below mirror the pace of those events: action and style become crisper.

97. The final clause in the Italian is a nice touch. Literally it is “he [i.e., Oliverotto] lodged himself in his [Giovanni’s] own house.” This syntactic subtlety brings about a dramatic switch: the focus moves from Giovanni to the real protagonist. But the stylistic nicety may be vitiated by historical considerations. Guicciardini records that all the activity occurred in Oliverotto’s own house and not—as we would gather from Machiavelli’s account—in that of his uncle’s house (*Florence* XXIII [P., pp. 256–257; Domandi², p. 234]). In that case, Machiavelli may be using loose syntax in an attempt to arrange matters in a more proper historical perspective, not merely to narrate artfully.

to seize Fermo with the help of some citizens who preferred to have their native town enslaved than free, as well as that of some of Vitellozzo's followers. He wrote to Giovanni Fogliani saying that, since he had been away from home for many years, he wished to come and see him in the town and to check into his inheritance. In order that his fellow citizens might see that he had not wasted his time—and also because he had striven for nothing else but honor—he was anxious to come in an honorable fashion, escorted by a hundred mounted soldiers from among his friends and retainers. He asked his uncle to be kind enough to arrange that the people of Fermo receive him with honor—honor not only for Giovanni, whose foster child he was, but also for himself. Giovanni omitted no detail of the courteous reception due his nephew; he saw to it that the people of Fermo received him honorably and he lodged Oliverotto in his own house. There—after several days had passed during which Oliverotto attended to the arrangements necessitated by the iniquity that he was about to perpetrate—he gave a very formal banquet to which he invited Giovanni Fogliani and all the leading citizens of Fermo. When the meal and the entertainments customary at such banquets were over, Oliverotto artfully launched into certain serious topics, mentioning the greatness of Pope Alexander and his son Cesare Borgia, as well as the feats of both. When Giovanni and the others began to answer these points, Oliverotto

174ff. Sasso wonders if the lengthy detail of Oliverotto's strategy is intended to contrast with the allusive description of Senigallia, which comes out in Cesare Borgia's favor. Oliverotto's sphere is restricted compared to Cesare's vast scope; hence ruthless measures are possible in the case of the latter.

179–123. See note to Chapter 3, line 122. As Machiavelli continues to outline Oliverotto's methods of securing his position, it is unclear whether they are necessarily designed to strengthen his position among the people of Fermo. Coupled with the successes of Agathocles, Oliverotto's example might lead us so to conclude; but Fermo was accustomed to choosing her own form of government, and since Machiavelli has taken great pains to indicate what a special case such communities are, the mere juxtaposition of Oliverotto and Agathocles cannot justify the conclusion that their acts were comparable in this respect.

130. "Parricide," although not strictly accurate, underlines the close relationship: Giovanni had brought up his nephew as if he were his own son.

132. A fitting end to this account of inequity. I feel that here, too, Machiavelli is artistically creating a little scene. Albeit we are not necessarily meant to sympathize with Oliverotto, the first paragraph inclines us to see him in an exemplary light—if we, too, should aspire to use iniquitous means. Proof that our reactions are being controlled here can be found in the way Machiavelli handles the final moments of Vitellozzo and Oliverotto in "Description": "Vitellozzo prayed that he might petition the pope to give him full pardon for his sins; Oliverotto—crying—laid upon Vitellozzo all the blame for the injuries committed against the duke" (*Guerra*, p. 48; AG.I, p. 169). Guicciardini's account in *Florence XXIII* (P., pp. 256–257; Domandi², p. 234) emphasizes the fact that their deaths occurred almost one year later to the day, and that this coincidence was an aspect of "divine justice," for which see his *Ricordi* C. 91 (B. 107) and C. 92. See *Discourses*, I., 16 for a story of "ruthless measures . . . applied all at once as a result of the need for security." There Machiavelli cites the example of Clearchus, a student of Plato and Isocrates, who became tyrant of Heraclea in 364 B.C. and who, caught between the prideful rich who had put him in power and an angry populace, murdered the rich to preserve his power base. The story is in Justin, 16, 4.

suddenly stood up saying that these were matters to
be discussed in a more secluded location; he retired 110
to another room, directly followed by Giovanni and
the other citizens. No sooner were they seated than
soldiers emerged from their hiding places and mur-
dered Giovanni and all the others. After this mas-
sacre, Oliverotto mounted his horse, paraded 115
through the city, and besieged the governing magis-
trates in the palace; this terrified them into obeying
him and supporting a government of which he
made himself prince. He put to death all of those
who, because they resented him, might give him 120
trouble, and he fortified his position with new civil
and military institutions so that during the course of
the year he held on to the principedom; having done
this, not only was he secure in the city of Fermo but
he had become feared by all the surrounding states. 125
His overthrow would have proved as difficult as
that of Agathocles had he not allowed Cesare
Borgia to gull him at Senigallia when Cesare cap-
tured the Orsini and Vitelli—as I mentioned earlier.
There, one year after committing parricide, he too 130
was captured. Together with Vitellozzo, who had
been his tutor in *virtù* and iniquity, he was stran-
gled.

Some might question how Agathocles and others
like him, after their countless acts of treachery and 135
ruthlessness, could live safely for so long a time in
their own native region and protect themselves
against foreign enemies with never a conspiracy

144. See Introduction, p. 65, for ruthless measures and the common weal. Furthermore, as the remarks at the end of Chapter 5 demonstrate, it is self-defeating to apply ruthless measures to a people who are used to choosing their own government and to cherishing a heritage of freedom. As a gloss on this paragraph, see Chapter 17, below, and notes to lines 3ff, 11, 34–35, and 76–80.

150–155. See Introduction, p. 65, on the danger of too much ruthlessness (*crueltà*). Machiavelli concludes that a prince's strongest "remedy" is to placate the people and court them. Granted the circumstances are special, and the problem really is one of "numbers," but it would be a mistake to understand Machiavelli as advocating wholesale ruthlessness. *Discourses*, I, 16 is an important gloss on the theoretical discussion in the next chapter about dealing with "masses of people"; see Introduction, p. 63. At the end of *Discourses*, I, 45 he argues that it weakens a prince's authority in a state if he keeps the populace on edge about recriminatory measures. "Therefore it is necessary either never to cause anyone any trouble, or else to cause the trouble at once; afterwards, reassure everybody and give them a reason to quiet and settle their souls" (B, p. 235; ML, p. 231; W.I., p. 314; Pen., p. 222; AG.I., p. 289).

against them from their fellow citizens, while many
others because of their ruthless measures have been 140
unable to maintain their power even during peace-
ful periods, not to mention unstable times of war.
I believe that this discrepancy depends upon the
good or bad use of ruthless measures. Such use can
be termed "good"—if it is suitable to use the word 145
"good" of things that are evil—when these meas-
ures are applied all at once as a result of the need
for security; they are not continued, but transmuted
into the greatest possible good for the subjects. The
"bad" use occurs when the ruthless measures, 150
though initially few, increase rather than diminish
with time. Men who follow the former method can
remedy their condition with respect to God and
men—as did Agathocles. Men who follow other
methods cannot possibly retain their position. 155
Hence it is to be noted that when seizing power a
conqueror ought to examine closely all the damage
he must inflict, and inflict it all at once so that he
is not obliged to repeat it daily; because by not
repeating it, he can reassure men and win them over 160
to his side with the favors he distributes. Whoever
acts otherwise, out of either timidity or bad advice,
always needs to carry a sword in his hand; he can
never count on his subjects, who will never feel
secure with him because of their recent and con- 165
tinual abuses. Abuses ought to be inflicted all at
once—the shorter savored, the less resented; favors
ought to be distributed gradually so that they will

176. Machiavelli closes this chapter with a generalization reminiscent of the end of Chapter 7; see note to lines 302–304 of that chapter. There it was assumed that new favors, freely given, cannot compensate for and obliterate “old injuries.” Here he merely points out that if you are obliged to cover “repressive measures” (*male*) with good ones or favors, you must do it quickly. There may be cases when you can compensate, but you do not stand a chance of obliterating “old injuries” unless you act before people start remembering.

be the better savored. First and foremost, a prince ought to live with his subjects in such a way that no unforeseen event—favorable or adverse—causes him to alter his course, for if the need for alteration arises in an adverse period, you have not the time for repressive measures; the good you do is useless, for people consider it to be forced, and you receive no gratitude whatever for it. 170 175

Concerning the Civil Princedom. "Civil" in the Latin sense of relating to a citizen.

7. The "other method" is mentioned at the beginning of Chapter 8: "an ordinary citizen [becoming] prince of his native region with the backing of his fellow citizens" (lines 8–10). As the argument develops here, the emphasis on "native region" and "citizenship" diminishes, only to resurface in Chapters 19–20 and 24–26 of *The Prince*. Here Machiavelli is trying to spotlight the locus of power. See Introduction, p. 63, for more on the "civil" princedom.

7. Here Machiavelli combines the ideas of *virtù* and of Fortune in a single phrase. Although it is clearly lower on Machiavelli's scale of virtues, no prince can afford to be without it.

9–10. For "rich people" Machiavelli uses *grandi*; for more on their role in his political ideas, see Bonadeo, "*Grandi*." Calling them "rich" throughout this chapter represents a compromise translation: they are also "great" because they are in a position to oppress the "common people," and seek to do so. For "classes," the Italian word is *umori* ("humors"); the healthy body was said to be one in which the four humors (blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile) were balanced. The application of this physiological metaphor to the body politic was common in contemporary Florentine political thought. As Machiavelli implies in the next sentence, an oppressive political situation would be analogous to one humor overbalancing the others. In *History*, III, 1, he uses the same metaphor, adding that the conflict of "humors" is what "nourishes" unrest in republics (G², p. 212; Htb, 108; AG.III, p. 1140). There are discussions in the *Discourses* (I, 5 and 40) of the effect this class conflict produces in Rome.

15. "Desires" translates *appetiti*, drawing upon the idea of "feeding the humours." See Introduction, p. 35 (based on *Discourses*, I, 2), for the devolution of the state along the lines of "a princedom, freedom, or anarchy."

19–28. The foregoing two sentences are concisely repeated in *Discourses*, I, 40. Tyrannical governments result from "the excessive desire of the people to be free and the excessive desire of the rich to dominate" (B, p. 227; ML, p. 222; W.I, p. 307; Pen., p. 214; AG.I, p. 282). Note how operative a factor the locus of power is. See the quotation from *Discourses*, I, 16 in Appendix B, 9, 1.

9

Concerning the Civil Princedom

But let us consider the other method, when an ordinary citizen becomes prince of his native region not through iniquity or other acts of intolerable violence, but with the aid of his fellow citizens. We can term this a civil princedom: its attainment necessitates neither pure *virtù* nor pure Fortune, but rather, fortunate astuteness. I submit that a man rises to this kind of princedom with the assistance of either the common people or the rich people, for these two opposing classes exist in every city. The civil princedom is a product of this fact: the common people want to be neither governed nor oppressed by the rich, and the rich want to govern and oppress the common people. In a city one of three consequences results from these two conflicting desires: a princedom, freedom, or anarchy.

A princedom is created either by the common people or by the rich, depending upon which of the two classes has the opportunity. For when the rich

35–37. The solitary prince unencumbered by the need to parcel out his power among others is the most secure prince; see *Discourses*, I, 19.

38–47. Fairness and honesty (*onestà*) are basic to the point Machiavelli emphasizes by repetition. Note, however, that his remarks on behalf of the “people” are less sentimental or populist than they are objective and pragmatic. As he continues to say that all the people want is to be free from oppression (p. 197 below), it becomes clear that he defines “oppression” in terms of sheer number. Later in Chapter 19, lines 370–372, as Sasso notes, Machiavelli says that even when weighed against soldiers “it is more necessary now for every prince . . . to satisfy the people rather than the soldiers because the people are stronger.” Judging the Europe of his day, with two exceptions, he sees all the governments forced to consider the number of people, whereas Rome had first to satisfy her military establishment; see note to the passage quoted above.

43–46. Cf. notes to ch. 3, lines 104–109, and to ch. 19, lines 1–6.

46–47. The implication that the “hostile populace” would desert passively is belied by history. “Desertion” really is a withdrawal of approval in this case; such retraction is usually a very active matter indeed. Sasso suggests that Machiavelli has adhered a bit too closely to the logical development and exposition of his argument, and consequently has gotten himself into a bad spot that he never fully repaired or retraced.

realize they are unable to hold out against the com- 20
mon people, they begin directing their influence to-
ward one of their own men and make him prince so
that they can give free play to their desires in the
shadow of his protection. Similarly, when the com-
mon people realize they are unable to hold out 25
against the rich, they direct their influence toward
some one person and make him prince so that they
can be protected by his power. The man who
becomes prince with the aid of the rich maintains
his position with greater difficulty than he who does 30
so with the aid of the common people; because the
former, while he is prince, finds himself surrounded
by many who consider themselves his equal, and
hence he can neither govern nor manage them in the
way he wants. The man who becomes prince with 35
the aid of the common people finds himself alone,
surrounded by none—or very few—who are not
prepared to obey. Moreover, a prince cannot honor-
ably satisfy the rich without harming others, but he
can certainly satisfy the common people because 40
their purpose is more honorable than that of the
rich: the latter want to oppress, the former want
only not to be oppressed. Besides, a prince can never
secure himself against a hostile populace, because
they are many; he can secure himself against rich 45
people, because they are few. The worst a prince
can expect from a hostile populace is their deserting
him; from the hostile rich he must fear not only
their desertion, but also their action against him.

55. Cesare Borgia was very much able to “make or break” people, as we have seen in the case of Ramiro de Lorqua (ch. 7, line 158). This ability can also be seen in the methods of Agathocles, cited in the previous chapter; as for dealing with the “few rich,” see pp. 287, 289 and 357.

69–72. Cf. below, “When you notice . . . you can trust” (ch. 22, lines 30–35).

Since the rich possess more foresight and astuteness, they always allow enough time for defensive actions and seek out favor among those they hope will come out on top. Again, a prince must always live with those common people; but he can easily do without the rich, since he can make or break them at any time, withdrawing or bestowing prestige at will. 50
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Now to clarify this discussion further, I maintain that the rich ought to be considered from two main points of view. They either behave so that they commit themselves totally to your fortunes, or they do not. Those who do, and who are not greedy, ought to be honored and loved. Those who do not are to be analyzed in two ways. Sometimes they act as they do out of cowardice and an inherent lack of spirit; in such a case you ought to make particular use of those who offer good advice because they respect you in good times—in bad times you have nothing to fear from them. When, however, they do not commit themselves to you because of their cunning and their ambitious designs, it is a signal that they think more of themselves than of you. A prince ought to protect himself against the latter and fear them as if they were avowed enemies, for in bad times they will always contribute to his downfall. 60
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Therefore the man who becomes prince with the aid of the common people ought to preserve their good will; he can do so easily because they ask

95. See below: “Well-organized states . . . most important duties” Chapter 19, lines 104–107, and note to those lines.

96. Nabis became tyrant of Sparta in 207 B.C. after guiding Pelops, the young Spartan king, for several years. He initially kept his power by courting favor with two groups: he formed a strong guard of mercenaries, and he won over the people by means of agrarian reforms and debt cancellation. During the Second Macedonian War (200–196), after he had expanded into the Peloponnesus, he stood alone against almost all of Greece and against the Roman general Flamininus. But he was later obliged to resign his conquests. He was assassinated in 192. For the historical background, see Introduction, p. 33. Scholars have long argued about the source for this account; it is generally agreed that it is Livy. Nabis, then, brings up the obvious consideration of a prince’s need to protect himself against attacks from both the few and the many. Machiavelli has alluded to this necessity before it becomes a major theme of *The Prince*.

104–106. See note to Chapter 6, line 99, and Introduction, p. 63.

nothing except not to be oppressed. But the man 80
who becomes prince contrary to the wishes of the
common people and with the aid of the rich must
—above everything—seek to win the common peo-
ple over to his side, he can do so easily once he takes 85
on their protection. And because men who receive
good when they expect evil commit themselves all
the more to their benefactor, the common people
quickly become better disposed toward him than if
he came into power with their aid. A prince can win 90
people over to his side in many ways which, since
they vary according to circumstances, cannot be as-
signed specific rules. Therefore I shall omit them,
concluding only that it is necessary for a prince to
be on friendly terms with the common people: oth- 95
erwise he has no remedy during bad times.

Nabis, prince of the Spartans, resisted a siege by
all of Greece and by one of Rome's most victorious
armies and defended both his native region and his
own position against them. With the sudden threat 100
of danger all he had to do was to protect himself
against a few subjects; had he been obliged to pro-
tect himself against a hostile group of common peo-
ple, that protective action would have proven
inadequate. Let no one counter my conviction with
that trite adage, "Whoever builds upon the com- 105
mon people builds upon mud." That holds true
when an ordinary citizen builds upon them and
assumes they will set him free when he is plagued
by enemies or governing magistrates. In this situa-

110–111. Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus and his brother Gaius Sempronius. Both brothers were distressed by the conditions of the poor in Rome; they excited anger among the aristocracy and ruling oligarchy because, as tribunes of the people, they initiated radical reform measures. Tiberius was murdered by a mob of senators in 133 B.C. Gaius had his slaves kill him after a riot in 121 to deprive his enemies of such a “victory” as had befallen his brother. The Florentine parallel was the Ciompi rebellion, a revolt of the previously unorganized wool carders. Two rich men, Giorgio Scali and Tommaso Strozzi, became the leaders of a “plebeian” party and were the virtual “princes” of Florence for three years. But they exceeded the bounds of restraint and law and gradually lost popular support. Hence their example glosses the sentences “Moreover, a prince . . . they are few,” lines 38–46 above. Scali was beheaded in 1382 and Strozzi was forced to flee for his life. See *History*, III, 18, 20.

121. “Absolute” is in obvious contrast to “civic”; it is virtually synonymous with “tyrannical.” Florence had such a “civic” rule under magistrates and councils when Cosimo de’ Medici ruled (1434–1464).

tion he frequently could be deceived—as the Gracchi were in Rome and Giorgio Scali was in Florence. 110
But when the prince who builds upon the common
people is a man of courage who is able to lead, who
does not lose heart in bad times, who has kept his
other defense preparations inviolable, and who can 115
keep up the general morale by means of his own
courage and management—he never will be de-
ceived by the people and he will realize that he has
laid good foundations.

Such princedoms usually run into danger during 120
the transition from a civil to an absolute form of
government because these princes govern either by
themselves or through governing magistrates. In the
latter case their position is weaker and riskier be- 125
cause they depend entirely upon the will of those
citizens who have been appointed governing magis-
trates: these men, particularly during bad times, can
very easily deprive the prince of power by either
acting against him or disobeying him. During dan- 130
gerous periods a prince does not have the time to
seize absolute control because the citizens and sub-
jects, accustomed to taking orders from the govern-
ing magistrates, will not take the prince's during a
crisis—in unsettled periods there will always be a
dearth of men whom he can trust. Such a prince, 135
therefore, cannot count on what he observes in
peaceful times, when the citizens need the state,
because then everybody comes running, makes
promises, and would die willingly for him—when

such death is remote. But in bad times, when the state needs the citizens, few supporters are to be found. Especially since this test can be performed only once, it is all the more dangerous. Therefore an experienced prince ought to contrive methods to force his citizens to need both his government and himself whatever the circumstances: then they will always be loyal to him.

How the Strength. . . . With this chapter Machiavelli begins a gradual transition from a discussion of the more or less autonomous beginnings of a principedom to an analysis of the requisites for any self-sufficient principedom: to be independent a prince needs a strong military force, a strong defense system, and strong loyalty among his subjects.

4. For self-sufficiency and self-reliance, see references in note to lines 88–96 of Chapter 6.

15–16. Machiavelli refers both back to Chapter 6 and forward to Chapters 12–13.

10

How the Strength of Any Princedom Ought to be Assessed

In examining the characteristics of these princedom, it is useful to keep another consideration in mind: namely, whether a prince possesses enough power that he can be self-sufficient, if necessary, or whether he constantly needs the protection of others. To clarify this point better, let me say that in my judgment those princes who can be self-sufficient are those who have enough men or money to assemble an army that can do battle with anybody coming to attack them. Similarly, in my judgment, those who are princes constantly need the protection of others, those who are unable to appear before their enemy in open battle but need to seek refuge behind their walls and defend them. I have already discussed the first possibility, and later on I shall treat whatever else the subject requires. As

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27. Sasso notes that “handled” (*maneggiato*) is a very common word in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italian political and diplomatic writings. I have always been struck by the implications of the idea of “good management” expressed in Italian words like *masserizia*, “good husbandry,” *masseria*, a large farm with land and cattle, and *maneggiare*. These implications are developed into fuller theoretical treatments in Alberti’s *Della famiglia*, which in turn goes back to Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus*—on skillful household management. “Good management” on a private, individual level and “good government” on a public level of the common weal seem to be regarded as analogous. Machiavelli has alluded to “handling” relations with subjects in Chapters 7, 8, and particularly 9. Other specific allusions are to come in Chapters 17 and 19; as for fortifications, see Chapter 20 and *Discourses*, II, 24; III, 27. But both topics, basic to a self-sufficient principedom, will be alluded to throughout the subsequent chapters.

28. Medieval and early Renaissance Germany was a jumble of cities and ecclesiastical states and principedoms where, unlike France, Spain, and England, centralized authority did not exist. The context of this sentence is rather wittily compressed into a tercet of “Ass” V, vv. 61–63 (G³, p. 288; Tusiani, p. 78; AG.II, p. 762). See Introduction, p. 12, for Machiavelli’s mission to the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I in late 1507 and early 1508. Comments relative to Germany occur in the *Discourses*: I, 55; II, Preface, 19; III, 43. The diplomatic reports are in *Leg.*, II, 1059–1153. Ridolfi, *Life*, p. 102, feels they are in the main written by Machiavelli and merely signed by Vettori; but this contention is convincingly disputed by the research of Jones, “Some Observations,” who has carefully delineated which sections in the joint dispatches are by Machiavelli and which by Vettori; see now Jones, *Vettori*.

43–45. This point will become increasingly important because Machiavelli is tacitly contrasting the Italian situation with the German one.

for the second, nothing further can be said except
to exhort such princes to fortify and supply their
own city and to pay no heed to the surrounding
rural areas. Any prince who has fortified his city 20
well and who has handled his relations with his
subjects according to my foregoing suggestions and
my subsequent remarks will be attacked only with
great caution. Men are always hostile to ventures in
which they foresee difficulties; they foresee nothing 25
simple about attacking someone who has his city
fully fortified and who is not hated by his people.

The cities of Germany enjoy great freedom, con-
trol small amounts of surrounding rural areas, and
obey the emperor when they want to. They are not 30
afraid of him or any other neighboring power, be-
cause they are so well fortified that everyone thinks
that capturing them must be a protracted and diffi-
cult task: they all possess suitable moats and walls
and adequate artillery, and always reserve a year's 35
supply of drink, food, and fuel in their public store-
houses. Over and above these facts, so that they can
keep the lower classes well fed without reducing
public funds, they always have on hand a year's
supply of raw materials for providing work both to 40
those trades which are the very muscle and life-
blood of that city and to those crafts by which the
lower classes feed themselves. They also have a
great deal of respect for military exercises, and,
moreover, have many regulations governing them. 45

Therefore a prince who has a strong city and does

54. “Self-interest” translates *carità propria*.

56–62. Another capsule version of a wise prince’s domestic and military policies; cf. the methods of Nabis in the previous chapter.

71. “Remedying” translates *remedio*, the idea leading Machiavelli into a psychological observation—obvious in its simplicity, powerful in its political ramifications—apt for forming alliances of any sort.

75–77. Allan Gilbert, *Forerunners*, pp. 58–59, cites a passage from Pontano, *De principe*, first printed in 1490, which does emphasize the need of a prince to be loved by his subjects, but it contains no such aphoristic hint of a precise understanding of the psychology of the situation behind receiving and giving favors.

not make himself hated cannot be attacked; even if someone were to attack him, the attacker would retreat in disgrace: affairs in this world are so inconstant that it is impossible for anyone to deploy his army idly around the city for a year. Were anyone to object, "If the people own property outside the city walls and see it burned, they will become impatient; the long siege and their own self-interest will cause them to forget about" the prince," my answer is that a powerful, courageous prince will always overcome every such obstacle—sometimes by inspiring his subjects with the hope that the troubles will not last long, sometimes by instilling fear of the enemy's ruthlessness, and sometimes by taking adroit steps to protect himself from those whom he considers too presumptuous. Furthermore, the enemy will in all likelihood burn and lay waste to the surrounding rural areas upon his arrival, at a time when the spirits of the defenders are still keen and eager for their task. Yet a prince has all the less cause to hesitate, because after several days—when their spirits have cooled off—the harm will have already been done, the injuries will have been received, and there will no longer be any way of remedying the situation. Then, more than ever, the people will step forward to rally around their prince, who would seem to be committed to them, for their houses were burned down and their property laid waste in his defense. Man's nature is such that he feels this commitment as much for favors he

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renders as for those he receives. Hence, if all these matters are considered carefully, it should not be hard for a wise prince to forge the spirits of his citizens from the beginning to the end of a siege, so long as he does not lack provisions and weapons.

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2. These are difficult to categorize and treat analytically, as Machiavelli recognizes: they are supported by a transcendent power and exercise a special power over men; see the discussion (below, p. 313) of the similarities between the papacy and the Sultan of Egypt. Since the papacy's temporal power is of interest to a new prince, Machiavelli returns to this question in Chapter 26. For more analysis of the pope's temporal power, and specifically of what Leo X should do about the suspected intentions of Louis XII to retake Milan in 1514, see the letters to Vettori of December 10 and the first one of December 20, 1514 (G¹, pp. 351–61, 363–367; Gpb, pp. 166–181; AG.II, pp. 948–959). The irony, not to say satire, of the rest of the paragraph is exquisite in its supple, witty style. Many cross-references can be given to support Machiavelli's anticlerical stance. But it is more important here to catch the glint in his eye, and his own enjoyment of his remarks. It is also important to understand that his objection to the church is chiefly political, not theological. Rome is an obstacle to Italian unity—not powerful enough to rule all of Italy absolutely; too powerful, and too suspicious, to permit any one man to rule all of Italy alone. “Therefore, since the church has not been strong enough to possess Italy or to allow another power to do so, she is the reason why Italy has been unable to unite under one leader” (*D.*, I, 12 [B, p. 166; ML, p. 152; W.I, p. 245; Pen., p. 145; AG.I, p. 229]). In his *Considerations* of the passage Guicciardini agrees that Rome was corrupt and evil and had deliberately blocked a unifying, single ruler. But he is not totally convinced that the church has erred in opposing unification, for the Italians have always “naturally had a desire for freedom,” and the church has “preserved in Italy the way of life that is more harmonious with its ancient customs and inclinations” (*Pal.*, pp. 22–23; Grayson, pp. 81–82). See Introduction, p. 41, for more on Machiavelli's thoughts about the temporal power of the church and the historical background of ecclesiastical-political relations.

10–12. Given Machiavelli's conviction that a prince's first thought must be to defend and governing, the irony of this sentence is strong.

18–23. Cf. note to Chapter 6, lines 35–37, and Machiavelli's cross-references to Moses.

11

Concerning Ecclesiastical Princedom

The only topic now remaining for discussion is that of ecclesiastical princedom. All the problems of these princedom arise before they are possessed, because they are acquired through either *virtù* or fortune. But ecclesiastical princedom are held 5 without either of these qualities, because they are sustained by long-established religious customs which are of such great might and merit that they keep their princes in power no matter how they behave or live. These princes are the only ones who 10 have states and do not defend them; who have subjects and do not govern them. Yet the states, though they be undefended, are not taken away from them; the subjects, though they be ungoverned, are indifferent to the situation: they can neither sever nor 15 dream of severing their ties to their princes. Consequently, these are the only stable and successful princedom. But since they are sustained by higher powers which transcend the mind of man, I shall

26. The principal “rulers” or powers, then, were Florence, Milan, Naples, and Venice; see the beginning of the next paragraph. Alexander became pope in 1492 and Charles VIII invaded Italy in 1494.

29. It is generally assumed that “today” refers to the policies of Julius II—starting with the League of Cambrai in 1508 and continuing on to the formation of the Holy League. Louis XII certainly “trembled” before, and even fled from, Italy after the Battle of Ravenna (1512). The Venetians were “crushed” after Julius II manipulated the French into defeating them at Vailà (Agnadello) in May of 1509; see Introduction, pp. 53–55.

39–40. The Peace of Lodi (1454) established a forty-year period of relative peace for the Italian peninsula, thus fulfilling the aim of “preventing any one Italian state from extending its territory”; see Introduction, p. 39.

40ff. See Appendix B, 11, 1 for Guicciardini’s opinion; it differs from Machiavelli by attributing the source of the balance of power in Italy in the early 1490’s to Lorenzo de’ Medici.

41–43. For Venice’s attempt to annex Ferrara and the actions of Pope Sixtus IV, see Introduction, p. 40. As Guicciardini says, the pope “was afraid that if the Venetians won, their greatness would count so much that both their friends and their enemies would have to be at their mercy” (*Florence*, VII [P., p. 58; Domandi², p. 55]).

46. See Introduction, pp. 47–48.

refrain from discussing them; since their ascen- 20
dancy and sustenance come from God, it would be
the act of a presumptuous, reckless man to discuss
them. Nevertheless, were anyone to ask me how it
happens that the church has attained such power in
temporal affairs (although prior to Pope Alexander 25
VI rulers in Italy—not merely those who called
themselves rulers but every baron and lord, even
the pettiest—considered her temporal powers negli-
gible while today a king of France trembles before
her and she has been able to drive him out of Italy 30
and crush the Venetians), it strikes me as useful to
call to mind a major portion of the story, even
though it is well known.

Before Charles VIII, King of France, invaded
Italy, this land was ruled by the pope, the Vene- 35
tians, the King of Naples, the Duke of Milan, and
the Florentines. These powers had, of necessity, two
principal objectives: first, preventing a foreign inva-
sion of Italy; second, preventing any one Italian
state from extending its territory. The pope and the 40
Venetians were the most suspect powers. To hold
back the Venetians, all the others needed to unite,
as was the case in the defense of Ferrara; to hold
down the pope, people used the Roman barons.
Since the barons were split into two factions, the 45
Orsini and Colonna families, there was constant
cause for dissension between them; remaining with
weapons in hand right under the pontiff's nose,
they kept the papacy weak and inactive. Even

51. In *History* VII, 22 Machiavelli describes Sixtus as “the first pontiff who began to indicate what a pope could accomplish and how much that previously was termed sinful could be disguised by papal authority” (G², pp. 486–487; Htb, p. 338; AG.III, p. 1365).

53. The reign of most of the popes in power during Machiavelli’s lifetime was indeed fairly brief: Paul II, 1464–1471; Sixtus IV, 1471–1484; Innocent VIII, 1484–1492; Alexander VI, 1492–1503; Pius III, several months in 1503; Julius II, 1503–1513; Leo X, 1513–1521; Adrian VI, 1522–1523; Clement VII, 1523–1534. See Appendix B, 11, 2 for more on the brief reign of each pope and the consequences of that brevity. In *History* I, 23 Machiavelli makes a direct connection, through a horticultural metaphor, between the shortness of papal rule and the brief duration of the “princedom” established by the pope’s relatives and sons (G², p. 113; Htb, 29; AG.III, p. 1062).

60. Since Machiavelli’s interest is in the popes who drastically affected the church’s temporal power, it is reasonable for him to skip Innocent VIII before Alexander’s reign, and Pius III after it.

64–66. See Chapter 7 and notes. Guicciardini’s summary comment on Alexander VI is interesting in this context; see Appendix B, 11, 3.

72–73. Machiavelli says that even Cesare Borgia thought that the next pope would be grateful to him for eliminating the powerful members of the Orsini and Colonna families; January 2, 1502; *Leg.*, I, 512.

75–76. The “means” were, specifically, simony—the sale of ecclesiastical offices.

77ff. Julius II was especially anxious to augment the temporal power of the church and get the French out of Italy. The Holy League helped him to achieve the latter goal; to achieve the former, he formed the League of Cambrai (1508–1509) to reduce Venetian power and campaigned against Bologna personally in 1506. See Introduction, p. 53, for the pope’s attack on Perugia, ruled by Giampaolo Baglioni, and on Bologna, ruled by Giovanni Bentivoglio. Baglioni had a chance, which he let slip by, to capture the pope. (In *Discourses*, I, 27, Machiavelli ridicules Baglioni’s cowardice and inability to do evil when the situation required it.) At that point Machiavelli was the Florentine ambassador to the pope (*Leg.*, II, 947–1035), carrying reluctant Florentine support for the pope’s mission. This situation is again alluded to on p. 367 below.

though there sometimes emerged a courageous 50
pope like Sixtus IV, neither fortune nor intelligence
could ever release such popes from this bondage.
The reason was the brevity of a pope's reign, ten
years on the average: he could scarcely suppress one
of the factions. For example, if one pope almost 55
wiped out the Colonna, then another pope hostile
to the Orsini might replace him, permitting the
Colonna to rise again, yet without sufficient time to
wipe out the Orsini. Consequently, the temporal
power of the pope was considered negligible in 60
Italy. But then there rose to power Alexander VI
who, more than any other, revealed how much a
pope with money and troops could achieve. With
Duke Valentino as his lever and the French invasion
as his opportunity, he did all the things I mentioned 65
earlier when discussing the duke's activities. Al-
though Alexander's intention was to aggrandize not
the church but the duke, nevertheless what the
pope accomplished did aggrandize the church: she
fell heir to his endeavors after his death and after 70
the duke's downfall. Then came Pope Julius II. He
found the church powerful, for she owned all the
Romagna; the Roman barons were wiped out, and
their factions destroyed under the succession of
blows struck by Alexander. He also found he had 75
access to means for accumulating wealth which had
never been used until Alexander's time. Julius not
only continued these measures but expanded them:
he contemplated winning Bologna over to his side,

83. Machiavelli respected Julius for constantly maintaining a conception of the state which, if not secular, at least made *raison d'état* paramount. Guicciardini, too, admired Julius for the same reason: "In no other matter did the pope indicate private or personal inclinations" (*Italy*, XI, 8 [Pan., III, 256; Alexander, p. 272]). See the remarks in Machiavelli's dispatches of November 11, 1503 (*Leg.*, II, 621; AG.I, p. 148) and November 20, 1503 (II, 655).

97. Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici became Pope Leo X on March 11, 1513: he was the uncle of the Lorenzo de' Medici to whom *The Prince* is dedicated. This praise of the pope could be interpreted as a gesture to attract favors from him. See also Chapter 26, particularly lines 38–43, for the allusion to the potential power of the Medici to "redeem" Italy. The hope for Italy through Leo here, and through Lorenzo in Chapter 26, is often used as an argument for an early composition date of *The Prince*, especially since Machiavelli's attitude toward Leo in the *Discourses* is generally one of disappointment.

100–101. "his goodness . . . *virtù*" translates *con la bontà et infinite altre sua virtù*"; *virtù* is almost equivalent to "virtue", as in Chapter 15, line 57.

wiping out the Venetians, and routing the French 80
out of Italy. He succeeded at all these undertakings
and earned all the more praise because he did every-
thing for the aggrandizement of the church, not for
that of some individual. He also kept the Orsini and
Colonna factions in the same position that he found 85
them. Although there might have been several lead-
ers among them who wanted to change the situa-
tion, yet two things checked them: first, the power
of the church, which terrified them; second, not
having their own cardinals, the cause of the quarrels 90
between them. These factions are never peaceful
whenever there are cardinals among them, for the
cardinals—both inside and outside Rome—culti-
vate factions; then the barons are obliged to defend
them: thus the discord and conflicts among the bar- 95
ons issue from the prelates' ambitions. Therefore
His Holiness Pope Leo X has found the papacy ex-
tremely powerful: it is our hope that as his prede-
cessors made it great through military power, he
will make it respected and very great through his 100
goodness, his countless other qualities, and his *virtú*.

7. These were discussed in Chapter 1. See Introduction, pp. 10–12, for Machiavelli's personal experience with armies and his attempt to reduce Florentine dependency on mercenaries.

73–76. This complementary, reciprocal relationship between good armies and good laws is a tenet basic to Machiavelli's thinking; it can be documented by similar statements throughout his career. For the preamble to the order he drafted in December, 1506, to establish a magistracy concerned with military affairs, see Appendix B, 12, 1. Judicial authority and an army are basic to anyone who commands (*uomini che commandono*): that is the general principle with which Machiavelli begins "Florentine Arms," a letter written to urge the enactment of the order of December 6, 1506, referred to in Introduction, p. 11. See Appendix B, 12, 2 for a passage from the "Proem" to *War* in which these ideas are expounded eloquently and imaginatively. In *Discourses*, 1, 4, the reciprocity is between a good army (*milizia*) and good government (*ordine*) (B, p. 137; ML, p. 119; W.I, p. 218; Pen., p. 113; AG.I, p. 202). In *Discourses*, II, 19 (B, p. 334; ML, p. 345; W.I, p. 415; Pen., p. 335; AG.I, p. 378) and *War* II (*Guerra*, p. 371; LLA, p. 57; AG.II, p. 605) the operative words are "customs" (*costumi*) and "laws"—possibly derived from Polybius 6. 47. 1; for Isocrates, a man must be both a statesman and a general to command honor and respect (*Philip*. 140). See also note to Chapter 24, lines 19–21.

12

Concerning the Various Kinds of Armies and Mercenaries

I have discussed in detail all the characteristics of those princedoms I set out to mention in the beginning, have considered to some extent the reasons for their success or failure, and have shown the methods by which many have sought to acquire and retain them; now it remains for me to discuss in general the offensive and defensive measures suitable to each of the previously mentioned princedoms. We have pointed out above that a prince must necessarily lay sound foundations, otherwise he inevitably falls. The essential foundations for every state—whether new, old, or mixed—are good laws and good armies. And, since there cannot be good laws without good armies, and where there are good armies there are good laws, I shall refrain from discussing the topic of laws, and discuss armies.

I submit, then, that the armies with which a

18–20. In *Discourses*, II, 20 Machiavelli defines auxiliary troops as “those a prince or republic sends to help you—led and paid for by the prince or republic” (B, p. 338; ML, p. 349; W.I, p. 419; Pen., p. 339; AG.I, p. 382). In this chapter he restricts himself to a discussion of mercenaries; the other alternatives are treated in the next chapter, where he also defines auxiliary troops as “those of a powerful state whom you call upon to come in with its own troops to aid and defend you” (p. 235 below).

23–26. J. H. Whitfield (*Discourses*, p. 235) notes that Giovanni Simonetta, a secretary and personal friend of Francesco Sforza who wrote a lively account of the history of Italy from 1421 to 1466 (*Rerum gestarum Francisci Sfortiae*), says of a *condottiere* named Tiberto Brandolini, “He had no faith, no religion, and no fear of God.” Fabrizio Colonna, Machiavelli’s spokesman in *War*, delivers a long tirade against mercenaries, concluding with his assertion that their lack of religion makes them untrustworthy and disrespectful (*Guerra*, pp. 516–517; LLA, pp. 208–209; AG.II, pp. 723). In turn, this corresponds to Machiavelli’s remarks in the “Proem” to *War*, where he predicates upon the ancients’ faith in the divine his own ideal kind of soldier—one whose great fidelity and bravery make him willing to die for his country, one inspired by his need for God’s help (*Guerra*, p. 326; LLA, p. 4; AG.II, p. 567).

26–34. The idea of mercenaries’ having no “love or reason” to fight for their employer is repeated, with respect to Roman armies, in *Discourses*, I, 43 (B, p. 231; ML, p. 227; W.I, p. 311; Pen., p. 218; AG.I, p. 286). As Sasso notes, the immediate problem involving “love” arises, however, because the Italian city-states were composed of a strong central city plus a large area of outlying rural districts which were closer to smaller, but often powerful, towns. The central city, although populous, could rarely support an entire army of its own. Machiavelli attempted to obviate this difficulty by enlisting from rural districts like Mugello and Casentino. But Arezzo, in southern Casentino, was a strong town in its own right and had actually revolted from Florence in 1502; see Introduction, pp. 7 and 49. Although the rural population he recruited was probably less loyal to Arezzo than the Aretines, their loyalty to the more distant Florence could by no means be sure.

39–44. Those “courageous while they fought one another” may be those who participated in the battle between the bands of mercenaries formed by the ruler of Perugia Braccio da Montone (the Bracceschi) and those of the Sforza family (the Sforzeschi); see note to lines 104–106 below. The “foreign invader” refers to the French under Charles VIII in 1494. Machiavelli next alludes to a proverbial turn of phrase originally attributed to Pope Alexander VI—who used it specifically of the invasion of the Kingdom of Naples and not, as Machiavelli says, of all Italy—by the courtier–diplomat–historian, Philippe de Commynes. (*Mémoires*, VII, 14). The point the pope was trying to make was that the French marched through Italy so easily that, rather than use their swords, all they had to do was to put a chalk mark on the houses where they intended to be billeted. See Guicciardini’s variation on Caesar’s “*Veni, vidi, vici*” and its application to Charles VIII (Appendix B, 12, 3).

45–48. Machiavelli alludes to the “sins” Savonarola attributed to Florence in particular, and to Italy in general as opposed to the political and military “sins” Machiavelli himself attributes to Florence and Italy; his attack culminates in Chapter 24, “Why Italian Princes Have Lost Their States.” The attack on the frailty and blindness of Italian princes is expressed most vitriolically at the end of *War*; see Appendix B, 24, 2.

prince defends his state are his own troops, mercenaries, auxiliaries, or a force combined of these elements. Mercenary and auxiliary armies are useless and dangerous. If a prince bases his government on a foundation of mercenaries, he will never have any stability or security. Mercenaries are disorganized, ambitious, undisciplined, and disloyal; bold among friends, among enemies cowardly; unfearing of God, unfaithful to man. Your defeat is staved off only as long as an attack on you is staved off: in peacetime they plunder you; in wartime, your enemies do. The reason for all this is that there is no love or reason to hold them on the battlefield other than their meager pay, which is not enough to make them want to die for you. They are only too anxious to be your soldiers while you are not waging war; but when a war breaks out, they flee, they desert. I hardly need to expend much effort convincing anyone, because the present collapse of Italy has had no other cause but her reliance upon these mercenary troops for so many years. Once they did help out some princes a little, and they seemed courageous while they fought one another; but when the foreign invader came, they showed themselves for what they were. Consequently, Charles VIII, King of France, was allowed to conquer Italy with chalk. Whoever said that our sins were the cause spoke truth; yet these sins certainly were not the ones he thought they were, but rather those I have mentioned. Since they were committed by princes, it is

49ff. The content of this paragraph is reflected in *Discourses*, I, 29–30. and *War*, I (especially *Guerra*, p. 348; LLA, pp. 30–31; AG.II, pp. 585–586). The forceful style is the result of a disjunctive form of argumentation lovingly borrowed from Scholastic rhetoric (Russo): no matter how you set it up, mercenaries cannot be trusted. To keep the stylistic pressure high, Machiavelli furthers the sense of debate by creating, as elsewhere, an imaginary speaker who attempts to counter his argument. Chabod, pp. 132–133, refers to Machiavelli's "dilemma-like procedure" which polarizes political questions into antithetical extremes, thus minimizing compromise; see also Whitfield, *M.*, p. 44. Sydney Anglo, *Machiavelli: A Dissection* (London: Gollancz, 1969), pp. 238–269, argues that this stylistic trait reduces Machiavelli's effectiveness in systematically presenting his thought.

59–67. Machiavelli returns to this idea again in Chapter 26; see note to lines 103–105 of that chapter. This is precisely the type of behavior he attributes to Castruccio Castracani, whose military effectiveness was, for Machiavelli, determined by it (G², pp. 18–20; AG.II, pp. 541–542).

71–72. Again *War*, I (*Guerra*, p. 348; LLA, pp. 30–31; AG.II, pp. 585–586); but Machiavelli passes on Sparta with more detail in *Discourses*, II, 3.

72. As in Chapter 10, the Swiss and the Germans merge together in Machiavelli's mind. In *Discourses*, II, 16 he calls the Swiss "the masters of modern warfare" (B, p. 321; ML, p. 330; W.I, p. 402; Pen., p. 321; AG.I, p. 366). Elsewhere he says they are the only people to "retain any shadow of ancient military practices" (*War*, II [*Guerra*, p. 375; LLA, p. 61; AG.II, p. 608]); and he discusses their infantry at length in *War*, II (*Guerra*, pp. 361–367; LLA, pp. 47–52; AG.II, pp. 597–601).

76–77. An allusion to the Mercenary or Truceless War that broke out after the First Punic War, 241 B.C., when some Carthaginian mercenaries, bored and poor, revolted against Carthage and harassed various envoys and their armies in a number of cruel skirmishes until 237. See *War*, I (*Guerra*, p. 335; LLA, p. 15; AG.II, p. 574) and *Discourses*, III, 32 (B, pp. 474–475; ML, pp. 505–506; W.I, pp. 553–554; Pen., p. 493; AG.I, p. 502); the probable source is Polybius I. 65–88.

princes who have paid the penalty for them.

I want to prove more fully the shortcomings of these armies. A mercenary commander is either an excellent soldier or he is not: if he is, you cannot trust him because he will always aspire to self-aggrandizement by coercing either you—his employer—or others against your wishes. If the mercenary leader lacks *virtú*, he usually ruins you. Should someone reply that anybody with troops under his control will do this be they mercenaries or not, my retort would be that soldiers must be controlled either by a prince or by a republic. A prince ought personally to go and perform the duties of a commander; a republic ought to send its citizens. When someone is sent who does not turn out to be talented, he ought to be replaced; when he is talented, he should be restrained with laws to keep him in bounds. Experience shows us that only princes and armed republics bring about solid progress and that mercenary armies bring about nothing but harm. A republic armed with its own troops is less likely to be subjugated by one of its citizens than a republic armed with foreign troops.

For many centuries Rome and Sparta remained armed and free. The Swiss are heavily armed and enjoy great freedom. The Carthaginians provide an example from antiquity of the use of mercenaries: they were almost overpowered by their mercenaries after their first war against the Romans, even though the Carthaginians used their own citizens as

78–80. Epaminondas was a patriotic Theban general who put an end to Sparta's supremacy at the Battle of Leuctra (371 B.C.) by means of innovative attack strategies—a victory that began a peaceful period of power for Thebes. He was killed by Agesilaus at the Battle of Mantinea in 362. Philip II, Alexander the Great's father, did not become King of Macedon until 359; see Introduction, p. 32. Thebes had controlled the area occupied by the Delphic Amphictiony, a league connected with the temple of Apollo and with preserving the cult, which included Phocis. The Third Sacred War began in 355, as Phocian separatists made their bid for independence, and lasted until 347 when Thebes and Thessaly formed a league and asked Philip to intervene. But Thebes switched allegiances and joined Athens in resisting Philip—hence her punishment. Philip took over Thebes in 338. Commentators are fond of noting Machiavelli's lapse from strict historical cause and effect: Philip is an inappropriate illustration here, for he was hardly a mercenary leader. See Justin, 8. 2. 1–2; 3. 1–2.

87. Filippo died in 1447; see Introduction, p. 39.

85. See Introduction, p. 38, for Queen Joanna II of Naples and the early power struggle in the Kingdom of Naples. The balance for protection she effected with King Alfonso V, then King of Aragon and Sicily, was only a temporary one: a shifting alliance among Joanna, Alfonso, Muzio, and other mercenary leaders, namely Braccio da Montone, stirred up the kingdom for years; see *History*, I, 38 (G², pp. 132–134; Htb, pp. 43–44; AG.III, pp. 1076–1078) and *War*, I (*Guerra*, p. 336; LLA, p. 16; AG.II, pp. 574–575).

99–102. Sir John Hawkwood fought with Edward III, the Black Prince, in France during the Hundred Years' War. He went to Italy in 1362 with his famous "White Company" and fought as a *condottiere* for various cities until his death in 1394. Pisa and Prato both employed him against Florence. In 1390, however, Florence hired him to stave off Gian Galeazzo Visconti. He had to retreat from his campaign against Visconti in Lombardy—hence "one who failed to conquer"; historians generally agree that if he had won in Lombardy, "Florence would have been at his mercy."

104–106. Although originally Muzio Attendolo Sforza and Andrea Fortebraccio, known as Braccio da Montone, had served together with one *condottiere*—Alberigo da Barbiano and his Company of Saint George (see note to line 169, below), which employed only Italian mercenaries—the two leaders eventually split. From about 1410 to 1443 their two companies of mercenaries—the Sforzeschi and Bracceschi—carried on the bulk of the wars fought between the Italian cities. The original "founders," Muzio and Braccio da Montone, died in 1424, but their traditions were perpetuated by Francesco Sforza and Niccolò Piccinino, who fell heir to Braccio's army at his death.

commanders. After the death of Epaminondas, the
Thebans put Philip of Macedon in command of
their troops; he took away their freedom once he
was victorious. After Duke Filippo Visconti died, 80
the Milanese employed Francesco Sforza against the
Venetians; once he had defeated the enemy at Cara-
vaggio, he joined with them to overpower his Mila-
nese employers. His father Muzio Sforza, hired by 85
Queen Joanna of Naples, suddenly deserted Joanna
and left her defenseless; hence, in order not to lose
her kingdom, she was forced to throw herself into
the arms of the King of Aragon. And if the Vene-
tians and Florentines have in the past extended their 90
domain with such troops, and if their commanders
have defended them without setting themselves up
as princes over them, my comment is that the Flor-
entines were very lucky in these instances; for
among those commanders with *virtú*, whom they 95
had cause to fear, some failed to conquer, some
encountered opposition, and some directed their
ambition elsewhere. The one man who failed to
conquer was John Hawkwood, whose loyalty we
cannot know since he did not conquer; but every- 100
one will admit that, had he conquered, Florence
would have been at his mercy. The Sforzas always
had the Bracceschi opposed to them, so that they
kept an eye on one another: Francesco Sforza di-
rected his ambition toward Lombardy; Braccio da 105
Montone against the church and the Kingdom of
Naples. But let us turn to more recent events. The

109–111. For Vitelli, see note to Chapter 8, line 71; for “ordinary citizen” as a translation for *privata fortuna*, see note to Chapter 6, line 129.

121. For “a great deal of *virtù*,” see Appendix A, 12 a. Although Machiavelli praises aspects of Venetian justice (*D.*, I, 49), he maintains a fairly consistent anti-Venetian bias throughout his works; see Introduction, p. 40. To trace Machiavelli’s position on Venice, see *Decennale II*, vv. 175–77 (*G*³, p. 264; Tusiani, p. 178; *AG*.III, p. 1461); *D.*, I, 6, 53 and III, 31; “Ass” V, vv. 49–54 (*G*³, pp. 287–288; Tusiani, p. 78; *AG*.II, p. 762); *War*, I (*Guerra*, pp. 348–349; *LLA*, pp. 31–32; *AG*.II, p. 586); and *History I*, 29, 39.

127. Francesco Bussone da Carmagnola (1380–1432) was one of the most outstanding Italian *condottieri*. Originally hired by Filippo Maria Visconti, Duke of Milan, he was later—probably correctly—suspected of treason; he escaped to Venice, where he was hired in 1425. Meanwhile Florence had been fighting Milan and lost a decisive battle at Anghiari in October of 1425; consequently, she felt it was to her advantage to join Venice, and Carmagnola became the leader of both armies against Milan in 1426. Two particular actions led the Venetians to suspect Carmagnola’s loyalty. In 1427 he defeated the Milanese forces led by Francesco Sforza and the former leader of the Bracceschi, Niccolò Piccinino, now fighting with a Sforza—but Carmagnola released all the prisoners. Then, in 1431, he was attacking Cremona and awaiting naval aid from the Venetians. Cremona was again defended by Francesco Sforza and Piccinino who, instead of attacking Carmagnola by land, formed a fleet, defeated the Venetian navy, and routed Carmagnola easily—a disaster for Venice. In 1432 the Venetians lured him into Venice, had him tried by the Council of Ten, and executed him. With mordant irony Machiavelli concludes *Discourses*, II, 33 on a note that no doubt alludes to Venice’s execution of Carmagnola and Florence’s execution of Paolo Vitelli; see Appendix B, 12, 4.

Florentines appointed as their military commander Paolo Vitelli, a man with a great deal of common sense who achieved enormous prestige from his position as an ordinary citizen. Had he conquered Pisa, no one would deny that Florence must necessarily have become his, for if he had been hired by her enemies she would have had no defense—if she had retained him, she would have had to obey him. If we consider the development of Venice, we shall note that she acted with security and glory as long as she fought with her own troops—that is, before she directed her attention to campaigns on land; for with her nobility and lower classes armed, she acted with a great deal of *virtú*.^a But when she began fighting on land, she forfeited this *virtú* and went along with Italian military tradition. During the initial stage of her expansion on land, since she had not much territory, yet in it enjoyed a considerable reputation, she had little to fear from their military commanders; but when she grew larger, as she did under Carmagnola, she got a sample of their mistaken policy. Since the Venetians thought he possessed enormous *virtú*—for under his leadership they defeated the Duke of Milan—and since they knew, on the other hand, that he was reluctant to continue the war, they concluded that since he was no longer willing they could no longer conquer with him. Yet they were unable to dismiss him lest they thereby lose their acquisitions. Hence necessity obliged them to murder him in order to protect

139–141. Bartolomeo Colleoni da Bergamo (1400–1476) joined the Venetians in 1424, fought at Cremona (see preceding note), and succeeded Carmagnola as the Venetian general. He was defeated by Francesco Sforza at Caravaggio (see Introduction, p. 39). A famous statue in Venice, designed by Verrocchio, of Colleoni riding a rearing horse makes his image one of the most recognizable of the *condottieri* to subsequent generations. Roberto da Sanseverino (1418–1487) was appointed *condottiere* for the Venetian forces in the war against Ferrara (1482–1484); he died fighting for Venice against the attacking Duke Sigismund of Austria. Niccolò Orsini, Count of Pitigliano, jointly commanded the Venetian forces with Bartolommeo d’Alviano at Vailà (Agnadello); see Introduction, p. 54.

143–146. A frequently quoted epigram; see Appendix B, 12, 5 for Guicciardini’s summation.

155. The “recent history” seems to suggest the period from Frederick I (Barbarossa, ca. 1125–1190), when he agreed, through the Peace of Constance (1183), to let the cities of Lombardy—formed into the Lombard League—be free. He also agreed to the fragmentation of the power enjoyed by the Holy Roman Empire after the death of his successor Frederick II (1194–1250). No attempt at intervention was made on the part of the empire until Charles IV’s second invasion in 1368. In the interim the politics of the Italian cities was dominated by the Guelfs and the Ghibellines. The Guelfs were on the pope’s side and hoped that he would gain temporal acendency; most of the republics or communes were Guelf. The Ghibelline faction favored the Holy Roman Emperor. But the allusion in the phrase “many of the large cities took up arms . . .” (line 159) could even be to the post-Carolingian period discussed in Introduction, p. 41; if so, then Machiavelli’s position in the following discussion is analogous to the one outlined in *Discourses*, I, 12, quoted in note to Chapter 11, line 2.

themselves against him. They then appointed such military commanders as Bartolomeo da Bergamo, Roberto da Sanseverino, and the Count of Pitigliano. With these men the Venetians had to fear not what these commanders acquired but what they lost: as it turned out later at Vailà, where in one day's battle Venice lost what she had very laboriously acquired over the course of eight hundred years. From this kind of mercenary army, then, came only protracted, belated, and feeble conquests—and sudden, prodigious defeats. Since these examples have brought me around to Italy, which for many years had been controlled by mercenary troops, I want to go into the topic more deeply so that once we have understood the origin and development of these troops we may be better able to rule them.

You must therefore realize that in recent history, as soon as Italy started driving the Holy Roman Emperors out and the pope started acquiring more influence in temporal affairs, Italy divided into many states. Many of the large cities took up arms against their nobility who, with the emperor's support, had previously kept the cities subjected; to add to its influence in temporal affairs, the church also backed the cities. In many other towns one of their citizens became prince. Hence Italy was almost completely in the hands of the church and a few republics; since the priests and citizens had no military experience, they started to hire outsiders. The

769. Also known as Alberigo da Cunio. His Company of Saint George, composed solely of Italians, helped establish the mercenary system of soldiers of fortune in Italy; he died in 1409. (But Bayley [*War and Society*, p. 12, n. 32] credits the Florentine Company of the Little Hat as being the first *compagnia di ventura* [1362–1365].)

174–177. Another heavily ironic sentence, especially since the *virtù* of each man cited is notably high. The effect of the Swiss army was decisive in defeating Ludovico Sforza at Novara (1500) and in driving Louis XII out of Italy after the Battle of Ravenna (1512). At another battle near Novara, in 1513, the Swiss again drove Louis back to France—this time definitively.

179. From his earliest military writing through *War*, Machiavelli consistently regards the infantry as the backbone (his word is “nerve”) of any army. He details the main strengths of the infantry in *Discourses*, II, 18: they can go many places where cavalry cannot, and they can learn to make and remake formations easier than cavalry can; moreover, a well-formed infantry can defeat cavalry easily, and not be easily defeated by them. In *Discourses*, II, 18, as here, Machiavelli goes on to blame Italian princes for too great attention to cavalry and not enough to trained, loyal infantry soldiers—another fault of overdependence on *condottieri*, who found the use of cavalry an easy way of keeping their reputations high.

193. Although first written in 1875, see the glowing passage from Symonds on these *condottieri* in Appendix B, 12, 6. For a more balanced evaluation, consult Bayley, *War and Society*, with its commentary and text of the *De militia* by Leonardo Bruni, written in 1421.

first man to win any reputation for mercenaries was
Alberigo da Barbiano from the Romagna. Among
others, Braccio da Montone and Muzio Attendolo 170
Sforza—in their days masters of Italy—were prod-
ucts of this man's training. Following these men
came all the others who, down to our own times,
have led mercenary troops.^b The effect of their *virtù*
is that Italy has been overrun by Charles VIII, plun- 175
dered by Louis XII, raped by Ferdinand of Aragon,
and scorned by the Swiss. In the first place the aim
of these mercenaries was to build up their own
prestige by discrediting that of the infantry. They
did so because they were without any territory of 180
their own and dependent upon their professional
skill: a handful of infantry did not afford them any
prestige and they were unable to outfit a greater
number. Consequently they restricted themselves 185
to cavalry, since with a manageable number of them
they could earn both income and honor. Matters
became so bad that there were fewer than two thou-
sand foot soldiers in an army of twenty thousand
men. Moreover, the mercenaries devoted all their
professional skill to eliminating hardship and anx- 190
iety for themselves and their own troops; they did
not kill one another in battle, but rather took each
other prisoner without demanding ransom. They
did not attack cities by night; the mercenaries
within the walls made no sorties on the enemy in 195
their tents, constructed neither palisades nor ditches
around their camps, and did no fighting in winter.

200. Machiavelli's word for "captained" is *condotta*, which is rich with connotations: "conducted" as a past participle in the negative sense of "reduced" as well as "led"; but as a noun, *condotto* was an old word meaning "mercenary soldier" and *condotta* was also the name for the contract enlisting a *condottiere*. Machiavelli is not above making such a pun on the word. He reports an exchange with Cesare Borgia, when the latter was angry at Florence for temporizing with him in 1502: Cesare asks Machiavelli what *condotta* the Florentines might give him, and Machiavelli wittily replies he thought Cesare was more accustomed "*ad volere piuttosto condurre altri*," implying that Cesare would both rather lead than be led, and rather not be hired on as a Florentine military leader—*condurre* meaning "to commission" (letter Nov. 8, 1502, *Leg.*, I, 417; AG.I, 129).

201. Burd notes that Machiavelli's account of the origin of the Italian mercenary system does not account for why mercenaries were so permanent an institution in Italy—they did not survive long in other European nations—nor does it explain why the large cities fought their nobility in the first place.

Their military codes allowed every one of these things, thus enabling them, as I have said, to avoid hardship and danger: so they have captained Italy 200 into slavery and scorn.

7. "Other" takes us back to Machiavelli's categorization of types of armies, especially his statement in Chapter 12, lines 20–21. For Machiavelli's habit of referring back and forth to matters covered, or to be covered, see Introduction, pp. 81–82. Cf. the other definition of auxiliary troops in note to Chapter 12, lines 18–20.

3–8. For the policy aims of Pope Julius II in 1510–1511, see Introduction, pp. 54–55.

9–11. Auxiliary troops, from a military point of view, have a slight edge over mercenaries, but they are dangerous from a political point of view. In *Discourses*, II, 20 Machiavelli is not at all sanguine about their potential and calls them the "most dangerous" kind of force: they are loyal to and obey their own prince, not the one who employs them, and they inevitably pillage their new employer (B, p. 338; ML, p. 350; W.I, p. 419; Pen., p. 340; AG.I, p. 382). Any treaty is better than having recourse to auxiliaries; in fact, any ambitious prince or republic ought to urge people to ask it for troops because it will surely gain whatever its troops win. *Discourses*, II, 20 also provides many illustrations for Machiavelli's frequent assertion that "ancient history is full of examples."

13

Concerning Troops That Are Auxiliary, Those That Are Mixed, and Those That Are a Prince's Own

Auxiliary armies, the other useless kind, are those of a powerful state whom you call upon to come in with its own troops to aid and defend^a you. Pope Julius II did this in the recent past when he witnessed the sad showing of his own mercenaries in his campaign against Ferrara; he turned to auxiliaries and arranged that King Ferdinand of Spain should support him with his people and forces. Such armies in and of themselves can prove useful and effective, but for whoever calls them in they are almost always dangerous: if they are defeated, you are destroyed; if they conquer, you are their prisoner. And though ancient history is full of examples to prove this point, nevertheless I want to pursue the recent example provided by Pope Julius II. His choice could not have been more ill considered: in

18. “Good fortune,” here, seems to carry some connotation of the wheel-turning goddess. Sasso and Russo both feel that its inclusion here is less the result of a consistent, systematic conception—as in *Discourses*, II, 29—than a desire to heighten the narration.

26. The “third situation” referred to in the previous sentence was the unexpected and successful intervention of the Swiss troops after the Battle of Ravenna (April 11, 1512; see Introduction, p. 55). Hence the paradoxical situation Machiavelli describes here—made more subtle by the fact that these Swiss mercenaries did aid this Prince of the Church, Julius II.

27–37. For the events of June, 1500, alluded to here, see Introduction, p. 7. They may form the background for that epigrammatic interchange between Georges d’Amboise and Machiavelli: “When [he] told me that the Italians had no understanding of warfare, I replied that the French had no understanding of statecraft” (ch. 3, lines 321–323).

37–35. John VI (John Cantacuzene) was the Byzantine emperor from 1341 to 1355, having usurped the throne from the rightful heir John V (John Palaeologus). John Cantacuzene called upon the Ottoman Turks in 1353 to help him in the ensuing civil war with the Palaeologi which lasted for two years. By then the Ottoman Turks had such a foothold in Europe that they were able to launch their long expansionistic career—a threat to both papal and Venetian power during the fifteenth century.

43. Translates *tutto uno corpo*; see note to Chapter 3, line 73, for more on the idea of unity suggested by this phrase.

order to get Ferrara, he thrust himself entirely into the hands of a foreigner. But his good fortune produced a third situation, so that he did not reap the harvest of his bad decision. When his auxiliaries were defeated at Ravenna, the Swiss arose and—contrary to everybody's expectations, including Julius's own—drove off the conquerors; hence he was taken prisoner neither by his enemies, since they had fled, nor by his own auxiliaries, since he had conquered with weapons other than theirs. The Florentines, when they had absolutely no armed forces of their own, brought in ten thousand Frenchmen to storm Pisa: that choice put them in greater jeopardy than in any other period of their struggles. The Emperor of Constantinople, to resist his neighbors, sent ten thousand Turks into Greece. When the war was over, they did not want to leave; this was the beginning of Greek servitude under the infidel.

Therefore anyone who does not want to conquer should choose auxiliaries. They are much more dangerous than mercenaries because with auxiliary troops defeat is certain; they are all united, all subject to another man's orders. But mercenaries, though they may have been victorious, need more time and better opportunities to cause you trouble. Since they are not united into one body, and they are recruited and paid by you, a third person whom you may make their leader cannot suddenly seize enough power to cause you trouble. In short, cow-

55ff. Machiavelli returns here to situations already discussed in Chapter 7, but does so to try and specify a point brushed over before: the troops Cesare Borgia led into the Romagna were in large part borrowed from Louis XII; see Introduction, p. 48. As for the Orsini and Vitelli, recall "Description" and Senigallia.

74. Machiavelli recapitulates material from the end of Chapter 6; see notes to lines 123 and 130–131 of that chapter.

ardice is your greatest danger among mercenaries; *virtù*, among auxiliaries.

Wise princes, therefore, have always steered clear
of such armies and had recourse to their own. They 50
have preferred to lose with their own troops rather
than to conquer with the troops of others, deeming
that a victory acquired through the use of foreign
troops is not a real one. I shall never hesitate to cite
Cesare Borgia and his activities. This duke invaded 55
the Romagna with auxiliary troops—everyone he
led there was French—and captured Imola and Forli
with them. But later, considering such troops un-
reliable, he turned to mercenaries, deciding they
presented fewer dangers: he hired the Orsini and 60
the Vitelli. Subsequently, in his dealings with them,
he found them equivocal, disloyal, and risky, so he
did away with them and raised his own troops. We
can easily discriminate between these two kinds of
armies if we consider the difference between the 65
duke's reputation when he had only the French;
when he had the Orsini and the Vitelli; and when
he was left by himself with his own troops. His
reputation steadily rose, yet he was never respected
fully until people realized that he was in complete 70
possession of his own armies.

I have preferred not to depart from recent Italian
examples, yet I do not want to refrain from men-
tioning Hiero of Syracuse, whom I have discussed
previously. When the Syracusans made him the 75
leader of their armies, as I have said, he realized

80. For the subtle technique involved here, see Introduction, pp. 86–87. Those comments raise another problem. I translate *essere conduttieri fatti come li nostri italiani* as “were composed of men hired the way we do in Italy.” As Sasso observes, *conduttieri* (or *condottieri*) most often implies the leader or commander, not all the troops—but it can also refer to the entire group. Therefore I have combined that possibility with both the source and the earlier reference to justify the emphasis on all the mercenaries rather than on their leaders only.

81–89. Taken from I Sam. 17:38–40; 50–51 (in the Vulgate, I Kings 17:38–40; 50–51). David was, of course, the civic hero of Florence. The Bible specifies that David’s weapons are a sling and a “staff,” not Machiavelli’s “sword.” In verse 50 the biblical account makes it clear David had no sword, but in verse 51 David withdraws Goliath’s sword. Since this is a common visual representation of David, it may be this verse that Machiavelli had in mind.

90–91. The epigrammatic quality of this sentence has made it famous. See Appendix B, 13, 1 for a discussion of the circumstances surrounding “Remarks,” its dating problem, and a relevant citation—given this context.

92. Charles VII, King of France from 1422 to 1461, finally drove the English out of France (except for Calais) at the end of the Hundred Years’ War (1337–1453). In 1445 he organized an independent unit of cavalry, and in 1448, one of infantry, known as the Franc Archers. He also strengthened himself with an independent artillery company. All of these were extremely important steps in establishing a permanent army and disengaging Charles from dependence on the nobles’ military support. The role of Joan of Arc in his “good fortune and *virtù*” is ignored here, but Machiavelli reports Charles’s gratitude to her in *War*, IV (*Guerra*, p. 441; LLA, p. 129; AG.II, pp. 661–662).

97ff. Louis XI, King of France from 1461 to 1483, signed a treaty with the Swiss cantons in 1474 which enabled him to draft a certain number of men per canton for his own army. These troops were particularly helpful in defeating Charles the Bold, the last Duke of Burgundy; his death in 1477 and the French victories led to France’s acquisition of Burgundy (see note to ch. 3, lines 63–67), Picardy, Boulogne, Artois, and the Franche-Comté. “As we can now in fact see” (line 100) probably alludes to the French defeats at Ravenna in 1512 and a year later at Novara. The remainder of this paragraph seems a bit too narrowly governed by Machiavelli’s military considerations: Louis XI is generally credited with being one of the most powerful forces in centralizing the French monarchy, and his military policy was a great support in this consolidating process. For another comment on Machiavelli’s views about these perils, see “French Affairs,” *Guerra*, pp. 166–167.

104. See the reference to “French Affairs” above, *D.*, II, 16 (B, pp. 320–321; ML, p. 329; W.I, p. 402; Pen., p. 320; AG.I, pp. 365–366), and the letter to the Dieci dated February 8, 1507 (*Leg.*, II, 1099).

immediately that their mercenaries, who were men hired as we do in Italy, were useless; it seemed to him that he could neither keep them on nor release them, so he cut them all to pieces: he then waged his battles with his own men—not with others. I also want to recall a symbolic story from the Old Testament which is relevant to my purpose. David volunteered to go and fight Goliath, the Philistine challenger, and, to inspire him with courage, Saul outfitted him with his own armor. But when David tried it on, he refused, saying that he was unable to fight well in it; hence he preferred to meet the enemy with his sling and his sword. 80 85

Another man's armor, in short, either slips off your back, or weighs too much, or constrains you. Once Charles VII, father of King Louis XI, had liberated France from the English with his good fortune and *virtù*, he recognized this need to arm himself with his own weapons and issued orders throughout his kingdom providing for cavalry and infantry. Then his son King Louis countermanded the order for infantry and began hiring Swiss mercenaries: this mistake, followed by others, is—as we can now in fact see—the cause for that kingdom's perils. By giving prestige to the Swiss, the king demoralized his entire army; by disbanding all^b his infantry, he made his cavalry dependent upon foreign troops. Having grown accustomed to fighting along with the Swiss, his own army supposes it cannot win without them. As a result, the 90 95 100 105

109. Cf. *Discourses*, II, 18 (B, p. 332; ML, p. 342; W.I, p. 412; Pen., p. 332; AG.I, p. 376). The points Machiavelli makes concern the Swiss at Novara (1513) and Marignano (1515); they are similar to what he says here, although the reference to Marignano is to September, 1515, after *The Prince* was written.

109–113. Therefore the military hierarchy Machiavelli recommends to a prince is: first, one's own troops; second—but by no means a close second—mixed troops; third, auxiliary troops; and last, mercenaries. But for the dangers of auxiliaries, see note to lines 9–11 above.

119. See notes to Chapter 3, lines 183 and 189, and Introduction, p. 82. The reference to material so far back requires an attentive reader and is one of Machiavelli's attention-getting devices.

121. Recall the passage in the letter to Francesco Vettori of June 20, 1513 quoted in note to Chapter 3, lines 85–89, and the sentence from that chapter which it glosses: "The reason is . . . no longer remediable." Cf. the reference to Cosimo de' Medici in the note to line 189 of the same chapter.

126ff. Refers to Valens, the eastern emperor from A.D. 364 to 378. Although he began to employ some Goths as mercenaries in 376, it did not save him from total defeat at the Battle of Adrianople two years later. The defeat prepared the way for the invasion of Greece by the Visigoths and the destruction of the Eastern Empire. The historical oversimplification that follows may well be due to Machiavelli's overinvolvement in his own argument—but it is a vastly brash generalization.

134–136. I have translated the Latin from the source (Tacitus *Ann.* 13. 19), rather than from the garbled version which Machiavelli is perhaps quoting from memory.

French are not strong enough to test the strength of the Swiss mercenaries and, without them, they do not test the strength of others. Thus the French armies have been mixed—partly mercenaries and partly native: in combination such armies are much better than purely auxiliary or purely mercenary forces, yet quite inferior to an army of one's own. Let the example just given suffice, for the kingdom of France would be invincible if Charles's methods had been elaborated or maintained. But man's imprudence initiates a policy for immediate gain, unmindful of the poison inherent in it—as I indicated in my previous reference to pulmonary tuberculosis.

Consequently the prince who does not recognize the diseases in his state at their inception is not truly wise: such wisdom is given to few men. And if we examine the primary cause for the downfall of the Roman Empire, we find that it began simply with the hiring of Goths as mercenaries: from that decision the forces of the Roman Empire began to weaken—all the *virtù* which was drained from it went to the Goths. I therefore conclude that without its own armies no principedom is secure; indeed, it is totally subject to fortune since it lacks the *virtù* to protect itself confidently during hard times. It has always been the contention and judgment of wise men that "nothing is as insecure and transient as a reputation for authority that is not supported by one's own forces." One's own forces are those

141. Cesare Borgia, Hiero II of Syracuse, David, and Charles VII are the four examples mentioned in this chapter. But Whitfield, "Essay" (xvi-xvii) argues that the "four men" are the more exemplary leaders who "became princes because of their *virtù* and not because of Fortune," namely, Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, and Theseus (Chapter 6). Nevertheless, the four men discussed earlier seem to exemplify "armed prophets" with *virtù* who instituted new governments, rather than models of the chief concern of this chapter, "the way to organize one's own army."

142-143. Both Philip II and Alexander were famous for creating their empire by means of the Macedonian phalanx, a block arrangement of soldiers in rows sixteen deep that thrust forward spears 24 feet long.

144-145. A weak, side-stepping conclusion; puzzling particularly since Machiavelli seems to have most of his argument well delineated and well organized. Perhaps its inadequacy can be attributed to Machiavelli's violent and emotional disgust toward mercenaries; this feeling certainly seems to get the better of his powers of rational argument.

composed of subjects, citizens, or one's own kinsmen: all other forces are either mercenaries or auxiliaries. The way to organize one's own army is easy to discover if you examine the methods followed by the four men I have named above, and observe how Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, and many republics and princes have armed and organized themselves. I have complete confidence in such methods.

140

145

2. "Profession" translates *arte*. Machiavelli repeats the word three more times in the paragraph, where "art" would seem more appropriate, especially given *The Art of War*.

7–9. There are two passages in *War* that allude negatively to the refined, delicate, personal indulgences of contemporary court life and hark nostalgically back to the vigor and strength of antiquity. Early in Book I the latter is "true and perfect" while the former is "false and corrupt" (*Guerra*, pp. 330–331; LLA, p. 10; AG.II, p. 570; see also note to ch. 25, line 6 below). At the end of Book VII Machiavelli witheringly describes the indulgent court life before the storm of 1494; see Appendix B, 24, 2.

13. For Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan from 1450 to 1466, see Introduction, p. 39. As for his successors, the Dukes of Milan after his death were Galeazzo Maria Sforza (1466–1476), a tyrannical ruler stabbed to death because of his cruelty; Gian Galeazzo (1476–1492), robbed at eleven by his uncle Ludovico, who became the effective ruler in 1480 and lasted until 1500 and the invasion of Louis XII. Finally, there was Massimiliano (1512–1515), appointed by the Holy League; he ruled from 1512 until 1515, although the Swiss really controlled Milan until their defeat at Marignano by Francis I, who forced Massimiliano to hand Milan over to him. Whether Massimiliano "counts" depends upon the dating of *The Prince*; see Introduction, pp. 24–25.

17–20. In the next chapter Machiavelli discusses the qualities that cause princes to be blamed, and in Chapter 19 he takes up the specific question of "how to avoid contempt and hatred."

14

What a Prince Should Do About Military Affairs

A prince, therefore, ought to have no object, thought, or profession but war, its methods, and its discipline; that is the only art expected of one who governs. It is of such great *virtù* that it not only keeps in power men who were born princes but frequently enables ordinary citizens to rise to that level. We note, on the other hand, that when princes have been more interested in personal pleasures than in arms, they have lost their states. The primary cause for your losing your principedom is neglect of this art; the means enabling you to acquire it is skill in this art. 5 10

Francesco Sforza, although an ordinary citizen, became Duke of Milan because he was a soldier; because they shunned the hardships of the army, his sons, though they were dukes, became ordinary citizens. For among the other ills that being unarmed brings you, it makes you despised: this is one 15

30ff. Cf. *Discourses*, I, 21 concerning Henry VIII of England (B, pp. 186–187; ML, pp. 175–176; W.I, p. 266; Pen., pp. 168–169; AG.I, p. 247); and *Discourses*, III, 31, in which Machiavelli returns to the interrelation between good laws and good armies, discussed in Chapter 12 (B, p. 472; ML, p. 503; W.I, p. 551–552; Pen., p. 491; AG.I, p. 500).

36. That the hunt was an apt pastime for a courtier and especially good training because of its resemblance to war was widely recognized in the Renaissance; see Castiglione, *Courtier*, I, 22. See also the long section in *Discourses*, III, 39, where topography is considered a *scienza*, one requiring the utmost practice, and hunting is the best source of this knowledge (B, pp. 490–491; ML, pp. 523–525; W.I, pp. 568–569; Pen., pp. 510–511; AG.I, pp. 516–517). Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* is behind both passages; for the one in *The Prince*, see 1. 2. 10. In *War*, V, without reference to hunting, topographical information is said to be necessary for any general (*Guerra*, p. 457; LLA, pp. 143–144; AG.II, p. 674).

of the disgraces a prince ought to guard against, as
I shall explain below. There can be no proper relation
between an armed and an unarmed man. It is
unreasonable that an armed man should willingly
submit to an unarmed one, or that an unarmed man
should feel secure among armed retainers; for when
one man feels scorn and the other suspicion, it is
impossible for them to work well together. Hence,
besides the other calamities I have mentioned, a
prince ignorant of military matters cannot be re-
spected by his soldiers—nor can he trust them.

Therefore a prince ought never to let his thoughts
stray from military training; he should school him-
self for war even in peacetime. He can do so in two
ways: first, with physical activity; second, with
mental activity. As for physical activity, in addition
to keeping his men well disciplined and trained, he
ought to hunt constantly, and in so doing inure his
body to hardships; meanwhile he learns the nature
of the terrain, and he comes to understand about the
elevation of mountains, the opening out of valleys,
the disposition of plains, and the nature of rivers
and marshes—matters to which he must devote a
great deal of attention. Such information is useful in
two ways. First, one learns to know one's local
countryside and thus^a can better understand how to
defend it; second, through knowing and under-
standing the terrain one can easily grasp the lay of
any other terrain one may be forced to explore for
the first time. For example, the hills, valleys, plains,

59. Philopoemen of Megalopolis (253–182 B.C.) was a great Greek statesman-general who was the head of the Achaean League for years; see Introduction, pp. 32–33. The source for the following information is Livy, 35. 28 and Plutarch, *Phil.* 4. But Machiavelli's indirect questions heighten the narrative; Livy's account, which Machiavelli paraphrases, is written in a more reportorial style.

rivers, and marshes of Tuscany have certain features in common with those in other regions: so that with the knowledge of one region's terrain, a prince can easily acquire knowledge of it in others. And the prince who lacks this skill lacks the primary qualification a commander needs, since this skill teaches you how to locate the enemy, choose campsites, lead troops on a march and draw them up for battles, and besiege towns to your advantage. 50
55

Among the other reasons why authors have praised Philopoemen, the leader of the Achaeans, is that in time of peace he never thought about anything but military strategy. When he was out in the country with his friends, he often stopped and asked them: What if the enemy were on that hill and we were here with our army, who would have the advantage? How could we attack them without breaking ranks? If we should want to retreat, how could we go about it? If they retreated, how would we go about pursuing them? And as they walked along, he pointed out all the contingencies that an army might encounter. He heeded their opinions, expressed his own, and supported it with reasons: so that, because of this constant reflection, when he was leading an army there could arise no unforeseen events for which he had no remedy. 60
65
70

But as to a prince's mental activity, he ought to read history and give attention therein to the actions of great men, observe how they have conducted themselves in wartime, study the causes of 75

85–86. These are the leaders to be imitated. For Alexander, see Plutarch (*Alex.* 8. 2; 15, 5) and the Roman historian Curtius (6. 6, 29); for Caesar, Suetonius (*Iul.* 7.1); for Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus the Elder, Cicero (*QFr.* 1.8.23). It is interesting to note that Curtius takes up the question of whether Alexander owed more to *fortuna* or *virtù* (Whitfield, *M.*, p. 97).

92. Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, about the education of Cyrus the Great, the founder of the Persian Empire, is perhaps—with Isocrates' oration *To Nicocles*—one of the earliest in the long line of treatises designed to educate men in what wise princes and statesmen ought to be.

92–96. An abrupt shift in tone marks the end of this chapter and brings the reader up sharply, reminding him of the pragmatic nature of *The Prince*.

96–98. An ambiguous hint at the content and imagery of chapter 25: "She shows her . . . to resist her" (lines 31–32), as well as the closing image of that chapter about Fortune as a woman to be seduced. With these brusque and allusive remarks Machiavelli closes the military section he began in Chapter 12. The effect of these chapters is a fairly one-sided explanation for the "causes" of Italy's downfall; that Machiavelli does not exclude other important "causes" can be seen in Chapter 24: "If we consider . . . is lost" (lines 22–33).

their victories and defeats so that he can avoid the
second and imitate the first. Above all he acts as *80*
some excellent men in the past have done: they
have chosen to imitate some predecessor who has
been praised and honored, and have constantly kept
his deeds and actions before them. So it is said that
Alexander the Great imitated Achilles; Caesar, *85*
Alexander; Scipio, Cyrus. Whoever reads the life of
Cyrus written by Xenophon immediately realizes
how much of Scipio's fame is attributable to his
emulation of Cyrus and how much—in terms
of continence, courtesy, human kindness, and *90*
generosity—Scipio conformed to those qualities
Xenophon had written about Cyrus. A wise prince
ought to practice such methods as these and never
remain idle during peacetime, but instead cleverly
profit from peaceable periods so that they can prove *95*
valuable during times of adversity. Thus when For-
tune changes, a wise prince may be prepared to
resist her.

Concerning Matters. . . . For comment on the significance of this chapter, see Introduction, pp. 80–81.

3–7. An extremely dense sentence, breaking down into three distinct parts: each is important for indicating a sense of content and the narrative devices for conveying it. It is with this section, as Allan Gilbert notes, that Machiavelli most closely approaches the traditional “advice to prince” writings (*de regimine principum*)—a tradition stretching from Xenophon, Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero through Aquinas, Dante, Edigio Colonna, Marsilius of Padua into the Renaissance, with such names as Philip Beroaldo, Poggio Bracciolini, Erasmus, Elyot, and Pontano. But as the chapter unfolds, it becomes clear that Machiavelli is interested more in revising the tradition than in preserving it. Characteristic of his attitude is a remark in *Discourses*, I, 58, “I want to defend a cause that, as I have said, all writers have rejected” (B, p. 262; ML, p. 260; W.I., p. 341; Pen., p. 252; AG.I, p. 313).

9–11. The practical, pragmatic, useful aspect of *The Prince* is always in the forefront; it forces us to be ever mindful of the *verità effettuale della cosa*, “the effective truth [or reality] of things.” Gilbert’s rendering (AG.I, p. 57) as “the truth of the matter as facts” has significant justification in sixteenth-century usage: *effetto* is common for *fatto* (fact). Furthermore, the literal rendering draws attention to the fact that Machiavelli coined the word (Russo).

11–12. Again “conception” and “conceived” leave something to be desired as translations for *immaginazione* and *immaginati*. The Italian, and particularly the thrust of this sentence, forces our awareness into the spiritual, ideal, metaphysical realm of past writers. To be prepared for the next three sentences, it is important that we play this visionary sense against the real, actual, effectively evil nature of the world as it is—as it is, at least, in Machiavelli’s nexus, rooted in his assumptions about man’s nature demonstrated by a realistic appraisal of man’s role in history. Guicciardini is no less kind to “a conceived government”: “we do not have to seek a conceived [*immaginato*] government, and one that would be easier to view in his books than in practice, as possibly was Plato’s *Republic*” (“Dialogo,” II [*Dialogo e discorsi*, p. 99]). It should be noted, however, that the *Dialogo del reggimento di Firenze* also attempts to construct an ideal constitution, despite Guicciardini’s deprecation of things “conceived” along effective and just lines that could be put into practice. Machiavelli’s friend Vettori is skeptical about republics not becoming tyrannies; see Appendix B, 15, 1.

15

Concerning Matters for Which Men, and Particularly Princes, Are Praised or Blamed

It now remains to consider what the prince's methods and controls ought to be in handling his subjects and friends. Because I know that many people have written about this topic, I fear that my writing about it too may be judged presumptuous—particularly since in discussing this matter, I depart from the precepts given by others. But the intention^a of my writing is to be of use to whoever understands it; thus it has seemed to be more profitable to go straight to the actual truth of matters rather than to a conception about it. Many writers have conceived of republics and principedoms which have never in fact been seen or known to exist. Since there is so great a discrepancy between how one lives and how one ought to live, whoever forsakes what is done for what ought to be done is learning

20. See Appendix B, 15, 2 for a significant passage from, and commentary upon, *Discourses*, I, 3. For the relation between this hypothetical statement and the idea of act and potency, see Introduction, pp. 60–62 and 72–73.

30ff. These pairs of adjectives announce several topics subsequently discussed: generosity and frugality in Chapter 16; ruthlessness and compassion in Chapter 17; keeping promises in Chapter 18; contempt and hatred in Chapter 19. As Allan Gilbert, *Forerunners*, points out, these are conventional topics in the *de regimine principum* literature.

30–33. In this parenthesis we see the juxtaposition of two Machiavellis: the theoretician who seeks “the actual truth of matters” and the writer who strives for precision in his use of language—a language that is even more personal because it is his own dialect, not his “national” language. Machiavelli’s interest in language as a basic natural idiom, approached with originality through morphology and phonology, can be seen in his “Dialogue” (*G*³, pp. 183–198; Hale, pp. 175–190); see Grayson, “Language.”

45–47. The emphasis is on the basically evil nature of man and the human condition which necessitates situations in which good qualities—princely or human—cannot be put into action. But those qualities are nevertheless valuable. Machiavelli exhibits no cynicism about them, but rather sorrow that man’s nature makes them difficult to apply.

self-destruction, not self-preservation. For a man who wants to practice goodness in all situations is inevitably destroyed, among so many men who are not good. Hence a prince who wishes to retain his power must learn *not* to be good, and to use, or not to use, that ability according to necessity. 20

Ignoring, then, those matters about a prince which are conceptual and treating those which are true, I hold that whenever we discuss all men—and particularly princes, since they are more in the public eye—we pass judgment on some of the qualities which are a source of either blame or praise for them. Thus one man is considered generous, another stingy (I use a Tuscan word, for in our idiom “avaricious” still refers to someone who seeks to acquire by violent means; we call someone “stingy” who is overly reluctant to use what he has); one man is considered open-handed, another greedy; one ruthless, another compassionate; one perfidious, another faithful; one effeminate and cowardly, another bold and courageous; one humane, another arrogant; one dissolute, another continent; one honest, another cunning; one severe, another lenient; one serious, another frivolous; one pious, another skeptical, and so on. 30 35 40

I know everyone will admit that it would be most laudable for a prince to be endowed with all the qualities mentioned above that are considered good. But since he is unable to possess them, or comply with them, entirely—the human condition does not 45

47–49. Furthermore, the realm of political action is so special that conventional assumptions may have to be reversed. Consequently, the most politic decisions should be based on the immediate situation, not traditional values. Expediency and reassessment are the basic rules of thumb—in other words, “the actual truth of matters.” Machiavelli states this point quite clearly at the end of *Discourses*, II, 27: “Men make this mistake: they are unable to fix limits for their expectations; when they base their actions on these expectations without taking a different measure of themselves, they are ruined” (B, pp. 362–363; ML, p. 378; W.I, p. 441; Pen., p. 366; AG.I, p. 404). Cf. note to Chapter 3, lines 118–119.

56–60. See Introduction, pp. 60–62, 72–73, and the discussion of act and potency. It is precisely on the ethical plane that Machiavelli counters traditional doctrine because he is dealing with that gray area where the latter does not confront the problem he has in mind. The traditional view assumed that man’s moral development could be channeled and nurtured through commitment to political life, and, furthermore, that if leaders practiced correct moral and ethical principles, the polity would possess the same characteristics. Machiavelli, on the other hand, recognizes that political life often requires actions antagonistic to developing such potential; he rejects the easy equation of action and polity. Here he substitutes for it an attitude of skepticism—see Introduction, pp. 89–90. In the next chapter he specifically discusses the futility of following the moral prescriptions about generosity which had been assumed valid since Aristotle’s *Politics*. It is fitting that this methodological interlude (Sasso) should close with a quiet, confident acknowledgment—unlike the challenging and argumentative opening paragraph—of Machiavelli’s awareness that he is flying in the face of traditional theory. Again, as in Chapter 11, line 101, and Chapter 16, line 25, *virtù* seems to mean simply “virtue” here.

permit it—he must be prudent enough to know how to escape the opprobrium of those vices that do cost him his power. He must protect himself, whenever possible, from those vices which would not deprive him of that power; but when this is impossible, these latter vices need trouble him less. Furthermore, he need not worry about incurring opprobrium because of those vices without which it would be difficult to preserve his governing power. For if we consider everything carefully, we discover that some qualities which appear to have *virtù* would, if practiced, spell his downfall. Other qualities appear to be vices; but, when practiced, they secure his safety and well being.

2ff. See the end of the second paragraph in the preceding chapter. Machiavelli specifically condemns the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I for his prodigious spending; see "German Report," June 17, 1508 (*Guerra*, p. 200) and Appendix B, 16, 1. Liberality and generosity properly used, however, gave Cosimo de' Medici his high position in Florence (*History*, VII, 5 [G², p. 458; Htb, p. 314; AG.II, p. 1342). Classical references abound, but Cicero (*Off.* 1.14.42–44; 2.15.52–55; 17.58) seems most relevant.

6. The word *virtù* is used here and at the beginning of the next paragraph with a sense fairly close to "virtue." More interestingly, it is akin to a political *sprezzatura*, the kind of "grace" and "nonchalance" Castiglione (I, 26) recommends that a courtier cultivate. Machiavelli feels that if the prince is not pushy about his generosity, he may be considered its opposite, or "frugal." Note how Machiavelli—and even Castiglione—are concerned with the impression that a prince creates for external consumption.

16

Concerning Generosity and Frugality

Beginning with the first of the qualities mentioned above, then, I submit that it would be fine to be considered generous. However, generosity practiced so that you acquire a reputation for it can cause you trouble; for if generosity is practiced with *virtù*, as it ought to be, it may pass unnoticed and you will not escape the opprobrium of its opposite. Hence to keep up a reputation for generosity, one will be obliged not to neglect any form of ostentation. It follows that a prince who so acts will inevitably dissipate all his wealth in ostentatious displays. In the end, if he wishes to keep up his reputation for generosity, he will have to lay extraordinary burdens upon the people, to levy excessive taxes, and to do everything he can possibly do to raise money. These actions will begin to make his subjects hate him, and the more impoverished he becomes, the less respect he will receive from anyone. So that, since his generosity has caused trouble

5

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24. Machiavelli uses *misero*, “stingy,” presumably as he has defined it in the linguistic aside in the preceding paragraph. In this chapter I have retained this distinction even when “avarice” sometimes makes for a smoother translation for *misero*.

25. Again, *virtù* means simply “virtue,” as in line 6 above.

33–36. Although Machiavelli’s point is somewhat overstated because of the force of the logic, it remains that he is stressing appearance: a prince need not fear being considered stingy by those few people who have not benefited from his “ostentation” —and its attendant power and protection.

39–42. Two interesting comments on Julius II’s simony and financial habits in general can be found in Machiavelli’s dispatches from Rome, dated November 4 and 26, 1503 (*Leg.*, II, 598–601; 683–685, partially excerpted in AG.I, pp. 143–144, 156–157). See also Appendix B, 16, 2 for Guicciardini’s comment on Julius’s liberality. The “wars” are allusions to the League of Cambrai against Venice (1508–1509) and the Holy League against France (1512).

45. For Machiavelli’s remarks on Louis XII’s frugality, see the letter from Melun dated August 27, 1500 (*Leg.*, I, 123–127; Chiappelli (1971), pp. 381–385).

46–48. In a letter to Vettori, August 26, 1513, Machiavelli calls Ferdinand the Catholic, King of Spain, “niggardly and avaricious” (G¹, p. 292; Gpb, p. 133; AG.II, p. 922); see also “German Report” (*Guerra*, pp. 199–200) for a suggestion about how Ferdinand, who was considered stingy by most of his contemporaries, could best spend his wealth.

to many and rewarded few, he is affected by every slight disturbance and compromised by any slight danger. Once he recognizes this mistake and wants to pull back, he quickly runs into the opprobrium of stinginess. 20

Thus, a prince cannot practice this *virtù* of generosity without being known only adversely for it; so, if he is prudent, he should not mind being called stingy. For with time he will be considered more generous still, once the people see that thanks to his frugality his revenues are enough for him: he can defend himself against anyone who declares war and he can conduct campaigns without burdening the people. So it develops that he is generous toward everyone from whom he takes nothing—they are countless—and stingy toward everyone to whom he gives nothing—they are few. In our own times we have seen great things done only by those who are considered stingy; the other men were destroyed. Julius II, although he drew upon his reputation for generosity to attain the papacy, subsequently decided not to keep up that reputation: he wanted to be able to pay for his wars. The current King of France has been able to wage so many wars without levying special taxes on his people only because his long-practiced frugality provided for the extra expenditures. The current King of Spain would never have conducted or concluded so many campaigns if he had been considered generous. 25 30 35 40 45

Consequently if a prince does not have to rob his

52–55. An allusion to the argument in the preceding chapter—the ambiguous interaction on the moral and political plane of “virtue” and “vice.” At this point Machiavelli again switches into a hypothetical dialogue with an imaginary listener.

55ff. Although it is true that Machiavelli seems to be arguing from contemporary history, or at least his own perception of it, Caesar is one of the examples Cicero uses (*Off.* 1.14.43). Cicero does not feel that Caesar was really generous, for he misappropriated money and property. Caesar rarely comes off well in Machiavelli’s references to him: he regards him as a tyrant (*D.*, I, 10).

subjects, if he can defend himself, if he does not 50
become poor and despised, and if he is not forced
to become predatory, he should not be too much
concerned about encountering a reputation for stin-
giness, since it is one of the vices enabling him to
rule. And if someone were to argue that Caesar 55
came into power through his generosity, as did
many others who, because they were considered
(and were in fact) generous, eventually arrived at
the highest positions, I counter that either you are
already a prince or you are on the way to acquiring 60
a principedom: in the first case, such generosity is
harmful; in the second, it is quite necessary to be
considered generous. Caesar was one of those who
was anxious to gain sovereignty in Rome; but once
he had gained it, had he survived and had he not 65
reduced his expenditures, he would have dissipated
his power. If someone were to reply that there have
been many princes who have accomplished great
things with their armies and have been considered
extremely generous, my answer is: either a prince 70
spends his own money and that of his subjects, or
he spends what belongs to others. In the first case
he ought to be economical; in the second, he ought
not to neglect any sort of generosity. And in the
prince who marches with his troops, who lives on 75
plunder, loot, and ransom, and who has his hands
on others' property, such generosity is necessary—
otherwise his soldiers would not follow him. And
with what is not yours or your soldiers' you can be

82–83. Again Appendix B, 16, 1, is relevant, since Maximilian I was, in Machiavelli's opinion, a good example of someone "hurt" by "using up his own resources."

84–87. The epigrammatic quality of this sentence has made it one of Machiavelli's more famous statements on "generosity." It also succinctly adumbrates the argument of the next chapter.

86–87. Being despised and hated were adduced by Aristotle as causes for tyrannicides in *Pol.* 5. 8. 20 (1312b18–19); see note to Chapter 19, lines 42ff. Machiavelli makes the point several times: *Discourses*, III, 23, is an object lesson, with Marcus Furius Camillus as the example (B., pp. 454–455; ML, p. 483; W.I, pp. 533–534; Pen., pp. 471–472; AG.I, pp. 484–485). See also *Discourses*, III, 21 on leaders overzealous to be either loved or feared (B, p. 447; ML, p. 474; W.I, p. 526; Pen., p. 463; AG.I, p. 478), and Machiavelli's letter to Vettori, December 10, 1514, talking about the risks of neutrality (G¹, pp. 358–359; Gpb, p. 175; AG.II, p. 954). Avoiding contempt and hatred is considered later in Chapter 19.

89–94. Again the epigrammatic quality is high. This chapter and the next two are marked by a prescriptive, didactic emphasis which, for some, obscures the reasoned clarity of the majority of *The Prince*. Yet the didacticism and the measured argument are not mutually contradictory, but extremely characteristic of Machiavelli. The combination should be considered and respected when it is encountered.

more generous; as Cyrus, Caesar, and Alexander 80
were, for spending other people's property does not
diminish your reputation but enhances it. Using up
your own resources is the only thing that hurts you.
Nothing feeds upon itself as much as generosity:
while you practice it, you lose the power to practice 85
it; you can become either poor and^a despised or, to
avoid poverty, predatory and hated. Above all else
a prince must protect himself from being despised
and hated; generosity leads to both. Consequently,
it is wiser to be considered stingy—which creates 90
opprobrium without hatred—than to want to be
considered generous, thus having to encounter a
reputation for being predatory—which creates op-
probrium, and hatred besides.

3ff. Compassion and ruthlessness are two of the poles that Machiavelli lists at the end of the second paragraph of Chapter 15. But Machiavelli is really distinguishing, not between compassion and ruthlessness, but between two kinds of compassion (Sasso); cf. his remarks on the good and bad uses of ruthless measures in Chapter 8, lines 143–152.

6. The word for “restored,” *raccioncia*, is used admiringly of Romulus in *Discourses*, I, 9; see Appendix B, 18, 11. Whitfield (*Discourses*, p. 160) argues that this word makes of Cesare Borgia a “pattern for a tyrant, but in the mould of Romulus.” This view, coupled with the remark in Chapter 7, lines 143–146, that Cesare had created good will and prosperity in the Romagna, shows Cesare as an example of someone who was ostensibly ruthless but actually compassionate—with compassion measured in terms of producing good results for the people as a whole; see note to Chapter 7, line 155. Guicciardini makes a particular point of this in *Italy*, VI, 4, noting that the people of the Romagna were “inclined to devotion” for Cesare because his policies broke up the existing feudal conditions. They saw the military effectiveness and efficiency of one strong leader as opposed to a local prince who oppressed them because his income was inadequate to support an army; see Appendix B, 17, 1. For further comment from Guicciardini, see Appendix B, 17, 2.

11. See Introduction, p. 7, for Machiavelli’s involvement in the Pistoia riots of 1501. For Guicciardini’s remarks on the situation, see Introduction, p. 7, n. 12. There were more riots in 1502; at this point the Florentine Signoria occupied the city. Machiavelli wrote two accounts of these affairs; see *Guerra*, pp. 25–31. In *Discourses*, III, 27 he says—with the Pistoia incidents in mind—that there are only three methods of dealing with such seditious rebellions: kill the leaders, exile them, or force them to make peace. The worst and most inefficient method is the third, the one that Florence tried before occupying the city. He feels that Florence would have acted more wisely had she used the first, or even the second, method (B, pp. 460–461; ML, pp. 490–491; W.I., pp. 540–541; Pen., p. 479; AG.I, p. 490); see note to Chapter 20, lines 50–53. See also *Discourses* II, 25 (B, p. 357; ML, p. 372; W.I., p. 436; Pen., p. 361; AG.I, p. 399). In contrast with the result of Cesare Borgia’s policies, the Florentines’ temporizing produced worse effects in the long run. The idea of “compassionate ruthlessness” (*pietosa crudeltà*) is one to which Machiavelli returns in Chapter 21, although with a different emphasis; see note to line 23 of that chapter.

14–18. Cf. the remark concerning Romulus in Appendix B, 18, 11.

17

Concerning Ruthlessness and Compassion: Whether It Is Better To Be Loved Than Feared, or Feared Than Loved

Moving along to the other qualities mentioned above, I submit that every prince should want to be considered compassionate rather than ruthless; nevertheless he should take care not to misuse this compassion. Cesare Borgia was considered ruthless; nevertheless his ruthlessness restored the Romagna, brought it unity, and led it back to peace and loyalty. Upon careful reflection, it will be seen that Cesare was much more compassionate than the people of Florence who, in order to avoid the reputation for being ruthless, allowed Pistoia to be destroyed. Hence a prince ought not to worry about the opprobrium of ruthlessness through which he keeps his subjects united and loyal. For by giving only a few illustrations of ruthlessness he will prove

21–24. A reminder of the opening sentence in Chapter 3, “In a new principedom, however, difficulties do arise.”

25–27. Virgil, *Aeneid* 1. vv. 563–564. Thus Dido attempts to justify her people after Ilioneus, one of Aeneas’s trusted lieutenants leading a group separated by storms from the other Trojans, has complained of the harsh treatment his men have received from the Carthaginians.

28–33. The translation of this paragraph attempts to capture an interesting characteristic of Machiavelli’s style. Before the quotation from Virgil, Machiavelli’s sentences are rather rambling and repetitive. But directly after the quotation, almost as if inspired by its high style, he echoes that style in a very neatly arranged period with parallelism and parison—*prudenzia* (“prudence”), *confidenza* (“trust”) and *diffidenza* (“distrust”).

34–35. As Allan Gilbert points out (*Forerunners*, pp. 98–117), this is a typical “question” discussed in the *de regiminie principum* literature; see Introduction, p. 84. Machiavelli comes out on the side of “feared” in *Discourses*, III, 21 (B, p. 447; ML, p. 474; W.I, p. 526; Pen., p. 463; AG.I, p. 477); in a letter to Vettori (February–March 1514) concerning Lorenzo de’ Medici, the person to whom he dedicated *The Prince* (G¹, p. 331; Gpb, pp. 138–139; AG.II, p. 926); another letter to Vettori (December 10, 1514), concerning Pope Julius II (G¹, pp. 358–359; Gpb, p. 175; AG.II, p. 954); and in *History* II, 37, concerning the Duke of Athens (G², pp. 203–204; Htb, p. 101; AG.III, p. 1133). Discussing Cesare Borgia in *The Prince*, Machiavelli says that he was both feared and loved: he made himself “loved and feared by the populace and followed and respected by the soldiers” (ch. 7, lines 271–273).

39–41. See the quotation from *Discourses*, I, 3 in Appendix B, 15, 2. Perhaps behind these statements, as Russo suggests, lies the assumption that one of the glories of the state Machiavelli envisages is that it can, indeed, succeed in governing a mankind about whom Machiavelli is none too sanguine. It should be said, nevertheless, that for Machiavelli man’s proclivity to evil is a function of his place in society and history; on the other hand, he seems to believe that there is a psychological determinism which the prince should admit and confront, rather than ignore it and thus lose his power.

41–45. Presumably he alludes to the passage at the end of Chapter 9, “Such a prince . . . to be found” (lines 135–142).

more compassionate than someone who—through too much compassion—allows the inception of disorders which breed murder or plunder. These disorders usually cause trouble for the entire population; those executions ordered by the prince cause an individual man trouble. Indeed, of all other types of princes, the new prince cannot possibly avoid the opprobrium of ruthlessness, for new states are full of dangers. Virgil, through the mouth of Dido, says:

Difficult circumstances and the newness of my reign compel these actions, to guard my territory on all sides.

Nevertheless a prince ought to be cautious about what he believes and how he acts. He should not fear imaginary dangers, but proceed with moderation, prudence, and human kindness, so that excessive trust does not make him imprudent, nor excessive distrust render him insufferable.

At this point a question arises: is it better to be loved than feared, or to be feared than loved? The answer is that a prince would like to be both. But since it is difficult to reconcile these two, it is much safer to be feared than loved—if the one must cede to the other. For it can be said about men in general that they are ungrateful, fickle, dissembling, hypocritical,^a cowardly, and greedy. As long as you treat them well, they are all yours. As I mentioned before, when the need is far off, they will offer you their blood, their property, their lives, and their

47–57. A paraphrase of a passage from Tacitus, *Hist.* 3. 86, about the Roman emperor Aulus Vitellius buying friendship rather than being of good character. Machiavelli may have had the career of Piero Soderini in mind; cf. *Discourses*, III, 30 for his remarks concerning Soderini and envy (B, p. 468; ML, p. 499; W.I, p. 547; Pen., pp. 486–487; AG.I, p. 497). Behind the Italian lurks the sense (*si meritano*) that Machiavelli feels a prince really ought to be able to count on alliances “acquired . . . with greatness and nobility of character”—an instance of the idealistic Machiavelli coming to the forefront even in a hardnosed context.

64. As several of the cross-references indicate, Machiavelli has tyrannies in mind. He repeats this thought again in Chapter 19, lines 8–11, a chapter on the effect of conspiracies and the general problem of avoiding contempt and hatred. It is closely paralleled by *Discourses*, III, 6—especially the section early in the chapter dealing with the kinds of “injuries” that result in conspiracies—and in *Discourses*, III, 26, where he refers to Aristotle (*Pol.* 5.9.13 [1314b24]): “the insolence of women has ruined many tyrannies.” See also *History*, II, 36 where the violence done to Florentine women by the Duke of Athens and his men infuriated the people (G², p. 197; Htb, p. 95; AG.III, p. 1127). See note to Chapter 3, lines 118–119, for the relation between the following passage and the notion “that men ought to be either pampered or destroyed.”

68–69. Another remark that has become proverbial in Italy, but a nice pun is lost in translation: *padre-patrimonio* for “father,” “inheritance.” See Machiavelli’s remarks to Giovanni de’ Medici, Introduction, p. 62. In *War*, IV, he says it is the love of property more than the love for life that makes soldiers “dogged” when defending a position (*Guerra*, p. 440; LLA, p. 127; AG.II, p. 660).

71–73. An idea repeated in *Discourses*, III, 19 where he refers to this part of the chapter (B, p. 444; ML, p. 471; W.I, p. 523; Pen., p. 460; AG.I, p. 475).

children. But when the need is at hand, they change 45
their minds. Any prince who relies on their word
alone, without any other precaution, is ruined. For
friendships acquired through money rather than
through greatness and nobility of character may be 50
bought, but they are not owned: they cannot be
drawn upon in times of need. Men are less reluctant
to cause trouble for someone who makes himself
loved than for someone who makes himself feared.
For love is supported by a bond of obligation which, 55
since men are evil, they break on any occasion when
it is useful for them to do so; but fear is supported
by a dread of retribution which can always be
counted on. Nevertheless a prince should make
himself feared in such a way that, if he does not 60
gain love, he does avoid hatred: being feared and
not being hated are sentiments that readily go to-
gether. This situation will always obtain when the
prince keeps his hands off the property of his sub-
jects and citizens—and from their women. Yet if he
does need to take someone's life, let him take it 65
when there is suitable justification and evident rea-
son. But above all he should restrain himself from
other people's property: men are quicker to forget
the death of a father than the loss of an inheritance.
Furthermore, opportunities for confiscating prop- 70
erty are always numerous; whoever starts out by
living on plunder inevitably finds opportunities to
seize what belongs to others. On the other hand,

76–80. Machiavelli is not always consistent on this point. In *Discourses*, III, 19 he notes that unless one is dealing with a leader like Manlius Torquatus, a man whose severity and cruelty did not prevent him from having *excessiva virtù*, one is better off to be loved by one's soldiers—as, he claims, most Roman generals were by their troops. On the other hand, Machiavelli has a long section in *Discourses*, III, 21 (see foregoing note) dealing with the same exemplars he is about to use—Hannibal and Scipio—in which he is clearly on the side of the necessity of being feared. In III, 21 he sees the conduct of Scipio (humane) and Hannibal (ruthless) as alternatives for effective leadership, whereas he is about to criticize “Scipio's tolerant nature” since in time it “would have damaged his fame and glory” (lines 112–13 below). For the background of the subsequent material, see Introduction, pp. 35–36.

87–86. Machiavelli cites Hannibal's “ruthlessness, deceit, and lack of religion” in the letter known as “Fantasies” and contrasts him with the “compassionate, faithful, and religious” Scipio (see Introduction, p. 11, n.19 [G¹, p. 229; Gpb, p. 98, AG.II, p. 896]). Two possible sources for the remarks on Hannibal are Livy 21.4.6–9, 28.12.1–9 and Livy's own source, Polybius 11.19; 9.22–26, but it is doubtful that Machiavelli knew the Polybian passages.

89. This “*virtù*” of Hannibal as a leader is perhaps what sets him in a separate category for Machiavelli.

98–99. For Scipio, see Introduction, p. 36. He was appointed commander in Spain in 210 B.C. The mutiny referred to broke out in 206 when Scipio was gravely ill; it is alluded to in *Discourses*, III, 21. Cf. Livy 28. 24–29.

opportunities for taking someone's life are rarer and
fade more quickly. 75

But when a prince is with his army and has many
soldiers under his command, then it is absolutely
necessary that he be unconcerned about his reputa-
tion for ruthlessness; without such a reputation he
never keeps his army united or ready for combat. 80
Among the amazing feats of Hannibal is the follow-
ing: although he led into battle on foreign soil an
enormous army composed of a wide variety of
races, no dissension ever arose either among them-
selves or against their leader—whether he was ex- 85
periencing good fortune or bad. This fact could have
resulted from nothing else but his inhuman ruth-
lessness which—together with his extraordinary
virtù—always made him an object of respect and
awe in his soldiers' eyes; without his ruthlessness 90
the rest of his *virtù* would have been inadequate to
achieve the same result. Writers who have given
this matter cursory attention admire Hannibal's
achievements, on the one hand—and on the other 95
hand condemn the primary source of those achieve-
ments. That the rest of his *virtù* would have been
inadequate can be deduced from the example of
Scipio—unique not only in his own time but in all
recorded time—whose troops mutinied in Spain.
This insurrection resulted from nothing else than 100
his excessive compassion, which permitted his sol-
diers more license than was consonant with military
discipline. He was rebuked for this compassion in

104. Fabius Maximus Cunctator ("the Delayer") was a famous Roman consul and general. His policy against Hannibal, after the latter's victory at the Battle of Lake Trasimene in 217 B.C., was more in terms of exhausting him through a series of quick skirmishes followed by swift retreats. He vigorously opposed Scipio's more active policy of invading Africa. Cf. Livy 29. 19. 3-5 for his "rebuke."

105-108. In 205 B.C. Quintus Pleminius, *legatus pro praetore*, took Locri, in southern Italy, back from Hannibal. This was the first stage of Scipio's planned invasion of Carthage. Quintus Pleminius pillaged the region; Scipio sponsored an investigation, but permitted him to continue his oppressive regime. Fabius Maximus condemned both Scipio and Pleminius in the senate when the Locrians complained to that body. Subsequently, the senate arrested Pleminius.

109-112. From Livy 29. 21. 11; the Locrians wanted to press charges against Pleminius, but gave this statement as their reason for not seeking "revenge" on Scipio. Livy merely reports this as the Locrians' position given to the Roman praetor sent to investigate the situation; Machiavelli heightens the effect by placing the scene in the Roman senate.

120-122. For the theme of self-reliance, see note to Chapter 6, lines 88-96.

the senate by Fabius Maximus, who called him the corruptor of the Roman legions. When the Locrians were sacked by one of Scipio's officers, Scipio did not compensate the people or punish that officer's insubordination—all because of his tolerant nature. So tolerant was he that someone in the senate, wanting to apologize for him, said that there were many men who knew better how not to err than how to punish errors. Eventually Scipio's tolerant nature would have damaged his fame and glory, if it had persisted while he exercised supreme command. But since he existed under the senate's control, this harmful characteristic of his was not only hidden, but actually brought him glory.

Returning to the question of being feared and loved, I therefore conclude that since men love as it pleases them, and fear as it pleases a prince, a wise prince ought to rely on what is his own, not on what is another's. As I have said, he should strive solely to avoid hatred.

How Princes Should Keep Their Word. A chapter that has occasioned more critical commentary than perhaps any other in *The Prince*. To begin with, two phrases should be remembered: "Yet it cannot be termed *virtù* to murder one's fellow citizens, to betray friends, and to be without loyalty, mercy, and religion; such methods can cause one to win power, but not glory" (ch. 8, lines 52–56) and "I do not mean fraud is worthy of glory if it causes you to break promises you have given and treaties you have made; for this kind of fraud, although it may sometimes acquire you territory and position . . . will never acquire you glory" (*D.*, III, 40; see Introduction, p. 65). The distinction I think it is important to bear in mind in reading this chapter is between the word a prince in his private capacity pledges a subject—an inviolable bond—and what a prince in his public self pledges to another government (see lines 71–74 below). In this respect we must remember that "necessity," "need," "ought," "obligation," and the sense of "must" reverberate throughout this chapter: *necessità* and its derivative nine times, *bisogna* and its derivatives four times, *dovere* four, *avere* a twice, *convenire* once; There are also two verbs—*stare in modo . . . che* and a subjunctive form of *parere*—whose grammatical form connotes necessity. For a discussion of the significance of this chapter, see Introduction, pp. 65–68. On the importance of "necessity" for Machiavelli, see Introduction, p. 74, and Meinecke, pp. 37–42.

7–2. This is a very plain statement of a prince's behavior under ideal circumstances. But since it is so obvious that "everybody realizes" it, Machiavelli's discussion centers on the prince's conduct when faced with broken pledges and evil circumstances. He has clearly pointed out that there is a great discrepancy between how people act and how they should act (ch. 15, lines 13–15). When possible, a prince should behave with all men as he does with his ministers, namely with "mutual trust" (ch. 22, lines 47–51). And since this chapter is so often blown out of proportion, it is worth noting what Machiavelli has to say in *Discourses*, I, 10, where his remarks pivot on themes brought up in Chapter 15, on praise or blame, and in Chapter 19, on contempt and hatred. See Appendix B, 18, 1.

3–8. Since Machiavelli alludes to Ferdinand V the Catholic at the end of the chapter, the second part of this sentence may refer to him. See Machiavelli's letter to Vettori (April 29, 1513) where he says he always thought Ferdinand "more crafty and fortunate than wise and prudent" (*G*¹, p. 251; *Gpb*, p. 109; *AG.II*, p. 904); see also his remarks about Francesco Sforza from *History* VI, 17, cited in Appendix B, 7, 2. Part of Machiavelli's "contemporary experience" may refer to the remarks he puts in the mouth of a fictional speaker before the Signoria during the Gueif–Ghibelline struggle: see Appendix B, 18, 2. Cf. also *History* IV, 33, and the trick used to defeat Rinaldo degli Albizzi in 1434. Finally, see Appendix B, 18, 3 for Guicciardini's acerbic remarks about Ferdinand.

11*ff.* See Cicero, *Off.* 1. 11. 34: "For since there are two means for resolving a dispute—one by debate, the other by force—and since the one is proper to man and the other to beasts, we must resort to the latter only when the former is impossible." Compare Machiavelli's remark at the end of *Discourses*, II, 21: "I do not mean that I believe one does not have to employ weapons and force, but they ought to be used as a last resort—when and where other means are inadequate" (*B*, p. 342; *ML*, p. 354; *W.I.*, p. 422; *Pen.*, p. 343; *AG.I*, p. 385). Now begins a series of dramatic, forcefully expressed epigrammatic sentences in this chapter, characteristic of Machiavelli when he is particularly involved with the reason and precision of his thought.

18

How Princes Should Keep Their Word

Everyone realizes how laudable it is for a prince to keep his word and to live by honesty, not cunning. Nevertheless, we see from contemporary experience that those princes who have done great deeds have held their word in little esteem; they have known how to bewilder men's wits through cunning, and in the end have gotten the better of those who relied on sincerity. 5

Therefore you ought to know that there are two ways to fight: by using laws, and by using force. 10 The former is characteristic of man; the latter, of animals. But frequently the former^a is inadequate and one must resort to the latter. Consequently a prince must perfect his knowledge of how to use the attributes of both animals and men. Ancient writers 15 have taught princes this use allegorically: they write that Achilles and many other ancient princes were brought up by the centaur Chiron, who was to nurture and instruct them. Having a teacher who is half

19–22. A very interesting poetic image, useful for understanding Machiavelli's conception outlined in this chapter. See Introduction, pp. 67–68, for more on Chiron. Francis Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, II, 4. 4 (1605) says Machiavelli "expounded ingeniously, but corruptly" the myth of Achilles' education in saying "that it belongeth to the education, and discipline of princes, to know as well how to play the part of the lion in violence, and the fox in guile, as of the man in virtue and justice" (ed. Wright, 1920, p. 104).

25–28. Cicero, *Off.* 1. 13. 41: "Although harm, then, can be caused by either of two methods—namely, force or fraud—fraud seems more characteristic of a little fox, force of a lion; both are extremely alien to man, but fraud is more worthy of contempt." See Plutarch, *Lys.* 7. 4 and Pindar, *Isthm.* 5. 45–47 for the contrasting images, as well as Dante, *Inf.* XXVII, 74–75. As force and fraud are covertly suggested by the allusion to Cicero, so they are obvious correlations for the direction Machiavelli's argument takes.

29ff. Sasso traces a gradually emerging relativistic note in Machiavelli's remarks about promises, beginning perhaps as early as March, 1503. In "Remarks" there is the sentence "among ordinary men, laws, documents, and agreements cause them to keep their word; among princes, only weapons cause them to keep theirs" (*Guerra*, p. 60; AG.III, p. 1442—see Appendix B, 13, 1 for the question of dating). This statement is slightly changed in *History*, VIII, 22: "Force and necessity, not documents and obligations, cause princes to keep their word" (G², p. 549; Htb, p. 386; AG.III, p. 1413). Machiavelli seems to regard Pope Julius II's promises to Cesare Borgia with some ironic detachment; see Introduction, p. 52. In a letter to the Dieci, November 26, 1503, he notes that the pope "is beginning to pay his debts quite honorably, and he blots them out with a cotton pad from the inkstand" (*Leg.*, II, 683; AG.I, p. 157); see also *Decennale I* (1504), I, vv. 472–477 (G³, p. 254; Tusiani, p. 168; AG.III, p. 1455). See Appendix B, 7, 10 for his earlier remarks (November 4, 1503) about these promises. Later in his life he argues in the title of *Discourses*, III, 42 that "Promises Made Under Duress Ought Not to be Kept"; and few in his day or ours would disagree. For part of his argument, see Appendix B, 18, 4. See also the section quoted from *Discourses*, III, 40 in Introduction, p. 65, as well as the end of *Discourses*, I, 59. In the long speech that ends *The Art of War*, already alluded to, Fabrizio Colonna laments the fact that mercenaries cannot be trusted to keep their promises (*Guerra*, pp. 516–517; LLA, pp. 208–209; AG.II, p. 723).

33–36. It is precisely because man is essentially evil that Machiavelli says later in this chapter that a prince "needs a flexible mind, altering as the winds of Fortune and changes in affairs require. As I said before, he does not deviate from the good, when that is possible; but he knows how to do evil when it is necessary" (lines 74–78, to which see note). See also Introduction, pp. 60–61. Similar assumptions run throughout Machiavelli. In *History* VII, 30, in an aside occasioned by the Florentine sack of Volterra in 1472, he says that "men are more prone to evil than to good" (G², p. 498; Htb, pp. 347–348; AG.III, p. 1375); the same phrase is repeated in *Discourses*, I, 9 (B, p. 154; ML, p. 139; W.I, p. 234; Pen., p. 132; AG.I, p. 218). In *Discourses*, I, 3, Machiavelli continues the thought quoted in Appendix B, 15, 2, and observes that "men never do anything good except out of necessity; but where there is freedom of choice and they can act as they please, everything is suddenly replete with confusion and disorder" (B, p. 136; ML, p. 118; W.I, p. 217; Pen., p. 112; AG.I, p. 201). See Appendix B, 18, 5 for Guicciardini's comments on the last passages. On the other hand, in his *Ricordi* (C. 41) Guicciardini says that since "the majority [of men] are neither very good nor very wise, one needs to rely more on severity" (Pal., p. 294; Domandi¹, p. 53; Grayson, p. 16). These thoughts, in turn, are balanced elsewhere in the *Ricordi* by his beginning, as in his *Considerations*, with the words "all men are inclined by nature to goodness," but going on to say that our natures are so "fragile" and so easily tempted that we turn away from the good easily. Legislation attempts to redirect our natural inclinations through a series of rewards and punishments (C. 134, [Pal, pp. 313–314; Domandi¹, p. 75; Grayson, p.

animal and half man can only mean that a prince 20
must know how to use both natures; he who has the
one without the other is not likely to survive.

Therefore since a prince must perfect his knowl-
edge of how to use animal attributes, those he must 25
select are the fox and the lion. Since the lion is
powerless against snares and the fox is powerless
against wolves, one must be a fox to recognize
snares and a lion to frighten away wolves. Those
who depend merely on the lion are ignorant. Hence 30
a prudent ruler cannot and should not respect his
word, when such respect works to his disadvantage
and when the reasons for which he made his prom-
ise no longer exist. If all men were good, this precept
would be invalid; but since they are bad and do not 35
respect their own word, you need not respect your
word either. A prince has never failed to have legiti-
mate reasons for whitewashing his failure to respect
his word. I could give countless modern examples,
proving how many peace treaties and promises have 40
been made null and void by the dishonesty of
princes: he who has known best how to use the
attributes of a fox has succeeded best. But a prince
must know how to whitewash these attributes per-
fectly, to be a liar and a hypocrite: men are inex- 45
perienced, and are so bound to the needs of the
moment that the deceiver will always find someone
who will let himself be deceived.

There is one recent example which I do not want
to pass over in silence. Pope Alexander VI never

35]; B.3 [Pal., pp. 241–242; Domandi¹, p. 99]). The next *ricordo* succinctly states that any man's nature that is more inclined to evil than to good is "bestial or monstrous," for it lacks that inclination which is natural to all men (Pal., pp. 314, 242; Domandi¹, op. cit., p. 100; Grayson, loc. cit.).

37. "Whitewash" translates *colorire*—to paint over the "failure" and thus to "excuse" it. The notion of concealing failures is expanded below in terms of a prince needing to be both a "liar" (*simulatore*) and a "hypocrite" (*dissimulatore*) and is consonant with the emphasis on appearance and reality. Machiavelli attributes the following statement to Lorenzo de' Medici in a speech given when King Ferdinand I of Naples and Pope Sixtus IV declared war on Florence (1478): "Powerful men always find something less corrupt to whitewash the harm they cause" (*History*, VIII, 10 [G², p. 528; Htb, p. 370; AG.III, p. 1398]; see Introduction, p. 42 for more on this war). Guicciardini notes of the same Ferdinand that "all his actions [were] full of incredible lies and hypocrisies" (*Italy*, I, 3 [Pan., I, 14; Alexander, p. 18; Grayson–Hale, p. 97]). See Appendix B, 18, 6 for Guicciardini's remarks about Cesare Borgia and Pope Alexander VI, and Appendix B, 18, 7 for his account of Cesare's and Alexander VI's treatment of Pandolfo Petrucci after his complicity in the Diet of Magione, although he was absent from Senigallia.

51. The translation of *e sempre trovò subietto da poterlo farle* misses the implication that Alexander had the power to create something out of an unyielding mass—a power that Machiavelli seems anxious to credit to him (see the discussion of act and potency, Introduction, pp. 61, 72–73).

59. Machiavelli enumerates eleven pairs of antithetical qualities in the second paragraph of Chapter 15 (lines 29–41). The positive ones are being generous, compassionate, faithful, bold, courageous, humane, continent, honest, lenient, serious, and pious. The ethical qualities which perhaps Machiavelli feels come into play most in the external policy of a new prince are repeated twice later in this chapter: compassion, fidelity, integrity, humanity, and piety; the translation of "honesty" and "integrity" render his *intero* and *integrità* respectively.

58–63. See Introduction, p. 66, for the argument that Machiavelli is really talking about the myth of power here, and how both ruler and ruled benefit from the continued preservation of the order thus provided. If this argument is valid, then the *anzi ardirò de dire* ("indeed, I shall even venture to assert") acquires a piercingly ironic cast. See the quotation from *Discourses*, III, 41 (Appendix B, 18, 8) for the context of the rest of the chapter. Burd and others call attention to Book V, *lectio* 12 of Aquinas's commentary on Aristotle's *Pol.* 5. 9. 13 (1314b19–23). Although the context is about tyrants, not new princes, Aquinas—but not Aristotle—couches his discussion in terms of "seeming" and "appearances."

71–74. See the first note to this chapter. I think Sasso is correct in maintaining that there exists an important distinction between internal and external policy. Machiavelli here refers not to domestic but to foreign politics, but similar thoughts occur in Chapter 17, where the concern is domestic. Of Gonzalo de Córdoba, after he had duped King Frederick of Naples in 1501, Guicciardini says, "But neither fear of God nor concern for respect among men could be more to him than the interest of the state" (*Italy*, V, 5 [Pan., II, 27]).

74–78. Flexibility of mind and adherence to the good again are also discussed in Chapter 15, lines 17–22 and 42–60; see also the first note to this chapter, and the note to lines 33–36 above. In this connection there is a relevant passage describing the reaction of Pope Julius II to the request of some ambassadors sent from Bologna to remind the pope of certain clauses in agreements made by previous popes that would guarantee the present political arrangements. See Appendix B, 18, 9 for what Machiavelli reports of Julius's action.

practiced or intended anything else but the deception of men: he always found a victim. There has never been a man whose declarations had greater effectiveness or whose affirmations rested on greater oaths—nor has there been a man who respected them less. Nevertheless his deceptions always served to fulfill his desires because he understood this facet of the world perfectly. 50
55

A prince, therefore, need not actually^b have all the qualities I have enumerated, but it is absolutely necessary that he seem to have them. Indeed, I shall even venture to assert that there is danger in having those qualities and always respecting them, whereas there is utility in seeming to have them. It is useful to seem, and actually to be, compassionate, faithful, humane, frank, and pious. Yet a prince's mind should be so enlightened that when you do not need to have these qualities, you have the knowledge and the ability to become the opposite. A prince, and particularly a new prince, must understand that he is unable to respect all those qualities for which men are considered good. For to maintain his rule, he is frequently obliged to behave in opposition to good faith, to charity, to humanity, and to religion. Thus he needs a flexible mind, altering as the winds of Fortune and changes in affairs^c require. As I said before, he does not deviate from the good, when that is possible; but he knows how to do evil when necessary. 60
65
70
75

A prince should therefore exercise great care that

83–85. Cf. Aristotle, *Pol.* 5. 9. 15 (1314b39–1315a2). Although not developed here, the political utility of religion is discussed in *Discourses*, I, 11–15; II, 2; III, 33.

85–87. A forceful image from the quotidian world of the marketplace that crystallizes the emphasis on appearance and reality in this chapter. See Introduction, p. 16, n. 29, and pp. 66–67. Machiavelli deftly alludes to the common human experience of being taken in by the external qualities of an object, buying it, and realizing only too late what its intrinsic nature is. On November 24, 1500, Machiavelli reports a conversation he had with one of King Louis XII's courtiers; the latter described the king as one who listened to everything, but trusted only what he touched with his hands (*Leg.* I, 205). The phrase is also reminiscent of an expression used suggestively by Nicia in *Mandragola*, V, 2—*toccare con mano*, where the idea is to “know,” “test,” or “explore” so that one's knowledge is absolute about the matter at hand (G³, pp. 107, LLA¹, p. 54; Hale, p. 56; AG.II, p. 817).

96ff. For Machiavelli's *vulgo* I use “unintelligent people,” based on the context. He obviously refers to powerless people, those without “the imposing dignity of government”; see note to Chapter 19, lines 69–70. Machiavelli's mention of “the final outcome” and “appearances and results” is often taken to mean that the end justifies the means. To reduce these remarks to such a statement is to lose sight of the context; see the remark from *Discourses*, III, 41, quoted in Appendix B, 18, 8. Also, the fact that it is the *vulgo* who are “taken in” casts doubt on how judicious the end really is. Even Machiavelli would seem to argue that the end justifies the means only when the end is clearly good. Appendix B, 18, 10 contains a long quotation from the letter known as “Fantasies,” included because it is appropriate as an indication of the extent to which Machiavelli is forced to go because of his insight and experience. Many quotations may seem to say that the end justifies the means, but the two in *Discourses*, III, 35 that contain verbal echoes of the present material—“men judge matters by their results” and “all men blindly judge good and bad advice by its results”—are clearly in the context of warning that men are prone so to judge; they do not *condone* man's stupidity so to act (B, pp. 481, 482; ML, pp. 513, 514; W.I, p. 560; Pen., pp. 500, 501; AG.I, pp. 508, 509). Romulus is an obvious example: see Appendix B, 18, 11, on which Whitfield's comment is important: he notes that it is the only explicit statement that the ends justify the means, but points out that it is not to be construed by the popular paraphrase “do anything in order to achieve your goals.” Rather, it is a more difficult reminder: “if the result is right, the means may have been necessary” (“Essay,” pp. xv–xvi). The remarks in “Castruccio” and *History* that would seem to indicate approval of a victory, however achieved, are again neutrally attributed without comment to the historical person in question; see “Castruccio” (G², p. 36; AG.II, pp. 555) and *History* III, 13 (G², p. 238; Htb, p. 129; AG.III, p. 1160). On the other hand, *History* IV, 7, Rinaldo degli Albizzi says that “to judge matters by their outcomes was not prudent” (G², p. 279; Htb, p. 165; AG.III, p. 1193)—but here again the remark is merely attributed to someone else. In his own “voice,” Machiavelli quietly condemns the Florentines because they judge matters “by their outcomes and not by their wisdom” (*History*, VIII, 22 [G², p. 549; Htb, p. 386; AG.III, p. 1413]).

99–100. This is a free reading of a line which has plagued textual scholars for centuries. The problem centers on the question of whether or not there should be a negative in the sentence, and if so, where it belongs. One manuscript tradition has the sentence: “e li pochi *non* ci hanno luogo quando li assai hanno dove appoggiarsi.” Another tradition removes the *non* from the early part of the sentence and inserts it toward the end so that the clause reads *assai non hanno*. See Whitfield, *Discourses*, pp. 220–221. As he paraphrases it, the sense of the sentence, regardless of where the *non*

he never utter anything that is not steeped in the 80
five enumerated qualities; to those who see and hear
him he should seem to be all compassion, all
fidelity, all integrity, all humanity,^d and all piety.
Nothing is more necessary than seeming to have
this last quality. Generally men judge more with 85
their eyes than with their hands because everybody
can see, but few can feel. Everybody sees what you
seem to be, few can touch what you are; those few
are not bold enough to contradict the views of the
many, who are protected by the imposing dignity of 90
government. When there is no court to appeal to,
people judge all men's actions, and particularly
those of a prince, by the final outcome. Therefore let
a prince be the conqueror and supporter of the state.
His methods are always deemed honorable and 95
praiseworthy by everyone because unintelligent
people are always taken in by appearances and re-
sults. Nothing but the unintelligent populate the
world. The few are elbowed out of the way when
the many have a base for support. A certain con- 100
temporary prince, whom it is better not to name,
proclaims nothing but peace and trust, yet he is an
extremely dangerous menace to both. Had he re-
spected either, he would have been deprived—
many times over—of either his reputation or his 105
power.

is placed, is: "The few find no room (for their ambition) when the many have authority to lean upon"; or "The few find room (for their ambition) when the many have no authority to lean on" (p. 221). Quaglio currently believes the best reading to be that without the negative (see Appendix A); my translation is based on his opinion.

100–101. Most commentators agree that Machiavelli alludes to Ferdinand V, King of Spain, who died on January 23, 1516. See Machiavelli's thoughts on this king, quoted in note to lines 3–8 above.

7–6. Machiavelli's "qualities" seem to be those of the antithetical list of Chapter 15, lines 29–41. He has discussed avoiding hatred at the end of Chapter 17. If we are to distinguish between external and internal policy, then Machiavelli is refocusing his attention on domestic concerns here. He signals this redirection both by alluding to Chapter 17 in lines 8–13 (see note to ch. 17, line 64), where the domestic posture is paramount, and by referring in lines 12–16 to the discussion of contending "with the ambition of a few," elaborated in Chapter 9, with respect to the rich; see notes to Chapter 9, lines 43–46, and Chapter 3, lines 104–109.

18–19. Machiavelli uses this same image when counseling a prince to avoid the hatred of his subjects in *Discourses* III, 23 (B, p. 455; ML, p. 483; W.I, p. 534; Pen., p. 472; AG.I, p. 485). The image is also used in *Discourses*, III, 6 and 30 (B, pp. 399, 469; ML, pp. 421, 500; W.I, pp. 479, 548; Pen., pp. 409, 487; AG.I, pp. 436, 497).

19

How to Avoid Contempt and Hatred

I have discussed the most important qualities mentioned above; now I want to cover the others briefly with this generalization: as has been partially explained earlier, a prince should concentrate on avoiding everything that may make him hated or^a despised. As long as he has done that, he will have executed his duty and will encounter no risk from his other infamous deeds. As I have mentioned, what makes him particularly hated is being predatory and pre-emptory toward the property and the women of his subjects: he must keep himself away from these. Whenever they are not deprived of their property or their honor, most men remain satisfied; a prince has to contend only with the ambition of a few, which can easily be curbed in a variety of ways. He arouses contempt if he is considered fickle, frivolous, effeminate, cowardly, or indecisive. A prince must steer clear of these qualities, as a ship does of a reef, and strive so that his deeds are

20. "Are manifest in" is an attempt to translate *si riconosca*, which delicately prolongs the sense of appearance and reality basic to the previous chapter by refusing to state clearly whether or not the "deeds" inherently possess the subsequent positive qualities, which in turn nicely compensate for, and pair off with, the weaknesses that arouse contempt: being "fickle, effeminate, cowardly, or indecisive." But, obviously, if these qualities were mere appearance, the prince's position would be weakened (cf. Sasso).

23. See Machiavelli's remarks about Maximilian I, the Holy Roman Emperor; Appendix B, 19, 1.

40. See note to Chapter 9, line 96. The phrase "ruled and lived as I have described" (line 38) refers in part to the defense strategies in Chapter 10. For Aristotle on the fear of domestic and foreign concerns, see *Pol.*, 5. 6. 9. (1307b20–22) and 5. 8. 18–22 (1312a40–1313b40).

42ff. Machiavelli's most detailed, theoretical account of conspiracies, mainly—but not exclusively—those in ancient history, occurs in *Discourses*, III, 6; see also *Discourses*, I, 2, 16, 58; II, 32; III, 2. Just as this chapter is the longest in *The Prince*, so III, 6 is the longest chapter in *The Discourses*. Russo refers to fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Italy as the "classical" period of conspiracies and plots. Indeed, the "classic" writers about the Renaissance spill a great deal of ink over this period: Burckhardt, in particular the chapters in the section "The State as a Work of Art," and Symonds' chapter "The Age of the Despots" (his excursus on haematomania [blood-madness] is especially lurid). The list of Italian conspiracies and plots specifically mentioned both in *Discourses*, III, 6 and in *History* include the following conspiracies: that of Agnolo Acciaiuoli and others against the Duke of Athens in 1343 (II, 36); of Cola Montano, Giovanni Andrea da Lampugnano, and others against Galeazzo Maria Sforza in Milan in 1476 (VII, 33–34); of the Pazzi against the Medici in 1478 (VIII, 1–9); of Jacopo Coppola against Ferdinand I, King of Naples from 1484–1487 (VIII, 32); and of Francesco d'Orso (Cecco Orsi) against Count Girolamo Riario of Forlì in 1488 (VIII, 34). The conspiracies and plots referred to only in *History* are those of the Bardi and Frescobaldi against Florence in 1340–41 (II, 32); of Stefano Porcari against Pope Nicholas V in Rome in 1453 (VI, 29), and of Dietisalvi Neroni and others against Piero de' Medici in 1466 (VII, 10–17). Those mentioned only in *Discourses*, III, 6 are of the assassination of Piero Gambacorta by Jacopo d'Appiano (1392); of attempts on the life of Ferdinand V, King of Spain (1492) and Bajazet, the Ottoman Sultan (1492); of the Belanti to assassinate Pandolfo Petrucci (1498); of the overthrow of Guglielmo de' Pazzi, the Florentine commissioner in Arezzo (1501–1502); and of the attempt on Alfonso d'Este by his illegitimate brothers (1506). And of course there was the Boscoli conspiracy against the Medici, in which Machiavelli was alleged to have participated; see Introduction, pp. 15–16. Although in *Discourses*, III, 6 he believes that a prince can best protect himself against secret conspiracies "by avoiding being either hated or despised," and Aristotle also believes that tyrannicides are specifically caused by hatred and contempt (*Pol.* 5. 8. 20; 1312b18–19), there seems to be no particular dependence on Aristotle as a source of Machiavelli's views or examples either in *The Discourses* or *The Prince*. In fact there are many other sources for the material here and in *The Discourses*: Curtius, Herodian, Herodotus, Justin, Livy, Plutarch, Sallust, Tacitus, and Thucydides.

46. "Above"—in Chapter 9, but see also Chapter 17.

manifest in their grandeur, courage, dignity, and strength. In dealing with the personal relations of his subjects, he insists upon his decision being irrevocable. He bolsters such an impression of himself that no one dreams of deceiving or outwitting him. 20

The prince who presents this kind of impression has a great deal of prestige; it is difficult to conspire against and attack someone who has such prestige, provided we understand that he is an excellent man and respected by his subjects. For a prince ought to fear two things: one is domestic and concerns his subjects; the other is foreign and concerns outside powers. Against the latter he can protect himself with good armies and good allies (if he has good armies, he always has good allies). Domestic affairs will always be stable when foreign relations are— unless, of course, they are upset by a conspiracy. Even when foreign affairs do founder, if a prince has ruled and lived as I have described, and if he himself does not lose heart, then he will always repulse every assault—just as I said Nabis the Spartan did. But as to his subjects, when foreign affairs are not foundering, he must fear secret conspiracies. A prince best protects himself against these by avoiding being either hated or despised and by keeping the people satisfied with him. He must achieve this contentment, as I have maintained at length above. And one of the most potent remedies a prince has against conspiracies is not being hated by the people at large. For the conspirator always believes that the 25 30 35 40 45

50–54. Of the people's anger against conspirators, Machiavelli says in *Discourses*, III, 6, that since the people loved Caesar so, they avenged his death by chasing the conspirators out of Rome, so that they were killed "at various times and in various places" (B, p. 408; ML, p. 430; W.I, p. 487; Pen., p. 419; AG.I, p. 444).

58. The only time in *The Prince* that Machiavelli uses "you" to refer to someone other than a prince. Strauss, pp. 77 and 309, points out Machiavelli's particularly emphatic use of the pronoun "you," arguing that in *The Prince* Machiavelli not only instructs a prince, but also tells subjects "what they should expect from their prince, or the truth about the nature of princes" (p. 77). (It should be noted that Strauss's documentation for this sentence is not from *The Prince* but from *Discourses*, I, 29, 30.) Strauss continues: "As an adviser of a prince, he addresses an individual; as a teacher of political wisdom, he addresses an indefinite multitude. He indicates his dual capacity and the corresponding duality of his addressees by his use of the second person of the personal pronoun: he uses "Thou" when addressing the prince, and even the man who conspires against the prince, i.e., when addressing men of action [as the "you" in this sentence would demonstrate], while he uses "You" when addressing those whose interest is primarily theoretical, either simply or for the time being" (77). Strauss also believes that Machiavelli "uses the second person plural only in connection with verbs like 'seeing,' 'finding,' 'considering,' and 'understanding'" (309). In part this belief is related to Strauss's conviction that *The Prince* is addressed to "the young" who are to become the new generation to liberate Italy (81–82). If Strauss is correct, my translation muddies his distinction. But I find little evidence to support the argument that "the young" are the addressees of the work. On Strauss's emphasis on the "covert" principles of Machiavelli's teaching and Strauss's place in current political theory, see McShea and Germino.

62–66. Cf. *Discourses*, III, 6: "immediately upon declaring your intention to a disgruntled man you give him the means to obtain satisfaction. In order to make him keep his word it must be either that his hate is great, or your authority is very great" (B, p. 396; ML, p. 417; W.I, p. 476; Pen., p. 405; AG.I, p. 433).

69–70. See the similar phrase in Chapter 18, p. 285, about the "imposing dignity of government" (*la maestà dello stato*). In *Discourses*, III, 6 Machiavelli records that Gaius Marius was saved by the "imposing dignity" and reverence attending a ruler because the slave sent to murder him was unable to carry out the orders given him. The same "imposing dignity," Machiavelli continues, would certainly be even more impressive for a ruler at liberty than one who is a prisoner (B, p. 403; ML, p. 425; W.I, p. 483; Pen., pp. 413–414; AG.I, p. 440).

74–79. Again the example of the Romans' reaction to Caesar's assassination is relevant; see note to Chapter 19, lines 50–54.

prince's death will satisfy the people; but when the 50
conspirator believes he might cause the people trouble, he has not the courage to undertake such a project because the obstacles conspirators face are countless. From experience we see that conspiracies 55
have been many, but few have had successful results. For a conspirator cannot act alone, and he can find no associates except among those whom he thinks are disgruntled. But as soon as you reveal your intention to a disgruntled man, you give him 60
the means to obtain satisfaction, for he can obviously expect every advantage from his knowledge. Indeed, aware of the certainty of profit on one side, and of the doubt and danger of profit on the other, he must surely be either an unusual friend or a truly 65
inveterate enemy of the prince to keep his word to you. To put it briefly, I maintain that on the conspirator's side there is nothing but fear, jealousy, and the demoralizing prospect of reprisal; on the prince's side there is the imposing dignity of his princely rank, the laws, and the protective measures 70
of his allies and of his state to defend him. So, with the good will of the people added to all these resources, it is impossible for anyone to be so foolhardy as to conspire against him. For ordinarily, a conspirator has cause to be afraid before he commits 75
his evil deed; but in this case he has cause to be afraid after the crime has been committed as well, because the people are his enemies and hence he can have no hope of asylum.

83–87. The assassination occurred June 24, 1445; see *History VI*, 9–10 (G², pp. 400–403; Htb, pp. 267–269; AG.III, pp. 1294–1296). The “present Annibale,” or Annibale II, lived from 1469 to 1540. See Introduction, p. 53, for Giovanni Bentivoglio’s encounter with Julius II.

87–99. Sante Bentivoglio, the son of Ercole Bentivoglio, who was a cousin of the murdered Annibale, ruled Bologna from 1446 to 1463, when the assassinated Annibale’s son Giovanni came of age.

104–107. Cf. Chapter 9, line 95. An important echo, as Sasso notes, because it is in the context of a “civil principedom,” the ultimate locus of Machiavelli’s interest even in this chapter. It is also important for its cognizance of the role of the “people” and for its tacit acknowledgment of the role of compromise in political affairs; see Introduction, p. 63; also notes to Chapter 6, line 99, and to line 119 of this chapter.

108–109. Machiavelli goes into some detail about the power of the French king in “French Affairs.” In general Machiavelli has greater respect for French institutions than for the French; see his remarks from *Discourses*, I, 16 in Appendix B, 19, 2. In the context of legal reform in a kingdom, Machiavelli also cites approvingly the French example; see Appendix B, 19, 3. He points out that France has the most thorough legal regulations of any other modern kingdom (*Discourses*, I, 58 [B, p. 262; ML, p. 261; W.I. p. 341; Pen., p. 253; AG.I, p. 314]). Earlier in the same sentence there, he uses the phrase “rompere quel freno che gli può correggere” (“to break the bit that is able to curb them”), thus echoing lines 115–116 here. This particular phrase has caused some scholars to think Machiavelli might have read Claude de Seyssel’s *Grant’ Monarchie de France*, whose one-sided praise of France employs a similar expression. But since Seyssel’s work dates from 1515, it is unlikely that it was a source for this chapter; it is even unlikely that Machiavelli knew it when he wrote *The Discourses*. See Appendix B, 19, 4 for Vettori’s remarks, a more accurate picture of the poverty and divisiveness in early sixteenth-century France.

I could cite countless illustrations of this point, 80
but I shall content myself with mentioning only one
—occurring within the memory of our fathers.
When Annibale Bentivogli, prince of Bologna and
the present Annibale's grandfather, was murdered
by the Canneschi, who conspired against him, there 85
remained no heir except Giovanni, who was still a
babe in arms. Immediately after the murder, be-
cause of the good will the people felt for the house
of Bentivogli at that time, they rose up and mur-
dered all the Canneschi. So great was this good will 90
that when there was no one from the Bentivogli
family left in Bologna to govern the city after An-
nibale's death, the citizens of Bologna—having
heard a rumor that in Florence there was a man of
Bentivogli blood who had until then been thought 95
the son of a blacksmith—came to this man in Flor-
ence. They handed over the government of their
city to him; he acted as regent until Giovanni was
old enough to assume control himself.

Hence I conclude that a prince ought to pay little 100
attention to conspiracies when he has the good will
of the people; but when they are antagonistic and
hate him, he must fear everything and everybody.
Well-organized states and wise princes have taken
great pains not to distress the rich and to satisfy the 105
people, keeping them happy. This function is one of
a prince's most important duties.

Today France is among those kingdoms that are
well organized and governed. She has a variety of

119. See the sentence “The civil principedom is a product of this fact: the common people want to be neither governed nor oppressed by the rich, and the rich want to govern and oppress the common people” (ch. 9, lines 10–14, and notes to lines 9–10). Again, it is important too for its balanced appraisal of the role of the people in *The Prince*; see Introduction, p. 63, and notes to Chapter 6, line 99, and to lines 104–107 of this chapter.

127–129. Clearly the deciding factor in Machiavelli’s assessment is the degree to which the French system evolved so as to keep the governing mechanisms strong.

129–132. An “important idea” consonant with the remarks in Chapter 7 about Cesare Borgia’s treatment of Ramiro de Lorqua; see note to line 158 of that chapter. Cf. Aristotle, *Pol.* 5. 9. 16 (1315a7–8). In his *Ricordi* (C. 170) Guicciardini notes that princes are lucky to be able to delegate nasty tasks—others, not they, are blamed for their mistakes. People would rather hate men closer to them than the more distant prince, who may go to some effort to create the impression of his officials’ being responsible for the trouble caused (Pal., p. 322; Domandi¹, p. 84; Grayson, p. 43). The appearance and reality note, though not causal, is at least present in Guicciardini.

excellent institutions upon which the king's free- 110
dom and security depend; the primary institution is
the parliament and its authority. For whoever orga-
nized the government of that kingdom was familiar
with the ambition and arrogance of powerful men
and deemed it necessary to keep a bit in their 115
mouths to curb them. On the other hand the king
was familiar with the hatred—based on fear—of the
people at large for the nobility, and he wanted to
provide security for both groups. But he did not
want this security to be the king's particular respon- 120
sibility, because he wanted to spare the king the
blame he might incur among the nobility by favor-
ing the common people, and among the common
people by favoring the nobility. Hence he estab- 125
lished a third arbiter that might restrain the nobility
and favor the common people without putting any
blame on the king. There could be no better or wiser
system, nor could there be a better cause for the
security of the king and the realm. From that we can
deduce another important idea: a prince must dele- 130
gate to others those measures which entail blame, to
himself those which cause pleasure. Once again I
conclude that a prince ought to respect the nobility,
but not make himself hated by the people.

Perhaps it would appear to many men, studying 135
the lives and deaths of certain Roman emperors,
that they exemplify instances rebutting my posi-
tion. We discover that some of them lived consis-
tently honorable lives and displayed great *virtù* of

154ff. The following account is based on the history written in Greek by Herodian, an official who was alive during most of the events he describes. It is believed that Machiavelli used the Latin translation done by Poliziano, a humanist and poet in the court of Lorenzo de' Medici, published in 1493. The instances in which Machiavelli's account seems almost to translate this Latin version are given in Burd's notes, pp. 318-324. Machiavelli covers the rulers from A.D. 161 to 238: Marcus Aurelius ("the Philosopher"), who reigned from 161-180, (Marcus Aurelius is the only emperor in Machiavelli's series with whom Herodian does not deal directly); Commodus, 180-192 (Herodian 2); Pertinax, 192-192 (Herodian 2. 1-5); Didius Julian, 193 (Herodian 2. 6-13); Septimius Severus, 193-211 (Herodian 2. 11-3. 15); Caracalla [Marcus Aurelius Antoninus], 211-217 (Herodian 4. 1-13); Macrinus, 217-218 (Herodian 4. 14-15, 5. 1-4); Elagabalus, 218-222 (Herodian 5. 5-8); Alexander Severus, 222-235 (Herodian 6); and Maximinus, 235-238 (Herodian 7-8).

159. The "ruthless, greedy soldiers" constitute the element that necessitates consideration of the special case Machiavelli makes of this period in Roman history, adding to a more complete treatment of the nature and problem of "civil principdoms" (Sasso).

spirit but nevertheless lost their power—or were 140
even killed by their own men, who had conspired
against them. Since I want to answer such objec-
tions, I shall go into the character of some emperors,
indicating reasons for their downfall—reasons not
unlike those I myself have advanced. In so doing, I 145
shall present for consideration those aspects worth
noting by anyone who reads about the history of
the period. I want to restrict myself to all those
emperors who reigned from Marcus the Philoso-
pher to Maximinus: that is, from Marcus Aurelius, 150
his son Commodus, Pertinax, Didius Julian, Sep-
timius Severus, his son Caracalla, Macrinus, El-
agabalus, Alexander Severus, and, finally, to Max-
iminus. First of all it should be noted that while in
other princedoms the ambition of the nobility and 155
the arrogance of the people are the only matters to
be contended with, the Roman emperors had a third
difficulty: they had to put up with their ruthless,
greedy soldiers. Enduring such behavior was so
hard that it caused the downfall of many emperors 160
because it was difficult to satisfy both the soldiers
and the people. The people loved tranquillity, and
therefore loved tranquil and^b peaceful rulers. The
soldiers loved military-minded rulers^c: men who
were aggressive, ruthless, and rapacious. They 165
wanted them to put these qualities into practice
with the people so that they might double their own
salary and give free play to their greed and ruthles-
ness. These reasons were always the downfall of

170–171. Machiavelli's phrase is *per natura o per arte*, "by nature or by art." Since the word "art" during the Renaissance often refers to the rules or systems one learns for dealing with a situation—as in the writings on the "art" of poetry by Horace and his Renaissance imitators, or, for that matter, *The Art of War*—it is not too great a leap to "art" as "experience" or "competence" in politics. The word "art," then, rarely connoted our sense of creativity or perfect workmanship. Many of the emperors Machiavelli discusses ruled while still very young—Elagabalus at fifteen—and hence political experience could not be assumed; when present, it was a definite asset to their reputation.

174. "New, inexperienced" translates *uomini nuovi* to emphasize the correlation between these emperors and the fictive addressee of *The Prince*: they are all in the position of a "new prince." Their bases of support are shaky, and they are obliged to start afresh to centralize power, particularly against the "two diverse factions" (*dua diversi umori*); for *umori* see note to lines 9–10 of Chapter 9. That Machiavelli has not lost sight of his purpose in *The Prince* is aptly illustrated by these examples of the rule of the Roman emperors, and is even more evident later in the chapter when the example of Septimius Severus is particularly recommended as a model for "new princes"; see lines 238ff. below.

177–182. Machiavelli seems to assume that the emperors were in a potentially more balanced situation between the army and the people than history would warrant. Most of the emperors came into power because they were supported by the military. To ignore such support would have been politically fatal.

184. Translates *novità*; see note to line 174 above.

186–189. The reason why Machiavelli feels it necessary to deal with this particular issue here is that to a prince the source of threatening contempt and hatred is his subjects. See Introduction, pp. 36–37, for how this balance relates to Machiavelli's notion of a "civil principedom."

193ff. The reasons Machiavelli adduces for the effectiveness of Marcus Aurelius, the author of the *Meditations*, differ from those in *Discourses*, I, 10. Here they seem more superficial: his inheriting power from his adoptive father, Antoninus Pius. In *Discourses*, I, 10, his *virtù* is specified, along with the five emperors who preceded him, because they "acted according to law and as good rulers . . . and . . . because they were protected by their practices, the goodwill of the people, and the affection of the senate" (B, p. 157; ML, p. 143; W.I., p. 237; Pen., p. 136; AG.I, pp. 221–22). These means make it clearer why "he was never hated or despised" and why "he had to acknowledge the rights of neither the soldiers nor the people."

those emperors whose natural qualities or competence had not won them a reputation so great that they might use it to restrain both groups. The majority of them, especially those who came into power as new, inexperienced men, recognized the difficulty caused by these two diverse factions and set about satisfying the soldiers—caring little about harming the people. Such a decision was necessary: since princes cannot help being hated by someone, they must first and foremost seek not to be hated by a large group; when they cannot achieve this result, they must assiduously strive to avoid the hatred of the most powerful factions. Thus those emperors who needed unusual support because they were new and inexperienced sided with the soldiers rather than with the people. The usefulness of this tactic, however, turned out to be dependent on whether the prince knew how to keep up his prestige among his men. Now for the reasons given above, Marcus Aurelius, Pertinax, and Alexander Severus all lived peaceably, loved justice, hated ruthlessness, and behaved humanely and graciously, yet it happened that all but Marcus Aurelius met unhappy ends. Only he lived and died in the greatest honor, and that was because he came into power by right of succession, and had to acknowledge the rights of neither the soldiers nor the people. Then, since the great *virtù* he was endowed with had earned him respect, he consistently held both the soldiers and the people within bounds dur-

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201–208. Actually Pertinax was indeed elected by the Praetorians, but his reforms caused them to turn against him and murder him within three months; see also *Discourses*, I, 10.

211–212. Machiavelli picks up a point he made in Chapter 15, lines 20–22, and follows through in Chapters 17 and 18.

217–225. Alexander Severus was the cousin of Elagabalus, and his adopted son; he became emperor at the age of thirteen in 222. Although Herodian is followed fairly closely here, Machiavelli is somewhat unjust in attributing the cause for his overthrow. Mutinous soldiers murdered him, possibly on orders from the jealous Maximinus, who became the next emperor. He was highly thought of by his people—partly because among his advisors were his tutor, the famous jurist and legal compiler Ulpian (who, however, was murdered by the Praetorians the year after Alexander came into power), and the historian Dio Cassius (whom the Praetorians also tried to murder). His mother Julia Mamaea, too, was influential during the early part of his rule. She advised well, but without encouraging military exploits, thus angering that part of the populace. Machiavelli hastens to attribute his death to widespread dissatisfaction within the military—a cause heavily emphasized here and played down in *Discourses*, I, 10 and III, 6.

ing his lifetime. He was never hated or despised. 200
But Pertinax was made emperor against the soldiers'
wishes; since they were accustomed to living licen-
tiously during the reign of Commodus, they were
unable to endure the decent conduct which Pertinax
sought to impose upon them. Hence, since Pertinax 205
aroused hatred for himself and also an added mea-
sure of contempt because he was old, he fell during
the early days of his administration.

It ought to be noted, at this point, that hatred
comes to one through good deeds as well as bad. 210
Therefore, as I said above, a prince who wants to
retain his power is often obliged not to be good. For
whenever that large faction which you decide you
need for survival is corrupt—be it the people, the
soldiers, or the rich—you must satisfy it by follow- 215
ing its inclinations. Good deeds at that point be-
come your enemies. But let us consider Alexander
Severus. He was a man of such goodness that
among the other praiseworthy acts attributed to
him, it is said that during the fourteen years of his 220
reign, he never executed anyone without a trial.
Nevertheless, he was considered an effeminate man,
one who permitted his mother to control him, and
thus he came to be scorned. The army conspired
against him and murdered him. 225

Now, for contrast, consider the character of Com-
modus, Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and Max-
iminus. You will think them extremely ruthless and
rapacious. To satisfy the soldiers they spared no

231ff. The military put Septimius Severus in power upon the death of Pertinax. Circumstances forced him to oppress the people, but he did so delicately enough so as not to anger them against him. In *Discourses*, I, 10, Machiavelli describes him as a wicked man who died a natural death because he possessed “extremely great fortune and *virtù*, two qualities which go hand in hand with few men” (B, p. 158; ML, p. 143; W.I, p. 238; Pen., p. 137; AG.I, p. 222). These elusive concepts were basic to Machiavelli’s discussion of Francesco Sforza, and particularly of Cesare Borgia in Chapter 7. Indeed, the evaluation of lines 235–238 is reminiscent of what Machiavelli says the people in the Romagna felt about the way Cesare treated Ramiro de Lorqua: they were “simultaneously gratified and terrified” (ch. 7, lines 177–178). Here Machiavelli goes on to praise Septimius Severus’s actions and offer them as examples to a new prince in language similar to his statements about Cesare Borgia: “I know of no better precepts to give a new prince than the example of Cesare’s actions”; “a [new] prince cannot find more vigorous examples than the duke’s actions” (ch. 7, lines 58–60, 279–280); see Introduction, pp. 85–86.

241–243. See Chapter 18, lines 23ff.

247 ff. When the Praetorians murdered Pertinax, they sold the title of emperor to Didius Julian, who ruled 66 days before the soldiers murdered him as Septimius approached the walls of Rome. Septimius had been made commander-in-chief of the armies in Pannonia (the Roman province between the Alps and the Danube) and Slavonia (the regions of the Slavs). His army proclaimed him emperor and he marched on Rome to assert his claim.

255–258. Upon the death of Commodus in 192, Pescennius Niger had been acclaimed emperor in the east by the Roman legions stationed there. In 194, Septimius defeated him in a battle near Issus in the southeastern corner of Asia Minor, then had him killed. The decision to attack the one and to trick the other is a nice combination of the lion and the fox. Decimus Clodius Albinus was the governor of Britain at the time of Commodus’s death. Septimius defeated him at an enormous battle near Lyon in 197; then he triumphantly brought Decimus to Rome and decapitated him.

kind of oppression that might be inflicted upon the 230
people. All of them, except Septimius Severus, met
unhappy ends. Severus, however, had so much *virtù*
that by keeping his soldiers as friends he was also
able to rule successfully, even though he oppressed
the people. For his *virtù* aroused such admiration in 235
the eyes of both the soldiers and the people that the
latter were left somewhat bewildered and amazed,
the former respectful and satisfied. And since this
man's actions were outstanding and noteworthy^d
for a new prince, I want briefly to show how well 240
he knew how to act the role of the lion and the fox
—whose natures, as I argued above, a prince must
imitate. When Septimius Severus learned of em-
peror Didius Julian's cowardice, he persuaded the
army he was commanding in Illyria that it was right 245
to go to Rome and avenge the death of Pertinax,
who had been murdered by the Praetorians. Under
this pretext, without appearing to aspire to power,
he led the army against Rome, landing in Italy even
before it was known that he had set off. Once he 250
arrived in Rome, the senate—out of fear—elected
him emperor and murdered Julian. After this begin-
ning there were two problems left for Severus to
solve if he intended to make himself ruler over the
whole empire: in Asia, where Pescennius Niger, 255
commander of the Asiatic legions, had had himself
proclaimed emperor; in the western provinces,
where Albinus, too, aspired to power. Since Severus
deemed it dangerous to reveal himself as an enemy

272–274. Another example of Machiavelli's concisely effective understatements.

280. "Upstart" translates *uomo nuovo*, here "new prince"; that the translation "upstart" may belie the overtones.

284. Marcus Aurelius Antoninus was born while Septimius Severus was in Gaul. Once he became emperor he wore a long tunic similar to the kind the Gauls wore, hence his nickname "Caracalla."

to both men, he decided to attack Niger and to trick 260
Albinus, to whom he wrote saying that, having
been elected emperor by the senate, he wanted to
share the honor with him; Severus sent him the title
of Caesar and, with the consent of the senate, made
him co-ruler: Albinus accepted everything at face 265
value. But once Severus defeated and murdered Ni-
ger and settled matters in the eastern provinces, he
returned to Rome and complained in the senate that
Albinus had been ungrateful for the favors granted
him and had treacherously sought to murder him; 270
for these reasons, he said, it was necessary to go and
punish his ingratitude. He then went to seek Al-
binus in Gaul and took away both his territory and
his life.

Therefore whoever makes a detailed study of the 275
actions of Septimius Severus will find him an ex-
tremely savage lion and a very wily fox. It will be
seen that he was feared and respected by everyone,
and not hated by his armies; it is not surprising if
Severus, an upstart, was able to hold on to such 280
great power, for on every occasion his enormous
prestige protected him against the hatred which
his rapacious acts might otherwise have inspired
among the people. But his son Caracalla was also a 285
man whose abilities were of the highest order, lead-
ing to his esteem in the eyes of the people and
acceptance by the soldiers. For he was a military
man, extremely able to endure all kinds of hardship,
a despiser of all fancy foods and all other luxuries;

296–298. Machiavelli's rather schematic account here of Caracalla's death follows his sources closely; it economically drives home his point about a ruler needing to be on good terms with his army. His account ignores much of the complicated political and economic background. Caracalla ruled jointly in 211 with his brother Geta, but arranged his assassination a year later as well as those of the most illustrious Roman citizens. He aspired to be another Alexander the Great, went east, and ordered a general massacre in Alexandria. In *Discourses*, III, 6, the foregoing material is also overlooked, but the account is clearer about the dramatic situation. Macrinus, the prefect of the Praetorians, decided to murder Caracalla when they were on a campaign in Mesopotamia. Fearful for his life, Caracalla wrote an astrologer friend in Rome, who informed him that Macrinus did indeed plan to kill him. But Macrinus intercepted the letter. "He entrusted the task of assassinating [Caracalla] to Martialis, a centurion who was devoted to him and whose brother Caracalla had killed several days earlier—a task Martialis carried out successfully" (B, p. 401; ML, p. 423; W.I, p. 481; Pen., p. 412; AG.I, p. 438). Herodian explicitly states that Caracalla was murdered while visiting a local temple in the company of a select bodyguard. He was assassinated after he had been taken sick and had withdrawn with one attendant—so he hardly was murdered in the midst of his own army (4. 13. 3–5). Again, Machiavelli is shaping historical accounts for narrative purposes.

301–303. See Aristotle on the character of a man who would kill a tyrant: "It is rare, however, to find such men; he who would kill a tyrant must be prepared to lose his life if he fail" (Jowett tr.; *Pol.* 5. 8. 17 [1312a30–32]). See also *Pol.* 5. 5. 18, 1315a25–31. It is difficult to establish whether Machiavelli is consciously using Aristotle as a source. See the passage from *Discourses*, III, 6, quoted in Appendix B, 19, 5, on those assassins who act alone.

310–312. See another quotation from *Discourses*, III, 6 (Appendix B, 19, 6) about the danger of threats.

these qualities made him loved by every man in the 290
army. Nevertheless his savagery and ruthlessness
were so great and so unprecedented (after countless
individual murders, he executed much of Rome's
populace and all of Alexandria's) that he was im-
mensely loathed by the entire world. Even his at- 295
tendants started to fear him, so that he was mur-
dered by a centurion while in the midst of his own
army. In this connection it should be noted that if
one man's mind is resolved upon such a killing, a
prince can do nothing to escape it, since anyone 300
who has no fear of death can harm him. But a prince
certainly ought not to fear that kind of death un-
duly, because it is extremely uncommon. He need
only guard against inflicting serious injury upon
someone who serves him, or someone whom he has 305
around him to perform duties in his principedom.
That is where Caracalla went wrong: he executed—
with disgrace—a brother of that centurion and con-
tinued to threaten the surviving centurion daily,
even though he kept him on as his bodyguard. This 310
was an imprudent decision that, as it happened, cost
him his life.

But let us turn to Commodus, for whom holding
on to power was an extremely easy matter, since he
had it by right of succession as the son of Marcus 315
Aurelius. Had he only followed in his father's foot-
steps, he would have satisfied both the soldiers and
the people. But his was a ruthless and bestial nature,
and he set about indulging the army and inciting the

326–328. Commodus does not come off very well in any account Machiavelli gives of his career. In *Discourses*, III, 6, the description stresses the desire of inner court circles to have a more dignified man as emperor. The conspiracy was headed by one of Commodus's mistresses and two commanders of his Praetorians. They tried to poison him, failed, and had to order an athlete to strangle him to death. The sense of outrage common both to the army and the people, then, is more consonant with the argument of this chapter than it is with fact (B, pp. 401, 410, 404; ML, pp. 422, 433, 426; W.I, pp. 480–481, 490, 484; Pen., pp. 411, 422, 415; AG.I, pp. 437–438, 446, 441).

329ff. Machiavelli notes that Maximinus “deferred his trip to Rome” (340); actually he never got there because his army mutinied. The difficulties in Africa revolved around the family of Marcus Antonius Gordianus, a name used by father (Gordian I), son (Gordian II), and grandson (Gordian III). Gordian I was a Roman senator and proconsul in Africa. He was proclaimed emperor but, since he was very old, he decided to rule jointly with Gordian II; in 238 the son was killed in battle by Maximinus's henchmen and Gordian I committed suicide. Meanwhile, in Rome, the senate—once they heard about the death of the two Gordians—elected two emperors to oppose Maximinus: Pupienus Maximus, in charge of military affairs, and Caelius Balbinus, in charge of civil affairs. The Praetorians murdered these two in 238 and proclaimed Gordian III emperor, even though he was only thirteen years old.

men to licentious behavior so that he could practice 320
his rapacity on the people. On the other hand, with
no regard for maintaining his dignity, he often went
down into the arena, fighting with the gladiators
and following other sorts of base pursuits hardly
worthy of the imperial majesty. He became con- 325
temptible in the eyes of the soldiers. So, hated by
one group and despised by the other, he was con-
spired against and killed.

The character of Maximinus remains to be dis-
cussed: he was a very bellicose man. Because the 330
armies were disgusted by the effeminacy of Alex-
ander Severus, which I mentioned above, they
elected Maximinus emperor after Alexander's
death. He was not emperor very long, for two fac- 335
tors made him hated and despised. One was that he
came of the lowest origins, having once herded
sheep in Thrace—a fact well known everywhere,
which detracted greatly from his prestige in
everybody's eyes. The other factor was that at the
outset of his reign he deferred his trip to Rome to 340
take formal possession of the imperial throne; he
gave the impression of being extremely ruthless,
having performed, through his prefects, many ruth-
less acts both in Rome and in various parts of the
empire. As a result the entire world was disgusted: 345
with indignation because of his mean birth, with
loathing because of his awesome savagery. First
Africa rose against him, then the senate with the
entire Roman populace, then all of Italy conspired

355–356. Each emperor was murdered either by his own soldiers or by soldiers loyal to someone else.

367–367. Sasso notes that this point is historically justified, but that is not made with the fullest understanding of the complex role the army played in Roman social and political history. See Introduction, p. 36, for Fabrizio Colonna's point about the creation of the Praetorians under Octavian and Tiberius (*War*, I). Later Fabrizio adduces the example of the Assyrians and an earlier period in Roman history to prove that keeping leaders "entrenched in administrating and ruling the provinces" is dangerous. The example thrived as long as generals were transferred and therefore unable to generate power locally to revolt against Rome (*Guerra*, pp. 340, 357; LLA, pp. 20–21, 41–42; AG.II, pp. 578, 593–594).

370–372. See notes to lines 38–41 of Chapter 9. This is an extremely important point, although it is somewhat lost in this paragraph. Machiavelli is clearly aiming it at the "civil principedom" of Chapter 9, particularly since it was impossible for such a principedom in Roman times, but highly possible—and he thinks highly desirable—in Renaissance Italy.

377–379. See Chapter 4, lines 30–34, and note to lines 36–38. Machiavelli mentions the Turks briefly in *Discourses*, I, 19; II, 17; III, 6, 35; and in *War*, IV. The absolute quality of the sultan's dominion rests solely on his powerful army, a consideration outweighing all others for Machiavelli in this context. The Sultan of the Ottoman Turks from 1512 to 1520 was Selim I.

against him. His own army, which was finding the 350
siege of Aquileia difficult, also joined the rebellion.
Disgusted by his cruelty and less afraid of him be-
cause they saw how many people were hostile to
him, they murdered him.

I do not want to discuss Elagabalus, or Macrinus, 355
or Didius Julian, who were thoroughly despised and
so were quickly done away with. Instead, I shall end
this discussion by submitting that, in our day,
princes are less bothered by this problem of giving
unprecedented satisfaction to the soldiers under 360
their administration. In spite of the fact that they
are obliged to give these soldiers some considera-
tion, the problem is soon resolved because none of
these princes has standing armies which, like the
armies of the Roman Empire, were entrenched in 365
the government and administration of the prov-
inces. Therefore, if a ruler then found it more neces-
sary to satisfy the soldiers than the people, it was
because the soldiers were stronger than the people.
It is more necessary now for every prince to satisfy 370
the people rather than the soldiers, because the peo-
ple are stronger—with one exception: the sultans of
Turkey and Egypt. I make an exception of the Sul-
tan of Turkey because he constantly gathers to-
gether^e near at hand twelve thousand infantry and 375
fifteen thousand cavalry troops, upon whom the
security and strength of his realm depend. Subor-
dinating all other considerations, it is necessary for
the sultan to stay on friendly terms with them. The

383–387. As Machiavelli goes on to demonstrate, the common characteristic is that both states have elected rulers. There is no sense in which “divine sanction,” as in Chapter 11, renders the two similar. The Mamelukes were a hereditary, powerful military class, and hence, in Machiavelli’s eyes, to be feared. Originally descended from slaves, they attained their own vested rights, the most important of which was electing the sultan. They constituted an oligarchy that virtually ruled Egypt from 1250 to 1517 when, with the defeat of the last Sultan of the Mamelukes, Tuman Bey, Egypt was incorporated into Selim I’s Ottoman Empire. The Janissaries in Turkey performed a similar role, hence Machiavelli excepts these two groups from consideration.

392–395. Since the institutions are so time-honored, the newly elected prince does not face the same kinds of problems as does Machiavelli’s “new prince.”

same rule applies to the Egyptian sultan's realm, 380
which is entirely in the hands of his soldiers: he too
must stay on friendly terms with them—without
regard for the people. You should note that the
Sultan of Egypt's state is unlike all other prince-
doms; it is similar to the Holy See, which can be 385
termed neither an hereditary principedom nor a new
one. It is not the sons of the former ruler who are
the heirs and stay on as lords, but rather a candidate
elected to the post by those authorized to vote. And
since this procedure has long been followed, we 390
cannot call such a principedom new, for it has none
of those problems besetting a new principedom. Al-
though the prince is new, the institutions of the
state are old, and are devised to accept him as if he
were their hereditary lord. 395

But let us get back to our subject. I submit that
anyone who reflects upon the foregoing argument
will realize that either hatred or contempt caused
the downfall of the emperors I mentioned. He will
also understand why it happened that in each group 400
one of them had a successful outcome and the oth-
ers unsuccessful ones, even though some acted in
one way and some in the opposite manner. Because
they were new princes, it was useless and harmful
for Pertinax and Alexander Severus to seek to imi- 405
tate Marcus Aurelius, who came into his principedom
by right of succession. The same applies to Cara-
calla, Commodus, and Maximinus: it was fatal for
them to imitate Septimius Severus because they did

414–418. See Appendix B, 19, 7 for Machiavelli's explanation. Furthermore, the emphasis on "selection" underlines the need for caution and prudence; thus it serves to counter and soften the easy solution of pampering or destroying—see Chapter 3, lines 118–119.

not possess enough *virtù* to follow in his footsteps. 410
Hence a new prince in a new principedom cannot
imitate the actions of Marcus Aurelius, nor is it even
necessary for him to follow those of Septimius
Severus. He ought rather to select from Septimius
Severus those methods necessary to establish his 415
own power, and from Marcus Aurelius those that
are conducive to, and glorious in, preserving it once
it has been established and stabilized.

7–13. Sasso points out that this is an interesting example of Machiavelli's awareness that in a world full of variables it is difficult to extract general principles. Cf. Guicciardini, *Ricordi*, for his own suspicion of dealing with situations "by rules" (C. 6 [Pal., p. 285; Domandi¹, p. 42; Grayson, p. 7]). It also indicates his faith in the potential for extracting these principles despite the obdurate matter from which they are drawn. That this process is particularly possible is based solely on examples chosen from Renaissance Italy—some of which Machiavelli was directly acquainted with—all of which were, in his terms, "from the recent past." This chapter is a very straightforward, methodical discussion, after a terse introduction ("so as to keep a firm grip on their state"), of the topics mentioned in the first three sentences of this paragraph.

14ff. Although Machiavelli alludes to the problem briefly in *Discourses*, I, 6 (B, p. 144; ML, p. 127; W.I, p. 225; Pen., p. 121; AG.I, p. 209), he discusses the disadvantages of disarming conquered people in *Discourses*, II, 30 (B, p. 370; ML, pp. 386–387; W.I, pp. 448–449; Pen., p. 374; AG.I, pp. 410–411). Nevertheless, in the long run his conclusions there are roughly similar to those in this chapter. Immediately following the first section from *War*,—referred to in note to Chapter 19, lines 361–367 and the Introduction, p. 36, which is also relevant to this context—Fabrizio concludes with a remark analogous to Machiavelli's thought here; See Appendix B, 20, 1. Later in Book I, Fabrizio is quite explicit about the advantages of a regulated, disciplined citizen army: "They are always useful and cities keep themselves peaceful longer by the use of these weapons than without them" (*Guerra*, p. 348; LLA, pp. 30–31; AG.II, p. 585); he goes on to discuss the danger of mercenaries. And it is not without some irony that Machiavelli says in the letter known as "Fantasies": "But since it is not customary to bring in the Romans as evidence, Lorenzo de' Medici disarmed the people in order to hold on to Florence"; this is noted in contrast to Giovanni Bentivoglio, who "armed Bologna in order to hold it" (see Introduction, p. 11, n. 19 [G¹, p. 229; Hale, p. 128; Gpb, p. 98; AG.II, p. 896]).

20

Whether Fortresses and Sundry Other Resources Used Regularly by Princes Are Useful or Useless

Some princes have disarmed their subjects so as to keep a firm grip on their state; others have split up conquered cities. Some have fostered hostility against themselves; others have striven to win over to their side those people whom they distrusted at the outset of their rule. Some have constructed fortresses; others have torn them down. And even though it is impossible to formulate a definitive judgment about each of these measures without knowing details about those states obliged to make a similar decision, nevertheless I shall discuss the question in those broad terms which the topic allows. 5 10

Now, at no time has a new prince ever disarmed his subjects. In fact, when he has found them dis- 15

34–40. Mercenaries are the specific subject of Chapter 12. But throughout, Machiavelli has paid particular attention to the relations between a prince, his armies, and his subjects (e.g., in Chapter 19). It is not redundant to speak of a new prince in a new principedom because the important point is for the new prince to “put down roots” (ch. 7, line 49) in a recently acquired territory. The question of a mixed principedom—in discussing which Machiavelli returns to his initial grafting image (ch. 3; see note to line 2 of that chapter and Introduction, p. 83—that is, a principedom whose language or customs differ from those of the prince, is analyzed separately. In that case, the danger is that a prince must rely on one army to conquer the other; such ambiguous support threatens his control. Once the new territory is secure, a prince must immediately take steps to check the power of the military.

.42. Again, Machiavelli returns to the “grafting” image (see ch. 3, line 2), thus reinforcing the idea of a “new prince” in a “mixed principedom.”

armed, he has always armed them: once they have weapons, those weapons become yours. Those men whom you have suspected become loyal, and those who were always loyal remain so: from being subjects, they develop into your supporters. And since 20
it is impossible to arm all your subjects, you can deal more securely with those you leave unarmed by extending privileges to those whom you arm. That preferential treatment which the armed ones realize is extended to them makes them feel com- 25
mitted to you. The others justify your actions, deeming it necessary for those who face more danger and more responsibility to be in greater favor. But when you disarm new subjects, you start out by insulting them; you indicate that you lack confi- 30
dence in them, whether because of their cowardice or their disloyalty; either of these views engenders hatred against you. And since you cannot remain unarmed, you are forced to turn to mercenaries, whose worth has been discussed above; even if they 35
were reliable men, they could not be sufficiently strong to protect you against powerful enemies and dangerous subjects. Therefore, as I have said, a new prince in a new principedom has always organized armies there. History is full of such examples. 40

But when a prince acquires a new state that is like an appendage to his former one, then it is necessary to disarm that state, except for those supporters who helped you acquire it. As time and opportunity permit, even these men must be made weak and 45

50–53. Machiavelli refers to the information covered in Chapter 17, lines 10–12 and Introduction, p. 7. He quotes an old saw, as he did in Chapter 3, line 204, only to mock it for its time-honored, “conventional” wisdom. The maxim presents obvious loopholes in time of war, for the conquered territory has the built-in potential for joining the enemy. In *Discourses*, III, 27 he repeats the maxim and notes that “our wise forefathers . . . failed to perceive how useless these means are in both instances” (B, p. 461; ML, p. 491; W.I, p. 541; Pen., p. 479; AG.I, p. 490). Machiavelli also refers to the opinion of Florentine “wise” men about holding Pisa with fortresses in *Discourses*, II, 24 (B, p. 349; ML, p. 362; W.I, p. 429; Pen., p. 352; AG.I, p. 392).

54–55. Conventional shorthand for the period from the Peace of Lodi (1454) to the death of Lorenzo de’ Medici (1492); sometimes this period is shortened to begin with Lorenzo’s accession to power (1469). Perhaps only during this time span did the Florentine maxim about Pistoia and Pisa hold true. For Guicciardini’s “dating” of this period, see Appendix B, 11, 1.

58–62. In *Discourses*, III, 27, this point is made again: “It is impossible to defend a town that has enemies both within and without” (B, p. 462; ML, p. 491; W.I, p. 541; Pen., p. 480; AG.I, p. 491). In *Discourses*, II, 25 Machiavelli cites the example of Filippo Visconti, Duke of Milan, and his attacks on Florence (1424–1428; 1430–1433; 1436–1440), when Filippo believed he could capitalize on dissension within the city (B, pp. 357–358; ML, p. 372; W.I, pp. 436–437; Pen., p. 361; AG.I, pp. 399–400). According to Aristotle, *Pol* 5. 9. 4. (1313b16–17), creating partisan strife was a classical method of tyrannical control. Most of the writers of *de regimine principum* treatises, however, disagree with Aristotle on this point. (Allan Gilbert, *Forerunners*, pp. 162–164, quotes from Egidio Colonna, Patricius, and Erasmus.) In *Discourses*, I, 7 Machiavelli says, “from factions arise political parties within cities; from parties arises the cities’ destruction (B, p. 148; ML, p. 132; W.I, p. 228; Pen., pp. 125–126; AG.I, p. 212). See Appendix B, 20, 2 for Machiavelli’s remarks in *Discourses*, II, 2 concerning a tyrant ruling a great deal of territory.

71–73. See Introduction, p. 54. The “factions” Machiavelli refers to are those Ghibelline towns owing allegiance to the Emperor Maximilian I—Brescia, Verona, Vicenza, and Padua. See Appendix B, 20, 3 for Guicciardini’s report about Brescia.

yielding. You must arrange matters so that only^a your own state's entire arsenal is in the hands of your soldiers—those living close to you in your former state.

Our forefathers—those who were thought wise 50
—used to say that Pistoia must be held by factions
and Pisa by fortresses; hence they fostered dissen-
sion in some of the towns under their sway in order
to hold them more easily. In the days when Italy 55
was relatively stable, this may have been a sound
policy; but I do not believe^b that today it can be
given as a rule because I do not think factions ever
did anyone any good. Indeed, when the enemy ap-
proaches, it is inevitable that cities divided into fac- 60
tions are lost at once, because the weakest faction
will always go over to the foreign armies and the
others will be unable to resist.

The Venetians (influenced, I believe, by the rea-
sons outlined above) nurtured the Guelf and Ghi- 65
belline factions in their satellite towns. Although
they never permitted matters to go as far as blood-
shed, they still fostered divergent views among the
people so that the citizens, preoccupied with these
views, might not unite against them. As we have 70
seen, this policy did not work out well after all: once
the Venetians were defeated at Vailà, one of these
factions immediately took heart and snatched away
all their empire. Such policies, moreover, are indica-
tive of weakness in the prince: a vigorous prince- 75
dom never allows itself such divisiveness—divi-

87–88. Although the “ladder” image is familiar enough in contemporary political terminology, Russo notes the habitual turn of Machiavelli’s mind seeing an abstract political situation in concrete terms.

92. This paragraph offers an interesting example of Machiavelli’s concept of Fortune. As Sasso notes, it would be incorrect to assume that Machiavelli makes Fortune a totally dominating force in human affairs.

93–96. The rest of the paragraph clarifies this paradox, but it is clear from what follows that Machiavelli has specifically in mind those princes “needing support to retain their position” (Sasso). The relevance to either Giuliano or Lorenzo de’ Medici is obvious.

96–97. The crafty Pandolfo Petrucci was powerful in Siena from 1487 on; he ruled in a coalition that included his brother Giacopo. After the latter’s death in 1497 and the assassination in 1498 of Pandolfo’s rivals among the Belanti—and eventually after Pandolfo arranged to have his father-in-law Niccolò Borghese murdered—he became the virtual prince of Siena from 1500 to his death in 1512. Pandolfo was the “mind” behind the Diet of Magione, and was rather lucky in his relations with the revengeful Cesare Borgia, who forced the Sienese to expel Pandolfo in 1503. But the city was torn by riots, and Louis XII was instrumental in having Pandolfo restored—on Florentine advice. Machiavelli was involved in three diplomatic missions to him; the last one, in July of 1505, concerned especially delicate diplomatic dealings over Florence’s prolonged struggle with Pisa. In a dispatch of July 18, 1505, Machiavelli describes him as a man who knew how to maneuver extremely adroitly: “he always kept his feet in thousands of stirrups, and kept them there in such a way that he could withdraw them at will” (*Leg. II*, 897). Machiavelli discusses Pandolfo’s career often: see *Discourses*, III, 6 and throughout the *Legations*—as can be seen from the index. In Chapter 22 here, he singles him out for praise because he shrewdly chose the intelligent Antonio da Venafrò as his minister (lines 12–22). That Pandolfo really “governed his state more with men he distrusted than with other citizens” is not a fact accepted by all historians. For more on Petrucci’s early career and his relations with Ludovico Sforza, see Hicks, “Education of a Prince.” In the “political psychology” governing the rest of the paragraph, Machiavelli prepares for Chapter 22 and his sharp distinctions of political acumen.

siveness that is of value to a prince only in peacetime, since its use facilitates control over his subjects; but wartime points up the fallacy of such a policy.

There is no doubt that princes become great when they overcome the handicaps and opposition imposed upon them. So Fortune, particularly when she wishes to heighten the prestige of a new prince—one who needs to acquire prestige more than a hereditary prince does—creates enemies for him and has them attack him so that he may have cause to conquer them. Thus he goes higher up the ladder that his very enemies have brought him. Hence many men think that when a wise prince gets the opportunity, he ought to be shrewd enough to foster opposition against himself so that by crushing it he may augment his own stature.

Princes, especially new ones, have found more loyalty and usefulness in those men whom they considered dangerous at the outset of their rule than in those whom they initially trusted. Pandolfo Petrucci, Prince of Siena, governed his state more with men whom he had once distrusted than with the other citizens. But this point cannot be discussed in general terms because it varies with the individual example; I shall merely state that with the greatest of ease a prince will be able to win over to his side those men who were unfriendly during the early stage of his principedom if they are the kind who need support in order to retain their position. And

725–729. Cf. Chapter 3, lines 15–21, in which Machiavelli outlines some of the problems facing a prince who has recently taken over a new territory: “everyone whom you have inconvenienced by taking possession of that principedom is your enemy; you cannot keep as allies those who got you there, because you are unable to gratify them in the way they had taken for granted—nor can you use strong medicines against them since you are indebted to them.” Here he applies that principle to a prince who gained power through the help of dissenters. Theoretically they should become his allies; actually, they have their own conception of the new state—“it is impossible to satisfy them.” Consequently “those men who were satisfied with the former government” are potentially more docile, for they have yet to clarify their political ideas.

732. The equestrian image occurs again in *Discourses*, II, 24 (B, p. 351; ML, p. 364; W.I, p. 430; Pen., pp. 353–354; AG.I, p. 393), where the question of the utility of fortresses is treated more fully, even repeating some of the examples from this chapter. The conclusions are generally similar—see also *War*, VII. It should be borne in mind that Machiavelli refers to fortresses within the city walls for refuge against internal eruptions and protection against external attack, as well as fortresses built in the outlying areas and around ports to control them. Machiavelli respects the ancients for constructing fortresses, but their circumstances were different. What distinguishes his period from ancient Rome, and vitiates the defensive utility of fortresses, is the existence of artillery: “for against its fire it is impossible to defend small sites and other places where there is no cover behind which to take shelter” (*D.*, II, 24; loc. cit.). But he has some reservations even about the potential of artillery. For him, an army’s strength lies in a devoted, disciplined, skilled infantry—“the nerve of an army” (*War*, I [*Guerra*, p. 339; LLA, p. 19–20; AG.II, p. 577]); see the note to line 32 of Chapter 24. Ultimately the drawback of fortresses is that they lull an army into a dangerous sense of security: the army trusts the fortresses and not themselves. Thus all devotion, discipline, and skill are for naught. Guicciardini’s comments on this passage of the *Discourses* are longer than usual, perhaps because he disagrees with Machiavelli (see Appendix B, 20, 4).

they are all the more obliged to serve him loyally—
being, as they are, aware of the necessity of wiping
out the bad impression their deeds have made upon
him. And so a prince always derives more useful-
ness from such people than from those who, serving 110
him with too great a feeling of security, neglect his
interests.

And because the topic calls for it, I do not want
to leave out a reminder to princes who have recently
taken over a new state with the aid of its inhabi- 115
tants: to consider carefully what motive may have
influenced those who helped them. If it is not based
on a natural affection for him, but only on a dis-
satisfaction with the former government, a prince
will be able to retain their friendship only with 120
effort and great difficulty because it is impossible to
satisfy them. Upon carefully considering the reason
for this fact, with the aid of examples taken from
ancient and modern times, a prince will realize that
it is much easier to win over the friendship of those 125
men who were satisfied with the former govern-
ment—and hence were his enemies—than that of
those who, because they were dissatisfied with it,
became his allies and helped him seize it.

In order to hold on to their states more securely, 130
princes have customarily erected fortresses that
could serve as a kind of bridle and bit for those who
might plan to attack them, and as a secure refuge
from a sudden attack. I commend this method be-
cause it was used in ancient times. Nevertheless 135

136. With the help of Lorenzo de' Medici, Niccolò Vitelli, the father of Paolo and Vitellozzo, gained control of Città da Castello, but lost it to the forces of Sixtus IV in 1474. After losing a siege in 1479, he successfully regained the city in 1482, again with Lorenzo's help. He immediately destroyed the two fortresses the pope had built because he felt, as Machiavelli says (*D.*, II, 24), that the loyalty of his people and not the fortresses was what kept him in power.

138–143. For the historical background, see Introduction, p. 49; Guidobaldo da Montefeltro returned to Urbino in 1502. In "Description" (*Guerra*, p. 44; AG.I, pp. 165–166) Machiavelli adds that confidence in his subjects contributed to his decision to destroy the fortresses; see also *Discourses*, II, 24 for mention of the same factor. Machiavelli refers to his previous example, the Vitelli and Guidobaldo both destroying fortresses in his letter known as "Fantasies" (see Introduction, p. 11, n. 19; G¹, p. 229; Hale, p. 128; Gpb, p. 98; AG.II, p. 896).

143–144. Pope Julius II conquered Bologna in November of 1506 after the Bentivogli fled; see Introduction, p. 53. He started to build a large fortress near one of the city gates in 1507. After the inhabitants revolted against his cruel governors in 1511, they took over the fortress; then the Bentivogli were restored and they destroyed it. The hatred of the people for the governors is mentioned again in *Discourses*, II, 24.

145. Catching the drift of "circumstance" is basic to sound government. Machiavelli's general rule is relatively clear and plays nicely against the theme of the previous chapter. Compare with this sentence and the general rule that follows Guicciardini's conclusions in Appendix B, 20, 4.

152–155. Machiavelli's prediction proved true: after the Battle of Marignano in 1515, Ludovico Sforza's son Massimiliano lost the citadel. See *Discourses*, II, 24 where Machiavelli makes the point that Francesco's fortress lulled the Sforzas into a false security so that they repressed the Milanese without considering the consequences. Also, if they had had friendly subjects, they could have withstood the invasion of Louis XII (B, pp. 351–352; ML, pp. 364–366; W.I, p. 431; Pen., p. 354; AG.I, pp. 393–394). In his commentary Guicciardini specifically notes that the example of the citadel in Milan is not well chosen because there was a large-scale war going on and it was not solely a question of rebellious subjects chaffing under the cruel Sforza regime, which is the way Machiavelli uses it here to lead up to an elaboration of his general rule in the next sentence. Although this rule has classical antecedents, it derives its force from the fact that it is deduced from the recent historical past and, as far as Machiavelli—if not Guicciardini—is concerned it deals with "the actual truth of matters."

160–162. Cecco and Lodovico Orsi, along with other friends and relatives, conspired to murder Count Girolamo Riario, the son of Pope Sixtus IV, in 1488. Girolamo's cruel regime sparked the attack. Once the Countess of Forli's uncle, Ludovico Sforza, helped her regain her power, she too governed ruthlessly; hence her subjects gladly aided Cesare Borgia in conquering the fortress late in 1499 and early in 1500. See *History*, VIII, 34 and *Discourses*, III, 6 for the conspiracy against Count Girolamo. See Appendix B, 20, 5 for Machiavelli's assessment of Caterina Sforza, the Countess of Forli, in *Discourses*, *History*, and *War*, VII, as well as Guicciardini's remarks in *Florence*, XIX and *Italy*, IV, 13. The quotations from Machiavelli offer an interesting commentary on the flexible quality of his mind. He easily holds two contradictory opinions of Caterina: praise for her bellicose courage in *War*, VII, and especially *Discourses*, III, 6 for her ruse and bravado against the conspirators; and blame for her political ineptness—in this case, being hated by her subjects.

Niccolò Vitelli, in our own day, saw fit to destroy two fortresses in Città di Castello in order to hold on to his state. When Guidobaldo, Duke of Urbino, returned to his realm after having been driven out of it by Cesare Borgia, he razed the fortresses in that region to the ground, having decided that without them he would be less likely to lose his dukedom a second time. The Bentivogli, when they returned to Bologna, took similar measures. Fortresses, then, are useful or not depending upon the circumstances: if they are beneficial in one situation, they are harmful in another. The matter can be stated as follows: the prince who fears his own people more than he fears foreign intervention ought to erect fortresses; but the prince who fears foreign intervention more than he fears his own people ought not to give them a thought. Francesco Sforza's building of the citadel of Milan has caused—and will still cause—more harm to the House of Sforza than any other of that state's intemperate policies. Yet the best possible fortress consists in not being hated by your people. Even if you possess fortresses, they will not save you if the people hate you; once the people have taken up arms, foreign intervention can only help them. In our own day we have not seen fortresses benefit any ruler except the Countess of Forlì, after her husband Count Girolamo Riario was killed. Thanks to her fortress she could flee a revolt of her people, wait for help from Milan, and regain her power. The times then were such that foreign inter-

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175–177. It is interesting that in both the example of Caterina Sforza and this closing sentence, Machiavelli—by modifying his “general rule”—comes out with a relative position which tacitly confirms some of the points Guicciardini raises in his *Considerations of Discourses*, II, 24; these are discussed in Appendix B, 20, 4 and in the note to lines 152–155 above. What is important is that Machiavelli ultimately approves of “the prince who makes his tactics consistent with the conditions of the times” (ch. 25, lines 51–53).

vention could not have helped the people. But subsequently even she found her fortresses of little avail: Cesare Borgia attacked her and her hostile subjects joined the foreign intervention. So, then and before, it would have been safer for her to have avoided being hated by the people than to have possessed fortresses. Having thought all these matters through, therefore, I approve both of the prince who erects fortresses and of the prince who does without them; I disapprove of anyone who, relying upon his fortresses, considers the hatred of his people unimportant.

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7–3. Machiavelli picks up a theme from the previous chapter, “there is no doubt that princes become great when they overcome the handicaps and opposition imposed upon them” (ch. 20, lines 80–82). In the context of furthering the common good, he repeats this advice in *Discourses*, III, 34 (B, p. 480; ML, pp. 511–512; W.I., p. 558; Pen., pp. 498–499; A.G.I., pp. 506–507).

3ff. Most of the subsequent remarks about Ferdinand are adumbrated in a letter to Vettori, April 29, 1513; see Appendix B, 21, 1. Guicciardini, who was the Florentine ambassador to Ferdinand’s court from 1512 to 1514, notes in his *Ricordi* (C.77; B.51) that the king always managed to sow the seeds for his plans in court beforehand so that once he announced his intentions everyone agreed that it was the best course of action (Pal., pp. 301, 249–250; Domandi¹, pp. 61, 108–109; Grayson, p. 23); see also C.142 (Pal., pp. 315–316; Domandi¹, p. 77; Grayson, p. 37) on Ferdinand’s ability to make something he had done in his own interest appear to have been carried out for the public good.

10ff. See Introduction, pp. 45–46, for his campaign against Granada. The Castilians were anxious to preserve their independence and viewed Ferdinand’s marriage to Isabella, Queen of Castile, with alarm. The attack on the Moors distracted them from their regional concerns. It is doubtful, however, that since the Castilians were involved in his enterprise they watched Ferdinand gain the upper hand “without . . . realizing it.”

17–22. From the church’s point of view the campaign against Granada had all the trappings of a holy war.

21

How a Prince Should Act to Obtain Prestige

Nothing gives a prince greater prestige than embarking upon great enterprises and giving exceptional proof of his abilities. In our day Ferdinand of Aragon, the present King of Spain, can almost be termed a new prince because with fame and glory he has developed from a weak king to the foremost king of Christendom. If you will review his deeds, you will find that each is very great, and some are unparalleled. Early in his reign he attacked Granada; that campaign laid the groundwork for his power. First he launched the campaign when everything was relaxed, and there was no danger of interference. He kept the minds of the barons of Castile preoccupied with the campaign; with their thoughts involved in the war, they did not think about sedition. In this way, without their realizing it, he gained prestige and authority over them. With funds from the church and the people he was able

23. For ruthlessness, see note to Chapter 17, line 11; for Ferdinand's policy toward the Jews and Moors, see Introduction, pp. 45–46. Machiavelli does not think that expelling the Jews and Moors—Machiavelli's word for them is *Marrani*, referring to Spanish Jews and Moslems—in 1501 and 1502 is a praiseworthy act. He goes on to call it "deplorable" (*miserabile*). Like Agathocles, who murdered his fellow citizens (ch. 8), this act probably prevents Ferdinand from "being honored among the most outstanding men" (ch. 8, lines 63–64). Hence the phrase *pietosa crudeltà* is not equivalent to the idea of "compassionate ruthlessness" contained in Machiavelli's remarks comparing Cesare Borgia's remodeling the Romagna and Florence's treatment of Pistoia (ch. 17, line 11 and note); in this instance Machiavelli's ironic tone is better suggested by the phrase "sanctimonious piece of ruthlessness."

26–29. Sasso notes that the idea of *religio instrumentum regni*, to which Machiavelli devotes five chapters in *Discourses*, I, 11–15, has a long history; he also sees the possible influence of Marsilius of Padua's *Defensor pacis* I, 5, 11, which discusses the utility of religion in a social-political context. See Introduction, p. 46, for Ferdinand's North African campaign and his annexation of the Kingdom of Navarre during the Holy League.

39. When Giovanni Visconti died in 1354, he left three nephews to rule. Matteo was murdered by the other two in 1355, but Bernabò ruled Milan until 1385 while Galeazzo ruled Pavia until 1378. In 1385 Bernabò was imprisoned and poisoned by his nephew Gian Galeazzo, who called himself the "Count of *Virtù*"; he was made Duke of Milan by the Holy Roman Emperor. Bernabò gave "exceptional proof of his ability to handle internal affairs" by being legendarily ruthless to his subjects.

48–52. The situation again revolves around the differences between domestic and foreign policy. There are fewer opportunities for compromise in the latter instance; all Machiavelli's subsequent examples demonstrate instances of decisive actions. As a general rule for any occasion, however, see the opening sentence of *Discourses*, II, 15 quoted in note to lines 82–85 below. As early as October 11, 1502, Machiavelli told his Florentine employers at Cesare Borgia's request that "if you remain neutral, you will lose in every case; were you to join with him you would be able to win" (*Leg.*, I, 346; AG.I, p. 124). The subject of neutrality is dealt with at great length in two letters to Francesco Vettori: December 10, 1514 (G¹, pp. 358–359; Gpb, pp. 175–176; AG.II, pp. 954–955) and the first letter of December 20, 1514 (G¹, pp. 364–367; Gpb, pp. 178–181; AG.II, pp. 956–959). In both letters there are numerous echoes of *The Prince*, especially the question of whether it is better to be feared or hated than to be loved, and of Machiavelli's belief that neutrality inevitably incurs the wrath of one of two disagreeing groups. In the second letter he also quotes the same passage from Livy that he quotes below (lines 74–78). For more on the idea of neutrality, see *Discourses*, II, 22 (which alludes to the same examples of recent papal tactics discussed in the two letters to Vettori); II, 15; Guicciardini's remarks in his *Ricordi* about Florentine temporizing in 1512 (C. 68; B. 15, 16; Q²18); and Guicciardini's *Considerations of Discourses*, II, 15.

to sustain his troops and build up his army in that long war—the army which subsequently brought him renown. Furthermore, in order to embark on greater campaigns, still making use of religion, he resorted to a sanctimonious piece of ruthlessness by hunting out the Jews and Moors and expelling them from his kingdom. No proof of his abilities could be more deplorable or more exceptional. Under this same cloak of religiosity he attacked Africa, began his campaign in Italy, and has recently attacked France. Thus he has consistently planned and executed great projects which have always kept the minds of his subjects in suspense and wonder—concentrated upon the outcome of the events. His moves have followed so closely upon one another that he has never given men an ample enough interval between his exploits to work quietly against him.

It is also very important for a prince to give exceptional proof of his ability to handle internal affairs; the activities reported about Bernabò Visconti of Milan furnish an example of this. Whenever someone does something in the life of the city that is unusual—either good or bad—a prince should choose a means for rewarding or punishing the man that will be widely bruited about. Above all, a prince must strive in every one of his actions to gain the reputation for being a great man of superior ability.

A prince also attains prestige when he is a sincere

52–55. See Appendix B, 21, 2 for a passage from Machiavelli’s “Florentine Affairs.”

66ff. See Introduction, p. 33, and Chapter 3, lines 166ff.

74–78. Machiavelli quotes, in the garbled text available to him, Livy, 35. 49. 13.

friend or an avowed enemy: that is, when he un-
reservedly shows his favor toward one man against 50
another. Such a policy is always more useful than
neutrality. For if two of your powerful neighbors
come to grips, they are strong enough so that when
one of them is victorious either you have to fear the
conqueror or you do not. In either case, it will al- 55
ways be more useful for you to reveal your position
and to fight resolutely. For in the first instance, if
you do not disclose your position, you will always
be at the mercy of the conqueror, to his delight and
satisfaction, and you will have no excuse, no de- 60
fender, and no refuge. Whoever wins does not want
untrustworthy allies who do not help him when he
is in trouble; whoever loses offers you no refuge
because you were unwilling to take part with armed
intervention in his fortune. 65

Antiochus marched into Greece at the behest of
the Aetolians to drive out the Romans. He sent
envoys to the Achaeans, who were allies of Rome,
exhorting them to remain neutral; for their part, the
Romans were urging the Achaeans to take up arms 70
on their side. When the matter came up for consid-
eration in the Achaean council, the representative
from Antiochus urged them to remain neutral. The
Roman representative answered: "Nothing is far-
ther from your interests than the advice given you 75
about not involving yourself in a war; you will be-
come the spoil of the victor without thanks, with-
out dignity."

82–85. Similarly in *Discourses*, II, 15: “In all deliberations it is good to get down to the essentials of the topic that has to be discussed, not to be equivocal or hesitant about the issue involved” (B, p. 315; ML, p. 322; W.I., p. 395; Pen., p. 313; AG.I, p. 360).

89–90. On the question of ingratitude, see *Discourses*, I, 29 and “Capitolo dell’Ingratitudine,” esp. vv. 61–63, 172–177 (G³, pp. 307, 311; Tusiani, pp. 105, 110; AG.II, pp. 741, 744). In the poem Machiavelli is less sanguine about men never being so “unprincipled.” He is as distrustful of the people’s ingratitude as he is of that of princes. The sentence here does not represent a softening of his opinion of mankind, which is strongly grounded in the actual and the useful, a context in which an astute ruler realizes he must operate, given the evil nature of man. In Machiavelli’s world, no efficient prince can act within a metaphorical or hypothetical construct.

96ff. Machiavelli refers back to his “outline” of the previous page and takes up the second alternative: “For if two of your powerful neighbors come to grips, they are strong enough so that when one of them is victorious either you have to fear the conqueror or you do not” (lines 52–55).

It will always be the case that whoever is not your ally will ask you to be neutral and whoever is your ally will ask you to make your position known with armed support. Irresolute princes, in order to avoid immediate dangers, more frequently follow the path of neutrality, and it is they who most frequently fall. But when a prince vigorously shows he is in favor of one man, and your man wins—even if he is powerful and you are at his mercy—then he is indebted to you and he negotiates an alliance with you. Men are never so unprincipled as to oppress a faithful ally with flagrant ingratitude. Moreover, victories are never so clear cut that the victor is not obliged to show some scruples, especially about justice. But if the one with whom you sided loses, he will give you refuge; while he can, he will help you and you are allied to a fortune that may rise again. In the second case, when the two opponents are so weak that you have no need to fear the winner, it is all the more prudent to side with one of them because you assist in the downfall of one prince with the aid of the other—who would, had he been wise, have protected himself. If your ally conquers, he is at your mercy, and with your aid it is impossible for him not to win.

At this point it should be noted that a prince ought to be careful not to ally himself, for the purpose of attacking others, with someone more powerful than he is, unless—as I mentioned above—he is compelled to do so by necessity. If your more

109–111. Machiavelli echoes this remark in a letter to Vettori, April 29, 1513: “Wise princes always avoid being at someone else’s mercy, except when necessity demands” (G¹, p. 256; Gpb, p. 114; AG.II, p. 908).

111–114. See Chapter 3, lines 234–237: “The Venetians . . . to acquire two towns in Lombardy . . . made [Louis XII] ruler over one-third of Italy.”

115–117. Machiavelli castigates the highly equivocal policy of Florence regarding Julius II and his Holy League. See Introduction, p. 14, and Machiavelli’s dispatches from his mission to the Court of France in September and October of 1511 (*Leg.*, III, 1377–1446). Subsequently, in 1512, Spanish troops sacked Prato; this defeat caused the pro-Medici forces in Florence to demand the deposition of Piero Soderini and the restoration of the Medici. Because of Machiavelli’s connections with Soderini and because *The Prince* is dedicated to Lorenzo de’ Medici, Machiavelli treads on delicate ground here. But, as in Guicciardini’s *ricordo* that alludes to the same situation (see note to lines 48–52 above), Florentine policy is being criticized. See also Appendix B, 21, 3 for Guicciardini’s remarks in *Italy*, XI, 2. ⁴

123–125. Machiavelli consistently echoes this thought. See Appendix B, 21, 4 for a passage from *Discourses*, I, 6. Of the Roman senate Machiavelli notes: “It always decided upon facts as they ought to be decided upon; they always chose the lesser evil to be the better alternative” (*Discourses*, I, 38 [B, p. 219; ML, p. 213; W.I, p. 299; Pen., p. 205; AG.I, pp. 275–276]). See also the two letters to Vettori, dated December 10 and the first one of December 20, 1514, where the question of choosing the lesser evil also comes up (G¹, pp. 358, 366; Gpb, pp. 174–175, 181; AG.II, pp. 954, 959), as well as the opening line of *Mandragola*, III, 1 (G³, p. 79; LLA¹, p. 26; Hale, p. 28; AG.II, p. 793). Almost three months before his death, when Charles V was threatening Italy, Machiavelli wrote Guicciardini: “When Heaven seeks to whitewash its plans, it puts men in such a state that they are unable to make any safe decision” (March 27, 1527 [*Leg.*, III, 1641; AG.I, p. 84, n. 4]). See Appendix B, 21, 5 for Guicciardini’s similar observation. Cf. Cicero, *Off.* 3. 1. 3.

128–131. “Craftsmen” translates *gli eccellenti in una arte*, that is, the excellent in an “art,” “craft,” or “technique.” See the end of *Discourses*, II, 9 for how Machiavelli believes the common weal is served by a ruler’s encouraging agricultural, commercial, and economic policies. Note too that the prince does not suffer from being the head of such a community. For more on the value of rewards, see *Discourses*, I, 24. Cf. Xenophon, *Hiero* 9. 9. 7–10.

powerful ally conquers, you are his prisoner. As
110 much as they possibly can, princes should avoid
being at someone else's mercy. The Venetians allied
themselves with France against the Duke of Milan
—an alliance they could have avoided, and which
resulted in their downfall. But when a prince cannot
115 avoid such an alliance—as the Florentines could not
when the pope and Spain attacked Lombardy with
their armies—then he ought to take sides for the
reasons just mentioned. And let no government
ever believe that it can always^a derive a secure
120 policy for choosing sides; rather, let it regard every
choice as risky. For this is the way things are: when-
ever we seek to avoid one obstacle, we run into
another. But prudence consists in knowing how to
recognize the nature of the obstacle and in choosing
the lesser evil. 125

A prince also ought to indicate his admiration of
virtù by patronizing men with *virtù*^b and honoring
excellent craftsmen. Moreover, he ought to encour-
age his citizens by enabling them to carry out their
130 profession in tranquillity—commerce, agriculture,
and whatever other professions men pursue. Thus
it should not be the case that one man is afraid to
improve his possessions, lest someone take them
from him, and that another is afraid of setting up
shop lest he be prohibitively taxed. Instead, the
135 prince ought to be prepared to reward those people
who are anxious to perform these tasks and those
who in some way think of methods for enriching

139–142. The first part of the paragraph enunciates a reasonable policy for any benevolent ruler, whereas this sentence smacks of diversions specifically planned to turn the peoples' interest and concern away from the actual political direction their state may be taking. Burckhardt enlarged this point, perhaps intemperately, and presented it as characteristic of the Renaissance Italy of the despots. Machiavelli picks up this idea at several points in *History*: VI, 1, where he notes that ancient republics entertained their people after a victory (G², p. 387; Htb, p. 257; AG.III, p. 1284); VII, 1, where he theorizes about how the founder of a new republic can decrease the danger of factional strife if he keeps the masses happy with games and gifts from public funds—but with no hint of partisan behavior (G², p. 452; Htb, p. 310; AG.III, p. 1337); and finally, VIII, 36, where he describes the success of Lorenzo de' Medici: "Then in those times of peace he always held celebrations for his native city where people often saw jousts and performances of ancient deeds and triumphs" (G², p. 575; Htb, 406; AG.III, p. 1433); cf. Tacitus *Ann.* 1. 54.

146–148. The official dignity of the state and its ruler, Machiavelli constantly maintains, must never be diminished. The idea of providing "an example of human kindness and generosity," Sasso feels, may allude to Machiavelli's personal experience with the Medici. Although he is frequently critical of their policies, this statement may be included as an homage to their treatment of him, which was more liberal than he might have received from more despotic rulers. Cf. Chapter 19, notes to lines 69–70, for more on "dignity."

his city or his resources. In addition to all these
encouragements, he ought to keep his people happy 140
with festivals and entertainments at appropriate
times during the year. And since every town is di-
vided into guilds or corporate bodies, take^c them
into account, sometimes meeting with them and
personally providing an example of human kind- 145
ness and generosity. Nevertheless, a prince ought
always to preserve the dignity of his rank, because
this dignity must never be missing from any act.

11–12. For Pandolfo Petrucci, see note to Chapter 20, lines 96–97. Antonio Giordani da Venafro was an extremely intelligent, capable lawyer and judge who helped Pandolfo's astute policies enormously. Machiavelli's diplomatic dispatches refer to him with great respect as "the very heart [of Pandolfo] and first among the other men" (July 19, 1505; *Leg.*, II, 902). Guicciardini approvingly quotes him (*Ricordi*, C.112). The role he played for Petrucci is not unlike that which Machiavelli aspired to play with the ruling Medici family in Florence.

15–18. The distinction is based on Livy 22. 29. 8; but Hesiod's *Works and Days*, vv. 293–97, is also appropriate, as is Cicero, *Clu.* 84. 31. But after Hesiod, this was virtually a proverbial phrase among the ancients.

22

Concerning the Prince's Confidential Staff

The selection of his ministers is a matter of no little importance to a prince: they are good or they are not, according to the prince's wisdom. The first impression of a ruler's intelligence is based upon the men he has around him. When they are capable and loyal, the prince can always be considered wise because he was able to discern their capability and now holds their loyalty. But when his ministers are not like that, the prince can never be judged favorably because the first mistake he makes lies in this selection. 5 10

Everyone who knows Antonio da Venafro—the minister of Pandolfo Petrucci, Prince of Siena—thought Pandolfo a very skillful man for having employed Antonio as his minister. There are three categories of intelligence: either one understands matters on his own, or one perceives the understanding of others, or one does neither. The first is 15

39–40. “To keep [him] functioning well” translates *per mentenerlo buono*, which has the sense of keeping him “faithful” to the prince. In this sentence and the following one, the idea of mutual dependence, as well as mutual trust, is perhaps implicit. See note to Chapter 18, lines 1–2, for discussion of the opposite situation.

the most excellent category of all, the second is
excellent, and the third is useless. So Pandolfo's 20
intelligence, if it were not in the first category, must
have been in the second. For whenever a prince has
the intelligence to recognize the good and the bad
in what someone does or^a says, even though he does
not have any inventiveness himself, he is aware of 25
his minister's actions, good and bad: he can applaud
the former and punish the latter. Having no hope of
deceiving him, the minister continues to be good.

But as to how a prince can evaluate a minister,
there is one method which is infallible. When you 30
notice that a minister considers himself more than
he does you and that he looks out for his own
interest in everything he does, then you know that
such a man will never make a good minister, never
be someone whom you can trust. For the man who 35
holds the responsibility for government in his
hands must never consider himself, but always the
prince, and only those matters pertaining to the
prince. On the other hand, in order to keep his
minister functioning well, the prince must be con- 40
siderate of him: honor and enrich him, do him fa-
vors, and give him his share of distinctions and
responsibilities. The minister thus realizes that he
cannot get along without the prince. His many dis- 45
tinctions make him seek no more distinctions; his
many riches make him seek no more riches; his
many responsibilities make him fear change. There-
fore, when relations between ministers and princes

are properly constituted, there can be mutual trust;
when they are otherwise, the outcome will always be disastrous to both. 50

8. Discussion of the problem of, and remedies for, "this "pestilence" is conventional in the *de regimine principum* literature. Burd and Allan Gilbert, *Forerunners*, list many from Isocrates, Xenophon, and Plutarch to Vincent of Beauvais and Egidio Colonna, as well as Commynes, Castiglione (*Courtier*, IV, 6), Erasmus, and Guicciardini (*Ricordi* C.26, B.86). Machiavelli includes an anecdote about Castruccio Castracani, based on Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 2. 8. 67 (Aristippus), although Machiavelli gives it a new twist. Angered at a flatterer, Castruccio spat on him; the flatterer responded by saying that fishermen let themselves get wet to catch one fish; to do the same he will "catch a whale." With that Castruccio heard him out patiently and rewarded him (G², p. 36; AG.II, p. 555).

13ff. The poor integration of this material into the fabric of the whole is apparent when the remarks are read in the light of the previous Chapter. The prince should form a privy council of trusted advisers. He should heed its deliberations and advice, but should not be paralyzed into inaction: he "should make up his own mind at his leisure" and "[follow] through what was decided upon" steadfastly; cf. Guicciardini's *ricordo* C.191. Yet this advice seems to rule out the possibility that any prince might have the "first category of intelligence" (ch. 22). Indeed Machiavelli spends so little time on the subject that perhaps he feels "this most excellent category of all" is an impossible perfection to attain. But the best advice he can give is to a prince of the second category, one who "perceives the understanding of others." Yet one reservation always holds true: such a prince must never let his ministers possess knowledge in a limited sphere where they can act upon that knowledge; it is the prince who must always be in full control, and must be the one to take every initiative. Furthermore, if the prince "does not have any imaginative powers himself," it is important that the potential to act on these powers remain in his hands alone (Sasso).

23

How to Avoid Flatterers

I do not want to refrain from discussing an important topic, the almost unavoidable error which princes commit if they are not very prudent or do not select their ministers carefully: I allude to the flatterers who crowd princes' courts. Since men are so engrossed in their own affairs and are so readily deceived by flatterers, it is difficult for them to ward off this pestilence. In trying to do so, princes risk becoming despised. For there is no way to ward off flattery except to convince men that you are not offended by their telling you the truth; on the other hand, when everyone can tell you the truth you lose respect. Therefore, a wise prince ought to adopt a third method: choosing wise men for his government. To these wise men only ought a prince give full authority to speak the truth to him—and only on those matters he asks about, nothing else. But he ought to query them about everything and listen to their opinions; later he should make up his own mind at his leisure. The attitude of a prince toward

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37. Luca Rinaldi was a trusted ambassador whom Machiavelli met during his legation to Maximilian I. The basis for this particular observation is a conversation Machiavelli had with Rinaldi and recorded in his "German Report" (*Guerra*, p. 200).

36–42. See the remark quoted about Maximilian in Appendix B, 19, 1; see Appendix B, 23, 1 for Guicciardini's summation of his career.

these suggestions and toward each of his advisers should enable each man to know that the more freely he speaks, the more acceptable he will be. Apart from these advisers, a prince listens to nobody. He follows through what was decided upon and is steadfast about his decisions. Whoever acts differently either is ruined by flatterers or changes his mind frequently because of divergent opinions; consequently his reputation is low. 25

In this connection I want to cite a modern example. When Bishop Luca Rinaldi, an ambassador of Maximilian I, the current Holy Roman Emperor, was speaking of His Majesty, he reported that he never consulted anyone, yet never implemented any decision according to his own wishes—a result of doing the opposite of what I said above. Since the emperor is a secretive man, he never tells anyone^a his plans and accepts no advice about them. But once he puts his plans into effect—and they start to be known and revealed—they begin to be reversed by those men he has around him; since he is easily influenced, he is diverted from his plans. The result is that what he accomplishes one day he destroys the next; what he wishes or plans to do is never understood, and no one can rely on his decisions. 30 35 40 45

Therefore a prince must constantly seek advice, but do so when he wants it, not when others want him to seek it. Indeed, he ought to discourage everyone from advising him about anything unless he asks for it. But a prince certainly ought to question 50

50–51. “To question freely and often” translates *esser largo domandatore*. Russo notes that *domandatore* is an infrequently used word and suggests that it epitomizes a pedagogical theory for Machiavelli. He cites the first full-length speech of Fabrizio Colonna, Machiavelli’s spokesman in *War*; see Appendix B, 23, 2. Although what Fabrizio is saying plays a useful part in establishing the direction that the fictive dialogue takes, the analogous sense of the speaking voice of *The Prince*—an “adviser” answering a series of questions—explains a great deal about the forward, forceful drive of Machiavelli’s argument.

59. In the previous chapter Machiavelli has a “method which is infallible” (line 30) for evaluating a minister. It is almost as if the emphasis on the incontrovertible is to compensate for the inconsistency in these two chapters, an inconsistency forced upon him by the distinctions in types of intelligence cited in Chapter 22.

73–74. Machiavelli returns to the pessimistic view of man stated above in Chapter 18.

freely and often, and then he ought to be a patient listener to the truth about what was asked. In fact, if he learns that anyone is for some reason not telling him the truth, he should be angry about it. For many people believe that any prince who gives the impression of being prudent is reputed to be so not because that is his nature, but because he has good advisers around him. This belief is without a doubt false. Here is a general rule that is infallible: a prince who is not wise himself cannot be advised well unless, quite by chance, he should submit to one individual who controls him in all matters and is an extremely prudent man. In this case the prince may well be given good advice, but he will not last long: the man who controls him will quickly take his state away from him. But when seeking advice from more than one man,^b a prince who is not wise will never receive unanimous opinions and he will never be able to balance out conflicting opinions by himself. Each adviser will think of his own interests, and the prince will not know how to control or to understand him. And it is impossible to find different kinds of advisers since men always turn out to be wicked unless some necessity makes them good. Hence I conclude, not that the prince's prudence depends upon good advice, but that good advice, no matter where it originates, depends upon the prince's prudence.

Why Italian Princes. . . . Here Machiavelli begins a kind of peroration that culminates in the last chapter. Reverting, perhaps, to the political and military “sins” of Italy (see Chapter 12, especially lines 44–48), Machiavelli starts to force one of the dominant themes of *The Prince*: the need for a leader to unify Italy. He resorts to an almost oratorical style—dramatic, urgent, pleading—but he always retains his characteristically analytical cast of mind. In this chapter, he evaluates the failure of Italian princes in an historical context; the crescendo increases in Chapter 25 with an attack on the assumption that Fortune cannot be dominated; it culminates in Chapter 26, with an argumentative exhortation for reunification through the *virtù* of one strong prince, a ruler cognizant of all of Machiavelli’s counsel and argument.

2–3. Again the question of “seeming” stability is of paramount importance; and note that the “seeming” refers to *all* of the foregoing material Machiavelli covers in *The Prince*. Throughout the subsequent argument, in a sense the *raison d’être* of the entire work—the present, actual state of affairs—is his prime concern. It is a delicate balance to achieve in an historical context, but the balance is basic to his discussion.

24

Why Italian Princes Have Lost Their States

If he is wise enough to comply with what I have prescribed above, a new prince will seem to have been long established in his state. He will soon become more secure and stable in it, as if he had grown up there. For the actions of a new prince are more closely observed than those of an hereditary one. When it is known that those actions show *virtù*, they will win men over to his side and commit them to him much more than ancient lineage does. For men are more compelled by concerns of the present than by those of the past. When they deem that the present is good, they enjoy it and seek nothing more. In fact, they will take every measure to defend the new prince, so long as he is not negligent in his other duties. Thus his glory will be a double one: having founded a new principedom and having embellished and fortified it with good laws, good armies, good allies, and good examples. By the same

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19–21. There is an obvious connection here with Chapter 2, “Concerning Hereditary Princedoms.” But it is clear that a “new prince” has more advantages, if he understands Machiavelli’s principles, than does a dynastic or hereditary prince: the former has the chance to begin anew and institute a new order along his own lines. For the interdependence of “good laws” and “good armies” in a “new” and “civil” princedom, see Chapter 12, lines 13–16, and note. Sasso believes the tacit attack on the inadequacies of “good laws” in Italy is basic to Machiavelli’s argument about “why Italian princes have lost their states.” In the first paragraph of *Discourses*, I, 10, he has very harsh words for princes who lose their princedom through “imprudence.” For the notion of glory behind this, see Appendix B, 19, 7. Note too that Machiavelli has added two additional considerations to his basic ideas of “good laws” and “good armies.” “Good examples” are not only “proof of [a prince’s] ability” (ch. 21); they are also illustrations of conduct that should be imitated by his subjects—a principle common in the *de regimine principum* literature. *Discourses*, III, 29 is titled “That the People’s Sins Originate in the Prince,” thus confirming the idea of what results when a prince gives his people poor examples. Hence Machiavelli glances back to Chapter 15, reiterating that “it would be most laudable for a prince to be endowed with” certain qualities: generosity, compassion, loyalty, boldness, courage, humaneness, continency, honesty, leniency, seriousness, and piety. “He does not deviate from the good, when that is possible” (ch. 18, lines 76–77); consequently, he becomes a worthy ally, and his own “good allies” will multiply because of his strength.

22–23. The King of Naples, who reigned from 1496 to 1501, is Frederick of Aragon; the Duke of Milan is Ludovico Sforza.

27. Namely their use of mercenary and auxiliary troops; see Chapters 12 and 14. For general advice on military affairs and organization, see Chapter 14.

31. “Rich” translates *grandi*; see note to Chapter 9, lines 9–10. This sentence is an important amplification of Machiavelli’s criticism of Italian princes. Fundamental to his whole discussion of the military is the reason why a distinct policy must be formulated: Italian princes have badly bungled their relationships with their subjects—rich and poor alike.

32. “Vigor” translates *nervo*; inserting this kind of imagistic diction is characteristic of Machiavelli’s style. I have tried, by this translation, to bring out what he means by *virtù*.

33. For Philip V of Macedon, see Introduction, p. 33; for the “other” Philip, see note to Chapter 12, lines 78–80, and Introduction, p. 32. His subsequent remarks about Philip V telescope the main points in his argument. Philip kept all his subjects—the military, the poor, and the rich—neatly in line. In *Discourses*, III, 37 Machiavelli uses him as an example of a man who thought it a bad idea to diminish his reputation by failing to defend what was theoretically his duty to protect. See Appendix B, 24, 1 for Machiavelli’s description in the context of the Second Macedonian War (200–196 B.C.), which he goes on to discuss here. Philip destroyed many towns around Athens when he failed to capture the city in 200. When Flaminius was advancing through Epirus and Thessaly, immediately before the Battle at Cynoscephalae in 197, the retreating Philip deliberately laid waste to the countryside. Machiavelli’s concluding remark about the end of the war that “in the end he . . . was left with his kingdom” glosses over the fact that Philip was obliged to restrict himself completely to Macedonia, to pay a heavy war indemnity, to renounce almost all his fleet, and to hand over his younger son—along with many other men—as hostages.

token, the shame of the man who is born a prince and loses his principedom through his imprudence is a double one. 20

If we consider those Italian rulers—the King of Naples, the Duke of Milan, and others—who have lost power in our day, we will find, first of all, that they possess one defect in common, as far as their military organization is concerned. I have already discussed at length the reasons for this failure. Next, we shall realize that some of them had the ordinary people as enemies; or else, if the people were their allies, they did not know how to protect themselves against the rich. For without these defects, no government with enough vigor to put an army in the field is lost. Philip of Macedon—not the father of Alexander the Great, but Philip V, who was conquered by Titus Quintius Flaminius—did not possess much of a state, compared to the greatness of the Roman and Greek powers that attacked him. Nevertheless, since he was a soldier who knew how to get along with the people and protect himself against the rich, he kept the war against the latter going many years. And although in the end he lost control of several cities, he nevertheless was left with his kingdom. 25
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Therefore, let these princes of ours who have been in power for many years and then were overthrown blame, not Fortune, but their own indolence. For during the peaceful periods they never thought that things could change—it is a common 45

45–47. In other words, the failure results from a human defect, not the machinations of an abstract force. Machiavelli's argument presupposes that rational faculties can conquer the irrational. A wise and prudent prince will utilize all the "appearances" at his command to formulate rational policies that will construct an impregnable political organization. This assumption is what Sasso calls attention to as Machiavelli's "rationalism," which he finds dramatized in the next chapter. Fabrizio Colonna in *War*, VII, delivers a more bitter and forceful denunciation of why, through indolence and cowardice (*ignavia*), "Italian princes have lost their states"; see Appendix B, 24, 2, for that passage, and the section immediately after for a similar comment by Montaigne at the end of his essay "On Pedantry," I, 25.

57. Two leaders to whom Machiavelli often alludes "thought of flight": Frederick of Aragon, King of Naples, and Ludovico Sforza, a man who also felt certain that his people would reinstate him.

55. Conjoined with "remedies," "reliance on the people" elaborates Machiavelli's medical metaphor; but it also draws attention to the reliance on oneself that he is about to recommend. This theme is consonant with lines 44–47 above and with the end of the chapter (see note). It prepares for the remarks on Fortune in the next chapter.

57–58. Again Machiavelli uses homespun diction to reinforce a political abstraction.

61–63. The chapter ends with a forceful call for self-reliance, which is particularly appropriate in setting the tone for what is to follow. The sentence before this ends with *non dependere da te*; this one, with *dependono de te proprio e della virtù tua*. Emphatic repetition of *sono* before the adjectives modifying "defenses" (literally, "the only good, the only certain," etc.) also contributes to the urgency of this closing, analytical advice. Machiavelli has alluded to self-reliance at several points: Cesare Borgia "decided to rely no longer on other men's armed force and fortune" (ch. 7, lines 108–110); when new, innovating princes "depend upon themselves alone and can force the issue, they rarely risk danger" (ch. 6, lines 94–96); a prince's power to be self-sufficient depends upon "enough men or money to assemble an army that can do battle with anybody coming to attack them" (ch. 10, lines 8–10). See also the cross-references in note to Chapter 6, lines 88–96, and Introduction, pp. 68–69.

human failing not to anticipate a storm when the weather is fine. Consequently, when periods of adversity came, they thought of flight, not defense; they hoped that the people, disgusted by the conquerers' arrogance, might recall them. When all else fails, such a policy is fine; but disregard of the other remedies for reliance on the people is certainly a poor policy. A prince should never let himself fall down in the belief that he will find someone to put him back on his feet. That may not happen, and even if it does, it does not restore your security; for such a defensive expedient is cowardly and is not rooted in your own actions. The only good, certain, and enduring defenses are those rooted in yourself and your own *virtù*.

7-4. The list of authorities who have argued that it is useless to try and control Fortune is indeed long: Plutarch, Sallust, Cicero, Livy, Thomas Aquinas, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Dante—to name a few. In fact it is one of the cherished topics of *de regimine principum* writers. Fortune, as these writers thought of it, was an intelligent motive force in the universe; but it is extremely important to remember that this chapter of *The Prince* is not merely another contribution to a general theory about man's helplessness in the face of Fortune. On the contrary: the need for a prince to dominate and control Fortune is absolutely basic to Machiavelli's argument. Sasso feels that the complex problem of Fortune lies at the very heart of *The Prince*, so that to understand its significance the reader should see Fortune as a philosophical motif—one that inspired the need to write *The Prince* and that governs its purpose. For general background, see Introduction, pp. 71-73.

6. With the down-to-earth diction here, Machiavelli returns to a mode of figurative language typical of passages in *The Prince* on subjects which tend to be treated abstractly by most other writers. Sasso draws attention to a subtlety of "sweat about" (*insudare*) that no translation can capture. In what serves as a kind of introduction and scene setting of *War*, Fabrizio Colonna establishes a dichotomy between the ancient princes who were "strong and rugged" and the "delicate and soft" modern ones; the ancients acted "in the sun," not "in the shade" as modern princes do; they derived their methods from a "true and perfect" past, not from a "false and corrupt" present (*Guerra*, p. 331; LLA, p. 10; AG.II, p. 570). The ancient sun, strength, and sweat strongly deprecate, by contrast, the modern shade, softness, and self-indulgence; see Chapter 14, lines 7-9.

7-11. Machiavelli alludes to the events since Charles VIII entered Italy in 1494. The phrase "beyond anything humanly imaginable" sums up nicely the bemusement of a ruined class of leaders whom Machiavelli reproaches throughout his writings for having lost control.

11-13. It is hard to say whether Machiavelli is turning a rhetorical phrase or whether he is alluding to other writings where he has been less emphatic about the potential for control over "these upheavals." Sasso notes that the "tone" of the letters written during 1512 and through December of 1513 (presumably the period in which Machiavelli was thinking through *The Prince*), and even the letter known as "Fantasies," written in 1506, heavily emphasizes the efficacy of human action. On the "Fantasies," see Introduction, p. 11, n.19.

15-18. Machiavelli draws on the theological notion that the free exercise of man's will is what ennobles him, since it allows him to choose the good over the evil; Machiavelli sees that exercise of will especially as a motive force for action. Yet even to allow that we have control over half our actions is to assert the need for *virtù* to work in conjunction with the will. See Appendix B, 25, 1 for a relevant remark on Fortune from *Discourses*, III, 31.

25

The Power of Fortune in Human Affairs and How She Can Be Countered

I am not unaware that many men have been, and still are, convinced that worldly affairs are controlled by Fortune and God, so that even prudent men are unable to rule them and have, indeed, no remedy against them. Hence they would think it useless to sweat about these matters very much, and instead to leave control to chance. This conviction has been embraced more often in our time because of the great upheavals in affairs, beyond anything humanly imaginable, which we have seen and are seeing every day. At times, when reflecting upon these upheavals, I myself am somewhat disposed to such a belief. 5 10

Nevertheless, since our free will ought not to be destroyed, I think it may well be true that Fortune is the mistress of half of our actions, but that even 15

18–30. Another of Machiavelli's supple images, effective stylistically and intellectually. Horace, *Odes* 3. 29. 36ff., urges men to struggle with the actual and not to try to contend with a river of Fortune which one moment can be calm and the next tempestuous. In the Prologue to his *I libri della famiglia* (1432–1434), Leon Battista Alberti had already used a similar image in an analogous conception of Fortune. Perhaps the most elaborate description of the force of water occurs later in the Renaissance with the powerful description in Leonardo da Vinci's *Notebooks*. He, too, uses the word "fortuna," but in an alternate, outdated meaning of "tempest"—prescribing how to "represent a tempest" (*figurava una fortuna*) and the effect of the winds in presenting a deluge; see *Notebooks* I, 305–309 *passim*, and plates 34–39. There is a compact interaction between the "human" attributes Machiavelli gives the verbs he applies to the river and the impotence man feels when confronted with its onslaught and power. Cf. the same device in "Capitolo di Fortuna," vv. 151–159 (G³, p. 317; Tusiani, p. 117; AG.II, p. 748).

30–34. A passage famous for its concise expression of Machiavelli's ideas about man, *virtù*, skill, control, and Fortune. In "Remarks" he has the speaker say "For I submit to you that Fortune does not alter her pronouncement when there is no alteration in method; Heaven will not, or cannot, support something that, in any case, is anxious to crumble" (*Guerra*, p. 62; AG.III, p. 1443; for dating of "Remarks" see Appendix B, 13, 1). See also Appendix B, 25, 2 for a passage from *War*, II, discussing the reliance of Italian princes on *fortuna* and not *virtù*.

38–42. The logic of this passage implies that Italy should be reunified along ethnic lines so that, as one unit, she can be compared with Germany (and Machiavelli probably includes Switzerland in this term), France, and Spain. I emphasize "ethnic lines" to combat the oversimplification of reading *The Prince* as a document in the history of nationalism. In another context where Machiavelli is upset by the "corruption" in Italy, he notes that France and Spain are less rent by upheavals because they have "a king who keeps them united not only with his own *virtù*, but with the institutions in those kingdoms which are still uncorrupted" (*D.*, I, 55 [B, p. 255; ML, p. 253; W.I, p. 334; Pen., p. 244; AG.I, p. 307]). See also the references to France in Chapter 19, 108ff.

42–43. Typically, Machiavelli signals his transition from the general to the particular. The balance between these two procedures is consistently the means for making the reader understand his argument. Needless to say, the "particulars" offer a much more trenchant exposition of his ideas.

so she leaves control of the other half—or nearly
that much—to us. I compare Fortune to one of those
tempestuous rivers which, in an angry outburst, 20
inundates plains, uproots trees, ruins buildings, and
rips up the earth from one place to deposit it in
another. Everybody runs away from these floods,
everyone gives way to their onslaught: no one can
check them anywhere. Although this is the nature
of floods, it still does not follow that when the 25
weather is calm men might not be able to take such
measures as building embankments and dams, so
that once the river rises it will flow off through a
canal, or else its onslaught will be neither so uncon-
trollable nor so injurious. The same thing happens 30
with Fortune. She shows her power in places where
no *virtù* has been marshaled to resist her; she directs
her onslaught to those places where embankments
and dams have not been constructed to restrain her.
And if you consider Italy—the seat, and the moving 35
force, of these upheavals—you will see that her
countryside is without dams and without a single
embankment. Had she been protected by the requi-
site *virtù*, as are Germany, Spain, and France, either
this floodtide would not have caused the major 40
upheavals it has or it would never have happened
at all. I want these remarks to suffice, in general
terms, for the topic of thwarting Fortune.

But restricting myself more to particulars, I main- 45
tain that, without our having noticed him altering
his character or any of his traits, we can see a prince

44–57. Political instability haunts Machiavelli as the overriding problem confronting Italy. In the context of the destruction of empires, although not in the context of Fortune, he notes in “Ass” V, 103–105: “It is, it has been, and it always will be that evil follows upon good, good upon evil: each is always the cause of the other” (G³, p. 289; Tusiani, p. 80; AG.II, p. 763). A passage from *Discourses*, II, 30 is even more appropriate; see Appendix B, 25, 3. The notion there of nature combined with Fortune and instability is mirrored on three occasions: “Decennale” II, vv. 187–192 (G³, p. 265; Tusiani, p. 178; AG.III, p. 1461); “In these turmoils a region is one thing today and another tomorrow” (October 11, 1502 [*Leg.*, I, 346]); and again, “I have seen many states recently laugh during the summer and cry during the winter” (July 23, 1505 [*Leg.*, II, 916]).

57–55. The logic of Machiavelli’s argument is similar to a passage from his letter known as “Fantasies”; see Appendix B, 25, 4. See also Appendix B, 25, 5 for a relevant quotation from *Discourses*, III, 8. Both here and in the appendices, for the sake of consistency, I have rendered *tempi* as “times,” although “circumstances” might express Machiavelli’s idea better.

58–59. Note that, given Machiavelli’s antitheses, no single man can be simultaneously “circumspect” and “impetuous.” Hence the ostensible paradox of the following sentence. For its resolution, see Introduction, pp. 73–74. See the “general rule” in the next paragraph.

thriving today and ruined tomorrow. I believe this fact arises primarily from the reasons adduced at length above—namely, that the prince who depends completely on Fortune collapses in proportion to her fickleness. I also believe that the prince who makes his tactics consistent with the conditions of the times may be successful; and, similarly, that he whose own tactics are at odds with the times may be unsuccessful. Therefore we discover that men use varying tactics with regard to the means of fulfilling the goals they have before them, namely, glory and wealth. One acts with circumspection, another with impetuosity; one with force, another with craft; one with patience, another with precipitousness: yet each man succeeds with these different methods. We also discover that of two circumspect men, one succeeds in his project and another does not; by the same token, two men of different propensities may thrive equally well, one by being circumspect, the other by being impetuous. For this there is no reason other than those conditions of the times, which either do or do not conform to their tactics. Hence it turns out, as I have said, that two people functioning differently can produce the same result; and that given two people functioning similarly, one can fulfill his goal and the other can not.

The ephemeral nature of the good also depends upon the conditions of the times. Thus if a man acts

80–85. An important “general rule” for this discussion; see note to lines 110–112. Machiavelli generalizes the same thought in his “Capitolo di Fortuna,” vv. 112–120 (G³, pp. 315–316; Tusiani, pp. 115–116; AG.II, p. 747); see Introduction, pp. 72–73. Burd, pp. 362–363, also cites a passage in Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, II. 23. 33 (ed. cit., pp. 238–239).

85–90. A man’s *virtù* is almost equivalent to flexibility at this point. Sasso regards the line Machiavelli takes in *Discourses*, II, 29, titled “Fortune Blinds Men’s Minds When She Does Not Want Them to Oppose Her Projects,” as a significant reversal of this passage. In *Discourses*, III, 9, “One Must Change with the Times If One Wants Always to Have Good Fortune,” Machiavelli uses several pertinent examples. Fabius Maximus Cunctator (“The Delayer”) acted “circumspectly and cautiously with his army, as opposed to using the customary Roman impetuosity and boldness”; it was his “belated and cautious” actions that staved off several enemy attacks. But when Scipio proposed an invasion of Carthage, the times were right for his plan and Fabius was wrong to oppose it; see Introduction, p. 36. Piero Soderini always acted “with patience and human kindness.” This was fine until the time came when “it was necessary to cease being patient and humble; he was unable to do it: so he and [Florence] were destroyed” (B, p. 417–418; ML, pp. 441–442; W.I, pp. 496–497; Pen., pp. 430–431; AG.I, pp. 452–453). See Appendix B, 25, 6, for an appropriate remark by Guicciardini, also made in the context of Fabius Maximus and the prestige he gained from being “the Delayer.”

91–94. Again in *Discourses*, III, 9, Machiavelli says that throughout his reign as pope, Julius II “acted impetuously and violently, and since the times were well suited to him, he succeeded in every one of his exploits.” But when the times required other decisions, “he was necessarily destroyed, for he was unable to alter his methods or procedures for conducting his affairs” (B, p. 418; ML, p. 442; W.I, pp. 497–498; Pen., p. 431; AG.I, p. 453). Machiavelli brings up the example of Julius II in the letter known as “Fancies” quoted in Appendix B, 25, 4 and refers to his “ferocious spirit” and to his “poison” in *Decennale II*, vv. 85–96 (G³, p. 261; Tusiani, p. 175; AG.III, p. 1459).

94–96. See notes to Chapter 11, lines 77ff. and 83, and Introduction, p. 53. In *Discourses*, III, 44, Machiavelli goes into more detail concerning the pope’s relations with Venice and France in this affair. See also *Discourses*, I, 27 for the example of Julius’s bold, impetuous attack on Giampaolo Baglioni, which Machiavelli does not cite here. See Appendix B, 25, 7 for Guicciardini’s summary statement about the pope.

104. An allusion to five towns on the southwestern end of the Adriatic (Otranto, Brindisi, Trani, Monopoli, and Polignano), over which Venice received the protectorate in 1496 as security for a debt when she helped Ferdinand II of Aragon, the King of Naples, against Charles VIII under the provisions of the League of Venice. Venice subsequently lost these cities to Spain with the victory of the League of Cambrai in 1509 at Agnadello (Vailà).

circumspectly and patiently, then the times and circumstances swing around so that his actions may be good and he achieves success. But if times and circumstances alter, he is destroyed because he does not alter his tactics. Nor is there a man prudent enough to know how to adjust to all this: either he is incapable of deviating from what nature predisposes him to do, or else, since he has always flourished by keeping to one path, he is unable to persuade himself to leave it. Therefore when the moment has arrived for the circumspect man to act impetuously, he does not know how to do so; hence he is destroyed. Yet were he to alter his character according to the times and circumstances, Fortune would not change.

Pope Julius II used impetuous tactics in every one of his exploits. He found the times and circumstances so harmonious with his tactical methods that he always prevailed. Consider the first campaign he waged against Bologna, while Giovanni Bentivoglio was still alive. The Venetians were annoyed by it, and so was the King of Spain; Julius was still negotiating with the King of France about such a campaign. Nevertheless, with boldness and impetuosity, he personally initiated that expedition. This move caused Spain and the Venetians to stay undecided and to stay put: the latter because they were afraid, the former because they sought to recover all the Kingdom of Naples. On the other hand, Julius got the King of France into the affair

110–112. See Appendix B, 25, 8, for a long passage by Guicciardini about Julius II from *Italy*, VII, 3; and Appendix B, 25, 9, for a comparison of impetuosity and patience with the examples of Popes Julius II and Clement VII.

121–125. The example of Julius II thus proves the general rule adduced; see note to lines 80–85 above. Immediately following the example of Julius II in *Discourses*, III, 9, Machiavelli rephrases this rule; see Appendix B, 25, 10. These ideas are echoed in *Discourses*, I, 18: “Men accustomed to living in one way are not anxious to change it” (B, p. 182; ML, p. 170; W.I., p. 261, Pen., p. 163; AG.I, p. 243); and in “Ass,” I, 88–90: “Our mind, always intent upon its natural good, is unfavorable to any defense against habit or nature” (G³, p. 271; Tusiani, p. 54; AG.II, p. 752).

130ff. See Introduction, pp. 73–74; this is one of Machiavelli’s most famous and supple images. In *Clizia*, IV, i, Cleandro, lamenting the luck that prevents him from pursuing his plans to “marry” his sweetheart, says, “O Fortune, since you are a woman, you always befriend young men; this time you have befriended old men” (G³, p. 147; Hale, p. 100; Evans, p. 63; AG.II, pp. 847–848). It is especially germane to the next chapter that in one of his *capitoli*, a dialogue “On Opportunity” (*Occasione*), Machiavelli has another “woman” contemptuously remark about man’s helplessness: “Alas, chatting while time flies, mulling over many hollow thoughts, of course you don’t realize or understand that I’ve slipped from between your hands” (vv. 19–22 [G³, p. 325; Tusiani, p. 129]). Note that there really are two “conclusions” here: adapt to Fortune and success will follow; like a woman, Fortune can be mastered—that is, adapting is not the sole option open to a prince who can combine external and internal, or foresighted, *virtù*. It is a daring assertion of the possibility for personal preference which shows the author’s hand and yet is consonant with the rationally constructed argument that may make some leaders prefer cautious action and delaying tactics as the surest means to victory.

with him; for the latter saw that the pope had moved, and he was anxious to ally with the papacy so as to humble the Venetians. The king thought he could not withhold his army without open insult. Therefore Julius, with his impetuous move, 110 achieved what no pope, even possessing the utmost human prudence, could ever have done. For if he had delayed his departure from Rome until agreements were secured and everything was in order, as any other pope would have, he never would have 115 succeeded: the king of France would have had thousands of excuses and the others would have inspired thousands of fears. I prefer to pass over his other exploits: all were similar, all succeeded perfectly. His short life allowed him no experience to the con- 120 trary. If there had come a time when he needed to use his tactics circumspectly, it would have led to his downfall; he would have never deviated from those methods toward which nature predisposed him. 125

Since Fortune is fickle and men are fixed in their ways, I therefore conclude that men are successful while they act harmoniously with Fortune and unsuccessful while they act inharmoniously with her. I am absolutely convinced that it 130 is better to be impetuous than circumspect, because Fortune is a woman and you must, if you want to subjugate her, beat and strike her. It is obvious that she is more willing to be subjugated that way than by men with cold tactics. There- 135

fore, like a woman, she always befriends the young, since they are less circumspect and more brutal: they master her more boldly.

An Exhortation. . . . Note that even in the title of this chapter, Machiavelli is preparing the reader for a more fervid, impassioned content and style than have been present in the rest of *The Prince*. Most of the foregoing chapter titles began with "How . . .", "Why . . .", or "Concerning . . .," signaling that the material to follow was of a didactic nature, analytically explored and presented. Here we have moved from straight presentation to "exhortation." Moreover, the use of the word "barbarians," at a time when Italy's oppressors were thoroughly Christianized (and, it might be said, at least as civilized than Italy herself) recalls ancient Rome, whose achievements Machiavelli has kept citing as examples of former glories that may, under the proper ruler, be reattained. The oratorical tone of this chapter has led many critics to argue that it is an appendix or an afterthought rather than an integral part of Machiavelli's argument; see Gilbert, *M. and G.*, p. 183 and the introductory material in B, pp. 9–10 and 109. Subsequent annotation will attempt to make precise the harmony that exists between this chapter and *The Prince* as a whole; see also Introduction, pp. 55–57 and notes to titles of Chapters 5 and 6.

6–8. For a discussion of matter and form, act and potency, see Introduction, pp. 60–61, 72–73. See *War*, "Dedication," "the arts which in a well-organized state are properly disposed for the sake of the common good of the inhabitants" (*Guerra*, p. 325; LLA, p. 4; AG.II, p. 566). For the notion of glory behind this idea, see Appendix B, 19, 7. Here Machiavelli concentrates on making the leader and the organization confident that the common good will follow. The sentence continues with a fairly general statement about the function of a ruler and the commonwealth, but that generalization is particularly relevant here; for, in effect, this exhortation that crowns *The Prince* appeals to a ruler to come forth for the common good of all Italy.

8–11. These two sentences gradually pick up momentum until they reach their somewhat startling culmination. Throughout *The Prince* Machiavelli has maintained that contemporary Italian politics offer the "new prince" nothing but difficulty, and hence his *virtù* must be "extraordinary." To understand the resolution of this discrepancy is to understand, in part, the reason why this chapter is integral to Machiavelli's discussion.

12. See Chapter 6. But, as Sasso notes, the use of these examples is radically different in the two chapters. In Chapter 6 Machiavelli seeks to show that the opportunities Fortune offers are necessary to actions that have *virtù* behind them. Following hard upon the discussion of Fortune in Chapter 25, where he concedes that Fortune pushes *virtù* to its limits—a statement particularly true of Machiavelli's Italy—he resorts to citing providence and using impassioned diction to emphasize the need to seize the circumstances that the times offer. It should be pointed out that Machiavelli leaves out the example of Romulus; perhaps the "volitional cast" he gave the myth in Chapter 6 vitiates its effectiveness at this point in his argument because Romulus himself was in no position to take advantage of opportunity. See notes to Chapter 6, line 54, and Chapter 13, line 141.

26

An Exhortation to Seize Italy and Free Her From the Barbarians

So, having reflected upon everything I have written about above, I have been musing over the question whether in Italy at present it is propitious to recognize a new prince—whether there exists in Italy the matter that might offer a prince who has prudence and *virtù* the opportunity to give that matter form, bringing honor to him and prosperity to the majority of her people. It seems to me that so many circumstances are converging to further a new prince that I can think of no period more appropriate than the present. And if, as I have argued, it took the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt to demonstrate the *virtù* of Moses; the oppression of the Persians by the Medes to bring out the greatness of spirit of Cyrus; the rout of the Athenians to show forth the outstanding qualities of Theseus—so, at

19–24. Despite the tight interaction Machiavelli perceives among his historical examples, and despite the highly rhetorical cast he uses to convey these connections, each word accurately pinpoints problems he sees in contemporary Italy: there may indeed be no leader to unite Italy, there are not enough strong laws to govern well, there are many areas that are despoiled, lacerated, and devastated by foreign intervention—Italy is in a state of total degradation.

24–29. Almost every commentator believes that this veiled allusion is to Cesare Borgia; they are probably correct. The phrase “rejected by Fortune” reinforces such an argument, since the failure of Cesare’s methods was the “result of the singular and inordinate malice of Fortune” (ch. 7, lines 61–62). We also know that Machiavelli approved of Cesare’s *virtù* and his “great courage and lofty intentions” (ch. 7, lines 264–265), although we have no reason to assume Cesare intended to rule all Italy; see note to Chapter 7, lines 264–265. Furthermore, “ordained by God” echoes a phrase Machiavelli wrote about Cesare Borgia on May 16, 1501, “*favorita dai cieli e dalla fortuna*” (“favored by Heaven and Fortune”); see Ridolfi, *Life*, p. 45. Nevertheless, because I believe that Machiavelli treats Cesare ironically in *The Prince*, I am reminded of another of the “great illustrations” of Chapter 6. Much of the inspirational note of “faint sign” and the religious diction of this chapter would be appropriate for Savonarola as well, particularly if Machiavelli wanted to treat him ironically too and to be severe about his potential as an “unarmed prophet.” On the other hand, it may be possible that there was some sort of identification on Machiavelli’s part with Savonarola—again as an “unarmed prophet,” a stance which Machiavelli does take in this chapter. Throughout he has been the advocate of a strong, protective army for the state; here he appeals to the active strength of someone else to institute what has most been on Machiavelli’s mind throughout *The Prince*. Never in real life was Machiavelli to be an armed prophet himself. The tone of this chapter is also that of a jeremiad, a tone quite similar to that employed by Savonarola in his denunciation of Florentine and Italian moral debility. But regardless of whether or not Machiavelli intends to remind his readers of Cesare Borgia, the very indefiniteness and mystery of “a certain man” produce a fascinating—almost teasing—literary effect.

29–34. Machiavelli gathers up all the medical metaphors scattered through the work into a single forceful statement. (Perhaps this passage is reminiscent of the jeremiad section in Dante’s *Purg.* VI, 76–151, where Dante calls upon the Holy Roman Emperor Albert I of Saxony to save Italy.) This sentence also raises a few problems about exactly what Machiavelli considers the “geographical” limits of Italy to be. Highly nationalistic interpretations assume that it is all of Italy, but Machiavelli’s focus is clearly on the region from Lombardy south through Tuscany to the Kingdom of Naples. It is also quite possible that this region stood, in Machiavelli’s mind, for all of Italy, especially since it has symbolic value as “the seat and the moving force” for the wretched condition of Italy (ch. 25, lines 35–36).

38–43. There were many highly placed members of the Medici “house” during the period when Machiavelli was composing *The Prince*. Giovanni de’ Medici, the son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, was Pope Leo X from 1513 to 1521; see note to Chapter 11, line 97. Giulio de’ Medici, the future Pope Clement VII, was made the archbishop of Florence and later a cardinal in 1513. Giuliano de’ Medici, the Duke of Nemours—the original recipient of *The Prince*—was made governor of Florence when the Medici were restored in 1512. And, of course, there was the actual recipient of *The Prince*, Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, who ruled Florence from 1516 until 1519. Giovanni Salvati, Innocenzo Cibo, and Niccolò Ridolfi were also cardinals with Medici connections. Giovanni delle Bande Nere (Giovanni de’ Medici), whose military skill Machiavelli came to admire, was then receiving his education under the aegis of Jacopo Salviati, Giovanni’s father.

the present time, Italy has had to be reduced to her current extreme position in order that the *virtù* of an Italian soul be recognized. She had to be more enslaved than the Hebrews, more oppressed than the Persians, more badly routed than the Athenians; leaderless, lawless; defeated, despoiled; lacerated, laid low: she had to endure every sort of degradation. Although up to now some faint signs may have appeared in a certain man from which we might have inferred that he was ordained by God for Italy's redemption, still we realized later—at the apogee of his career—how he had been rejected by Fortune. Thus Italy, left lifeless, awaits that man who may heal her wounds, put an end to the sack of Lombardy and to the tribute exacted from the Kingdom of Naples and from Tuscany, and cure her of those sores that have been suppurating for such a long time. See how Italy implores God that He may send her someone to redeem her from these barbarous cruelties and outrages! See, too, how eager and willing she is to rally around a banner, if only there were someone to unfurl it! There is no person in sight at present from whom Italy can have more hope than one from your illustrious House, your House with its Fortune and *virtù* blessed by God and by the church it now heads, your House which can make itself the leader of this redemption. The mission is not very difficult if you summon up the deeds and lives of the men I have mentioned. Although exceptional and wondrous, nevertheless

45. Moses, Cyrus, and Theseus. Given this context, a passage from Chapter 6 is particularly relevant: "By examining their actions . . . would have come in vain" (lines 42–49). Italian commentators, however, usually gloss the leaders referred to in the first sentence of the next paragraph (lines 66–68) as Francesco Sforza and Cesare Borgia, although Julius II also seems a likely candidate.

45–48. Sasso calls attention to the metamorphosis at work in Machiavelli's conception: earlier the ordinary man was thought to be outstanding because of his *virtù*; here the outstanding man is thought to be ordinary because of his inability to seize the opportunity Fortune gives him and mold it according to his *virtù*. The entire interaction emphasizes the ease of victory when the time is ripe.

51–53. Machiavelli inaccurately quotes, perhaps from memory, Livy 9. 1. 10. He uses this citation again in *Discourses*, III, 12 and alludes to it in *History*, V, 8.

57. "Set up" is a free translation of the Italian *per mira*, literally "set up as a target," with a deliberate echo of the image in Chapter 6 of the archers who *pongono la mira . . . pervenire al disegno loro* ("elevate their sights . . . so as to hit the target" (lines 15–17). Thus he reinforces the idea of the *virtù* that is needed to bring the task to fruition (see ch. 6, note to line 15). This type of imagistic consistency is a further argument for the integral relation between the chapter and the entire work.

59–67. Although not in the same order as in the Bible, Machiavelli incorporates Biblical images from Moses and the Israelites fleeing Israel; Exodus 14:21, 13:21; 17:6, and 16:4—see also Psalms 78:24 (Vulgate, 77:24).

62–65. Machiavelli plays on an inherited notion of what it is to be a ruler: God rules the universe but a man, and especially a king, is responsible for his own actions in this world. Free will and predestination are the obvious poles of his argument; again the context is different from Chapter 6. In "Ass" V, with perhaps an ironic thrust at Savonarola, Machiavelli says that the belief that God fights on man's behalf, as man does nothing but remain idle on his knees, has "laid waste many a kingdom and many a regime. . . . there should be no man with a brain so small as to believe that, if his house is crumbling, God will save it without any further support: because such a man will die beneath the rubble" (vv. 115–117, 124–127 [G³, pp. 289–290; Tusiani, pp. 80–81; AG.II, p. 764]).

they were men; each one of them had less opportunity than now exists. For their undertaking was no more just and no more easy; God was no friendlier to them than to you. There is great justice in this cause: "For that war is just which is necessary, and those weapons are sacred in circumstances when there is no hope except in them." This cause is highly opportune; and where the opportunity is great, there can be no great handicap—if only your House were to adopt the measures of those men whom I have set up for your admiration. Moreover, miraculous and unprecedented things wrought by God are to be seen: waters have divided, a cloud has led you the way, water has come forth from the rock, manna has rained down. Everything has converged to make you great. The rest is for you to accomplish. God is unwilling to do everything, lest He deprive us of our free will and a share in the glory that is our due.

Nor is it any wonder if none of the Italians included above were able to do what it is hoped may be done by your illustrious House; or if, in so many of Italy's upheavals and military campaigns, it always seems that her military *virtù* is exhausted. This is because the former institutions were worthless and no one knew how to devise new ones. Nothing creates as much prestige for a man newly risen to power^a as do the new laws and institutions he devises. These accomplishments, when they are well based and are infused with greatness, cause him to

78ff. Again see Introduction, pp. 60–61, 72–73 on matter and form. This too is an often-quoted passage. Note how Machiavelli adjusts the focus to improper military organization, one of his favorite topics, about which he considers himself an expert. The leaders have not known how to give proper shape to the available material; the matter is good, the shapers inadequate. Machiavelli's argument rests on an optimistic assertion of, and confidence in, the material. Highlighting military institutions alone, of course, is tantamount to ignoring the whole question of civil and political institutions. But Machiavelli's more basic assertion is that "great *virtù* lies in the individual members." It is not only military failures that are "all a result of weak leaders." The confidence in the soundness of the material certainly suggests that that material—the Italian people—has the *virtù* to create and maintain sound civil and political, as well as military, institutions once they can do away with the corrupt inheritance of the princes who have led Italy into ruin; see Whitfield, *Discourses*, pp. 15, 154–155.

80. "Skirmishes" translates *congressi de' pochi* which, as Russo notes, refers to hand-to-hand combat involving more than two opponents. He also believes Machiavelli alludes to the famous *Disfida di Barletta*, "Challenge of Barletta." Barletta was an important port in the Kingdom of Naples (Apulia), where Gonzalo de Córdoba withstood a long siege by the French during the winter of 1502–1503. During the course of the siege there was a famous combat in which thirteen French knights were defeated by thirteen Italian ones. With the arrival of spring and of reinforcements, Gonzalo broke the siege and went onto victory at Cerignola; see Introduction, p. 47. Machiavelli alludes to the same siege early in *War*, II.

85–88. Admittedly there is still an appeal to one man with the *virtù* and luck to unite, but the sense of the goodness of the material is always present. See Appendix B, 26, 1 for a relevant passage from the closing pages of *War*, VII, on the situation in Italy and the potential of Italian "material."

92–93. Machiavelli alludes swiftly to turning points in Italian history from 1495 to 1513. Nevertheless, he rides his thesis too hard. Italian Renaissance military history is replete with counter-illustrations. For the Battle of Fornovo, on the Taro River (July 6, 1495), see Introduction, p. 45. Alessandria, on the Tanaro River southwest of Milan, was sacked by Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, the leader of the French Army when Louis XII marched into Italy (August, 1499); see Introduction, p. 46. During the second invasion of Naples the French leader d'Aubigny sacked Capua (July 24, 1501). For Genoa (April 28, 1507) see Introduction, p. 53. For Vailà or Agnadello (May 14, 1509), see Introduction, p. 54. The people of Bologna revolted against the Papal Legate, recalled the Bentivogli, and permitted the French General Trivulzio to enter the city (1511); see Introduction, p. 54. Venice deserted the Holy League and joined with Louis XII in the spring of 1513. Mestre was burned by the troops of the League immediately before the defeat of the Venetians at the battle of Vicenza (October, 1513); see Introduction, p. 55. We know that Machiavelli was writing *The Prince* in December of 1513.

94–98. In this context the "outstanding men" are specifically Moses, Cyrus, and Theseus. With the reference to "your own troops," Machiavelli alludes to his remarks in Chapter 12, lines 11–13, on the necessity of good laws and good armies as "essential foundations for every state"; this is also stated in Chapter 13; he also emphasizes the military causes for the present conditions in Italy.

103–105. Note that Machiavelli's assumption is that the prince himself will command his own forces ("when they have experienced the leadership of their prince," just above); see note to Chapter 12, lines 59–61. "Italian virtue" translates *la virtù italiana*;

be respected and admired. And in Italy there is no lack of matter to be given all sorts of form. Here great *virtù* lies in individual people, when it is not lacking in the leaders. Notice duels and skirmishes: 80
how superior in strength, dexterity, and ingenuity the Italians are! But when it comes to armies, they do not measure up. It is all a result of weak leaders, because those who are knowledgeable are not obeyed. With everybody seeming to be knowledgeable, 85
no one hitherto has known how to stand out so that, with his *virtù* and fortune, others yield to him. The result is that over a long period of time—during the many wars waged over the past twenty 90
years—whenever there was an army composed entirely of Italians, it has never passed muster: witness first^b the battle of Taro, then Alessandria, Capua, Genoa, Vailà, Bologna, and Mestre.

Therefore, if your illustrious House wants to imitate those outstanding men who redeemed their native lands,^c it is absolutely necessary that you equip yourself with your own troops as the true foundation for every enterprise. You cannot have more devoted, reliable, or skillful soldiers. Each soldier is effective singly; but as a unit, when they have experienced the leadership of their prince and have been honored and thoroughly trusted by him, they are even more effective. It is therefore necessary to raise such an army so that you can defend yourself with Italian *virtù* against invaders. Although the 105
Swiss and Spanish infantries may be deemed formi-

"italica" is also a Latin word, so that the phrase has ethnic, as well as national, overtones; thus Machiavelli unites in one ancient word both the ancient Romans and the contemporary Italians. The Petrarch *canzone* that ends *The Prince* also used *Italica* for "Italians." See also Introduction, p. 56.

105–107. Machiavelli refers to a different type of organization of infantry troops, a type he deals with extensively in *War*, II. It is essentially a citizen army, not a mercenary one, with more emphasis on infantry and less on cavalry. The ideas are so similar that some commentators maintain, I believe unconvincingly, that this similarity argues for a later dating of Chapter 26. The fictive date of *War* is 1516, but it is believed to have been complete in 1520 and published in 1521.

113–116. In *War*, II Machiavelli notes that Roman military superiority was a function of their weaponry, tactics, and battle formations; hence, their ability "to defeat both infantry and cavalry" (*Guerra*, p. 363; LLA, p. 48; AG.II, p. 598). Machiavelli longs for the Italians to adapt the Roman system to contemporary Italy.

118. See Introduction, p. 55, for the Battle of Ravenna. The German troops were allied with the French, and the Spanish with the Holy League, whose troops were defeated. Both sides fought in serried ranks.

121–125. For "unable to do a thing about it," Machiavelli uses "*sanza . . . remedio*." See AG.I, p. 95, n. 2. The tip of the seventeen-foot pike was usually some thirteen feet ahead of the pikeman. By ducking underneath all this length, the Spanish soldiers got nearer the German pikemen than the points of the spears which they also carried. The buckler was a kind of shield with a large point in the middle—thus the Spanish made an offensive weapon out of a defensive one. This example, more elaborately discussed and coupled with the lifting of the siege of Barletta (note to line 80 above), is again cited in *War*, II, to prove Fabrizio Colonna's point that "good infantry ought not only to be able to hold out against cavalry but also to be unafraid of foot soldiers . . . a result of their weapons and battle formations" (*Guerra*, p. 366; LLA, p. 51; AG.II, p. 601). To a certain extent, in *War*, Machiavelli is amplifying his notion of the interdependence of good laws and good armies by stressing the analogy between proper military organization and proper legal organization which together produce a properly run state. Indeed, all of *War* can be read as governed by this elaborate metaphor; it is probable that Machiavelli's deliberations on his own experience with the Florentine militia, his study of Roman tactics, and his reflection on the history of his times led to his writing *War*.

dable, nevertheless they both have one defect which would enable a third army not only to oppose them but also to be confident of beating them. For the Spanish are unable to withstand cavalry attacks, and the Swiss have reason to fear the infantry, who meet them in battle with a resolve equal to theirs. Hence experience has shown, and will show, that the Spanish are unable to withstand French cavalry and the Swiss are wiped out by Spanish infantry. Although experience has not proven this last statement, nonetheless there was some hint of the truth at the Battle of Ravenna when the Spanish infantry came face to face with the German battalions, which employ the same battle formation as the Swiss. The Spanish, with the agility of their bodies and the aid of their bucklers, got in underneath and between the German pikes; they were in a secure position to attack them and the Germans were unable to do a thing about it. Had it not been for a cavalry charge, the Spanish would have annihilated every German. It is possible, then, once someone is aware of the defects in both these kinds of troops, to develop a new type that can withstand cavalry and be intrepid before infantrymen. This result can be accomplished by modifications in the nature of their weaponry and battle formations. It is reforms of this sort which, when newly introduced, bestow prestige and greatness upon a new prince.

Therefore, in order that after so long a time Italy

138–143. As Sasso notes, it is important to remember, even through the rhetoric and oratory, that what Machiavelli hypothetically praises the “redeemer” for involves the restitution of order and consequently of the civic and political institutions attendant upon a “civil principedom.”

146–148. The very strength of language of this sentence has caused it to be frequently quoted; its “popular” cast has made it a libertarian rallying cry for freedom from oppression. The “barbarous tyranny” echoes Julius II’s *fuori i barbari*, the aim of his Holy League. See Appendix B, 26, 2 for a similar statement in terms of Guicciardini’s three last wishes.

157. For “Italian,” see note to lines 103–105 above. The quotation is taken from the sixth stanza of a patriotic *canzone* by Petrarch dedicated “to the leaders of Italy,” *Italia Mia* (no. 128, vv. 93–96). Petrarch, too, was writing for an Italy then laid waste by foreign mercenaries. The occasion of the poem was the devastation wrought around Parma during the winter of 1344–1345 by Werner von Urslingen, called Duke Guarnieri, a German—and therefore a “barbarian”—mercenary leader and his troops known as The Great Company. The *canzone*’s call to Italian unity and its overt hostility to Germany have made it a rallying cry for Italian patriotism from the fourteenth to the twentieth century. The context of another quotation from Petrarch in *History*, VI, 29 is perhaps significant for Machiavelli’s thought at the end of *The Prince*. When Stefano Porcari conspired to rescue Rome from Pope Nicholas V, he was in part inspired by another *canzone* by Petrarch, *Spirto gentil* (no. 53) and saw himself fulfilling what he read as a prophecy of his leading the revolt. Machiavelli comments, “Stefano knew that poets were frequently imbued with a divine and prophetic spirit, so that he considered that in any case what Petrarch prophesied in that *canzone* should occur” (G², pp. 433–434; Htb, p. 295; AG.III, p. 1322). Perhaps with such an optimistic assumption behind the quotation, Machiavelli decided appropriately enough to end *The Prince* with a lyrical, poetic, literary, prophetic, and spiritual ring.

may behold her redeemer, this opportunity must
not be allowed to slip by. I cannot express with
what love that redeemer would be received in all
those regions that have suffered from these inunda- 140
tions of foreign invaders: with what thirst for ven-
geance, what determined loyalty, what devotion,
what tears. What doors would be barred to him?
What people would withhold their obedience from
him? What envy would set itself against him? What 145
Italian would withhold homage from him? This
barbarous tyranny stinks in the nostrils of all man-
kind. May your illustrious House assume this mis-
sion with that spirit and hope typical of men who
take on just enterprises so that, under your colors, 150
our native land may be ennobled and, under your
auspices, these words from Petrarch may come to
pass:

And against their furor
Virtù will fight and make the battle short. 155
For the ancient valor
Is not yet dead in our Italian heart.

Appendices

Appendix A

Textual Variants

The enormous textual problems surrounding *The Prince* have not received adequate attention in most English translations. Basic to all textual questions is the fact that we possess no holograph copy of Machiavelli's original manuscript; every printed edition was published posthumously, and hence not authorized by Machiavelli. All of the manuscripts listed below are but scribal copies; we do not even know the names of all the writers. The earliest printed text is that of Blado, but it is clear that even within five years of Machiavelli's death corruptions had crept into the available manuscripts.

Lisio's edition was the first major attempt to arrive at a definitive text, yet even Lisio has been supplemented and challenged by subsequent scholars. Although I have used the Feltrinelli in my references, I have based the translation itself on Chabod, partly because his edition was basic to the one brought out by Feltrinelli (8 volumes, edited by Bertelli, Gaeta, and Procacci, in the series "Biblioteca di Classici Italiana," Milan: 1960–1965), and partly because Chabod's examination of the dating problems surrounding *The Prince*, referred to in the Introduction, pp. 24–25, was rooted in textual analysis. The Mazzoni and Casella text offered a tempting alternative. I rejected it in favor of the Chabod, and became aware of the pitfalls of the Chabod text only after the translation was begun. But, after all, a beginning had to be made.

Recently, however, all of the available manuscripts and editions, and the work of all scholars concerned with Machiavelli's text, have come under the careful scrutiny of Professor Antonio Enzo Quaglio of the University of Padua. The initial results of his ground-breaking studies first appeared in "Per il testo del 'De principatibus' di Niccolò Machiavelli," *Lettere Italiane*, 19, No. 2 (April–June, 1967), 141–186. Since then Professor Quaglio has been diligently pursuing his research. All scholars interested in Machiavelli anxiously await his publication of what is to become the definitive text of *The Prince*. I gratefully acknowledge his generous assistance in helping me to compile a table of textual problems that seem to me to alter substantially any English translation of *The Prince*. The reader, however, should bear in mind that at this point we have no definitive text; that I am concerned below only with passages that I believe would substantially alter a translation; that all references below to Chabod are a shorthand that reduces a complicated series of manuscript designations for which the reader would need both the Lisio and the Chabod editions; and that

the table is based on Professor Quaglio's opinion as of April 24, 1972. As he said on that date in response to my queries: "I have sought to answer, paying attention to the categories you established, in the most definitive possible manner. In particular I have made maximum, but not unwarranted, use of the textual suggestions in G, and especially those in which G agrees with M."

More recently, J. H. Whitfield discovered a manuscript of *The Prince* at Charlecote Park, near Stratford-on-Avon. Whitfield's description of the manuscript can be found in *Italian Studies*, 22 (1967), 6–25; it is reprinted in his *Discourses on Machiavelli* (Cambridge, England: Heffner, 1969), pp. 207–229. He has also published the manuscript in a facsimile edition: Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il Principe* (Wakefield, England: S.R. Publishers, Ltd; Paris–The Hague: Mouton, 1969). References to this manuscript occur four times in my table, but any final evaluation of its priority must await the publication of Professor Quaglio's edition.

Below are the abbreviations employed in this appendix. The list of manuscripts and editions is by no means complete, but these are the most important ones for establishing the text of *The Prince*.

A	Carpentras, <i>Bibliothèque et Musée Inguibert</i> , cod. 299
B	Vatican City, <i>Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana</i> , cod. Barberiniano 5093
b	<i>Il Principe de Niccolò Machiavelli</i> , Rome: Blado, 1532 (<i>editio princeps</i>)
C	Rome, <i>Biblioteca dell' Accademia dei Lincei</i> , cod. Corsiniano 43, B, 35
Ch	Charlecote Park, Warwickshire, England
Chabod	Niccolò Machiavelli, <i>Il Principe</i> , ed. Federico Chabod and Luigi Firpo, 5th ed. Turin: Einaudi, 1966
E	Perugia, <i>Biblioteca Comunale</i> , cod. G. 14
G	Gotha, <i>Landesbibliothek</i> , cod. B 70
I	Rimini, <i>Biblioteca Comunale Gambalunga</i> , cod. 217
L	Florence, <i>Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana</i> , cod. Pl. XLIV, 32
Lisio	<i>Il Principe di Niccolò Machiavelli</i> , ed. Giuseppe Lisio. Florence: Sansoni, 1899
M	Venice, <i>Biblioteca Marciana</i> , cod. It. II, 77
Mazzoni & Casella	<i>Tutte le opere storiche e letterarie di Niccolò Machiavelli</i> , ed. Guido Mazzoni and Mario Casella, Florence: Barbera, 1929
P	Paris, <i>Bibliothèque Nationale</i> , cod. It. 709
R	Florence, <i>Biblioteca Riccardiana</i> , cod. 2603

In the following table I list first the reading that has been adopted and translated; then another possible reading, and finally a series of coded remarks based on the letter from Professor Quaglio: (1) he advises the use of this reading; (2) he believes that the manuscript evidence is strong enough to make the second,

alternate reading a plausible one; (3) he believes that the manuscript evidence is strong enough to counter the text printed in Chabod; (4) at this point in his research he is undecided about the best reading.

TEXT TRANSLATED	ALTERNATE READING	REMARK
<i>Dedicatory Letter</i>		
a (line 3) lui più delettarsi (G)	lui delettarsi (Chabod)	(1)
b (line 22) et ornamento (G+M)	o ornamento (Chabod)	(1)
<i>Chapter 3</i>		
a (line 138) e' potenti (Chabod)	e' più potenti (CLPR)	(2)
b (line 237) del terzo (C)	di dua terzi (Chabod)	(3)
c (line 307) obligata (G+CLPR)	data (Chabod)	(3)
<i>Chapter 4</i>		
a (line 26) e non li portano (Chabod)	e' li portano (G+M)	(2)
b (line 45) Così per avverso troverete per qualche rispetto più facilita ad occupare lo stato di Francia, ma difficoltà grande a tenerlo (C & G)	[Chabod omits]	(3)
c (line 57) trovare tutto unito (G)	trovare unito (Chabod)	(3)
d (line 108) tutte queste cose (BCR)	queste cose (Chabod)	(3)
<i>Chapter 6</i>		
a (line 110) a potere tenere (G)	a tenere (Chabod)	(3)
<i>Chapter 7</i>		
a (line 59) che lo esempio delle azioni (Chabod)	che le azioni (CLPRCh)	(2)
b (line 133) li Orsini medesimi, mediante (G)	li Orsini, mediante (Chabod)	(1)
<i>Chapter 8</i>		
a (line 19) per li gradi della sua età (Chabod)	per li gradi della fortuna & sua eta (Ch)	(2)
<i>Chapter 10</i>		
a (line 55) sdimenticare el principe (Chabod)	dimenticare l'amore del principe (G)	(4)
<i>Chapter 12</i>		
a (line 121) virtuosissimante (Chabod)	virtuosamente (G+M)	(4)
b (line 174) queste arme (Chabod)	l'arme di Italia [in Italia—M] (BAEI+M)	(4)
<i>Chapter 13</i>		
a (line 3) venga ad aiutare e difendere (Chabod)	venga a difendere (G+M)	(4)
b (line 102) ha spento in tutto le fanterie (G+M)	le fanterie ha spento (Chabod)	(1)
c (line 132) avversità con fede lo difendo (G)	avversità lo difendo (Chabod)	(1)

<i>Chapter 14</i>		
a (line 44) può meglio per quello intendere (G)	può meglio intendere (Chabod)	(1)
<i>Chapter 15</i>		
a (line 7) sendo la intenzione mia stata scrivere (G)	sendo l'intento mio scrivere (Chabod)	(1)
<i>Chapter 16</i>		
a (line 86) povero e contennendo (Chabod)	povero o contennendo (BCLMPRb)	(2)
<i>Chapter 17</i>		
a (lines 40–41) simulatori e dissimulatori (G+M)	simulatori, (Chabod)	(1)
<i>Chapter 18</i>		
a (line 12) el primo molte volte (Chabod)	il primo modo molte uolte (Ch)	(2)
b (line 58) avere in fatto tutte (G+M)	avere tutte (Chabod)	(1)
c (line 75) venti della fortuna e le variazioni delle cose (G+M)	venti e le variazioni della fortuna (Chabod)	(1)
d (line 83) integrità, tutto humanità, tutto religione (G)	integrità, tutto religione (Chabod)	(1)
<i>Chapter 19</i>		
a (line 5) odioso o contennendo (Chabod)	odioso e contennendo (Mazzoni & Casella)	(4)
b (line 163) amauano i principi quieti et modesti (Ch)	amavano e' principi modesti (Chabod)	(1)
c (line 164) e principi d'animo militare (M)	el principe che fussi d'animo militare (Chabod)	(4)
d (line 239) grandi e notabili in (G+M)	grandi in (Chabod)	(1)
e (line 375) tenendo quello continuamente insieme intorno (G)	tenendo sempre quello intorno (Chabod)	(1)
<i>Chapter 20</i>		
a (line 46) solo le arme di tutto el tuo (G+M)	tutte l'arme del tuo (Chabod)	(1)
b (line 56) non credo (Chabod)	non credo già (G+M)	(4)
<i>Chapter 21</i>		
a (line 119) sempre pigliare (G+M)	pigliare (Chabod)	(1)
b (line 127) dando ricapito alli uomini virtuosi (C & G)	[Chabod omits]	(1)
c (line 143) tenere (G+M)	debbe tenere (Chabod)	(1)
<i>Chapter 22</i>		
a (line 24) o dice (G+M)	e dice (Chabod)	(1)
<i>Chapter 23</i>		
a (line 37) consigliava con persona (Chabod)	consigliava (G+M)	(4)

<i>b</i> (line 67) con più d'uno, uno principe (Chabod)	con più d'uno principe (G+M)	(4)
<i>Chapter 26</i>		
<i>a</i> (line 74) di nuova surga (Chabod)	di nuovo si vegga (Lisio)	(4)
<i>b</i> (line 92) è testimone prima el Taro (G+M)	è testimone el Taro (Chabod)	(1)
<i>c</i> (lines 95–96) uomini che redimirno le province loro (Chabod)	uomini e redimere le province loro (Lisio)	(4)

Appendix B
Passages from Other Works
Relevant to The Prince

Chapter 1

1. MACHIAVELLI: ON FLORENCE'S FORM OF GOVERNMENT

“The reason that Florence has always changed her types of government so often is that she has never been either a republic or a principedom, has never possessed her own proper characteristics. . . . No stable government can be devised unless it is a true principedom or a true republic, for every type of government situated between these two is inadequate. The reason is most obvious. A principedom can disintegrate along only one path, that of sinking toward a republic; similarly, a republic can have only one path to dissolution, that of rising toward a principedom. The governments in between [*stati di mezzo*] have two paths: they can rise toward a principedom or sink toward a republic. Hence their instability. (“Florentine Affairs” [*Guerra*, pp. 261, 266–267; AG.I, pp. 101, 106].)

2. GUICCIARDINI: ON MIXED GOVERNMENTS

“There is no doubt that a mixed government consisting of three forms—that of a prince, that of the aristocracy, and that of the people—is better and stabler than simply a government of any single one of these forms; particularly when it is mixed in such a way that the good characteristics of one form are retained, and the bad rejected.” (*Considerations* [Pal., 5; Grayson, p. 63.]

Chapter 2

1. EGIDIO COLONNA: ON THE HABIT OF OBEDIENCE

“Custom is almost a second nature; hence custom makes various types of government almost natural. Therefore if a populace has obeyed the fathers, their sons, and the sons of their sons through long-standing custom, it is almost naturally inclined to voluntary obedience. And since all voluntary acts are less troublesome and difficult, if the populace is to obey a king’s commands willingly

and easily, then it is useful for the royal succession to be hereditary." (*De regimine principum*, III, 2, 5 [quoted in Gilbert, *Forerunners*, pp. 20–21]. My translation.)

Chapter 3

1. MACHIAVELLI: ON MAN'S INSTABILITY

"Men are so eager for change that in most cases those who are well off desire change as much as those who are badly off. For, as I have rightly said before [*D.*, I, 37], in good times men become surfeited and in bad times they become worried. This desire, then, opens the way in a region to anyone who is leading a reform movement. If he is a foreign invader, people flock after him; if he is a native of the region, they gather around him, strengthening and aiding him." (*D.*, III, 21 [B, p. 446; ML, p. 474; W.I, pp. 525–526; Pen., p. 463; AG.I, p. 477].)

2. MACHIAVELLI: ON MAN'S DESIRE FOR CHANGE

"For just as sweet things cloy the taste and bitter things startle it, so men become impatient with the good and complain about the bad." (From the letter known as "Fantasies" [(G¹, p. 231; Hale, pp. 129–130; Gpb, p. 100; AG.II, p. 897].) See Introduction, p. 11, note 19. [In the two quotations above, the context concerns Hannibal in Italy and Scipio in Spain.]

3. MACHIAVELLI: ON ACQUISITIVENESS

"Nature has created man so that he desires all things, but cannot obtain them all. Hence, since the desire is always greater than the ability to acquire, the result for man is discontent and dissatisfaction with what he has. Thus the origin of man's variable fortune: because some men desire to have more and others fear the loss of what they have acquired, mankind becomes embroiled in hatred and war." (*D.*, I, 37 [B, 215; ML, 208; W.I, 295; Pen., 200; AG.I, 272].)

4. MACHIAVELLI: ON PASSIVE CITIZENRIES

"A populace accustomed to living under the regulations of others—a populace that does not know how to deal with the state's defensive or offensive measures, does not understand princes and is not understood by them—soon goes back under a yoke that is often heavier than the one it had recently thrown off its neck." (*D.*, I, 16; [B, p. 173; ML, p. 161; W.I, pp. 252–253; Pen., pp. 153–154; AG.I, p. 235].)

5. MACHIAVELLI: ON EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT

“The Romans . . . always avoided halfway measures in governmental proceedings and opted for total ones. For governing is nothing but controlling subjects so that they cannot, nor do they wish to, cause you trouble. This result is accomplished either by making yourself completely secure against them—depriving them of every way of harming you—or else by helping them so much that they could not reasonably wish for a change of fortune. . . . We should note . . . that subjects ought to be either helped or destroyed.” (*D.*, II, 23 [B, p. 346, 348; ML, pp. 358, 360; W.I, pp. 425–426, 427; Pen., pp. 347–349; AG.I, pp. 389–390].) [Other passages expressing this thought occur in *D.*, III, 6, quoted in this Appendix as passage 6 to Chapter 19; and in *History* IV, 30 (Gaeta², p. 317; Htb, p. 198; AG.III, p. 1225) and V, 27 (Gaeta², p. 371; Htb, p. 243; AG.III, p. 1270).]

6. MACHIAVELLI: ON MAKING THREATS

“Threats [against life] are more dangerous than actions. In fact, threats are extremely dangerous, and there is no danger whatever in actions. For the dead man cannot think about reprisal—and those who remain alive will, more often than not, leave thinking about reprisal to you.” (*D.*, III, 6 [B., p. 391; ML, p. 411; W.I, p. 471; Pen., p. 400; AG.I, p. 429].) [This is the course of action followed by Oliverotto da Fermo; see pp. 183, 185 above.]

7. GUICCIARDINI: ON DRAWING EXAMPLES FROM ROME

“How deceptive it is to bring in the Romans as evidence all the time! One would have to have a city with conditions like theirs and then govern it according to their example. It is as out of proportion to set Rome as a model for those lacking the proper qualities as it would be to expect a donkey to run like a horse.” (*Ricordi*, C. 110 [Pal., p. 308; Domandi¹, p. 69; Grayson, p. 30].)

8. GUICCIARDINI: A CLARIFICATION OF AN ADAGE

“The adage that ‘a wise man ought to reap the benefit of time’ would be a dangerous one, unless it were understood correctly. It is true that when the desired opportunity knocks at your door, you will not find it again if you do not seize it; in most such instances quick resolution and action are necessary. But when you are in a puzzling or annoying situation, procrastinate and wait things out as long as you can; often time will inspire you or let you off. Using this adage—as I have explained it—is always healthy, but understood differently it might often be pernicious.” (*Ricordi*, C. 79 [Pal., pp. 301–302; Domandi¹, p. 61; Grayson, p. 23]. Cf. B. 76 [Pal., p. 255; Domandi¹, pp. 114–115].)

9. GUICCIARDINI: ON THE VENETIANS

"The Venetians . . . went on with their resolutions apart from the common resolve and, waiting for the growth of dissidence and quarrels among the others, remained intent, preparing themselves to take advantage of every unforeseen event that might enable them to rule all of Italy." (*Italy*, I, 1 [Pan., I, 4; Alexander, p. 8; Grayson-Hale, p. 88].)

10. MACHIAVELLI: ON CESARE'S FIRST CAMPAIGN IN THE ROMAGNA

"The King of France, to keep his promises to the pope, was obliged to hand over some of his soldiers to Duke Valentino who, under the banner of the three lilies, made himself prince over Imola and Forli and took a woman and her sons away from them." (*Decennale I*, lines 238–243 [Gaeta³, pp. 244–245; Tusiani, p. 160; AG.III, p. 1450].) [The woman was Caterina Sforza, who was included in those coming to Louis's court (see note to lines 228–237 of Chapter 3; see also passage 5 to Chapter 20 in this Appendix). These lines nicely sum up the results of Cesare's first campaign in the Romagna.]

11. GUICCIARDINI: ON THE CONCESSIONS OF LOUIS XII

"Have we not recently witnessed the example of the Kingdom of Naples, where the ambition and agility [of Louis XII] were so great that his possessing half the realm induced him to agree to the King of Spain's getting the other half, and putting an extremely powerful king in Italy? —where, at first alone among the rest of us, he provided for having a partner who was his equal?" ("In Behalf of the League Proposed by Maximilian I to the Republic of Venice," *D.P.*, I [Pal., p. 72–73].) [Similarly in *Italy*, V, 2, Guicciardini writes: "Everyone considered that the King of France greatly lacked prudence; for he was willing for half the Kingdom of Naples to fall into the hands of the King of Spain, and he brought into Italy, where previously he alone was the arbiter of affairs, a king as his rival—a king to whom every one of his enemies and dissidents might have recourse, and furthermore a king allied by many intimate concerns with the King of the Romans. The King of France tolerated all this, rather than letting King Frederick have sway over everything. He gave recognition to the King of France for his power, and paid him tribute for it—a situation the King of France had sought to obtain by various means." (Pan., II, pp. 21–22; Alexander, p. 158.) [King Frederick, sometimes referred to as the King of the Romans, ruled the Kingdom of Naples from 1496 to 1501.]

12. MACHIAVELLI: ON THE NECESSITY FOR SOLDIERS

"Thus it is true above all other truths that if there are no soldiers where there are men, then it is the fault of the prince—not any local or natural fault. . . . Warriors are born not only in Sparta but in every other region where men are

born, provided that there be men able to train them in military discipline." (*D.*, I, 21 [B, pp. 186, 187; ML, pp. 175, 176; W.I, pp. 266, 267; Pen., pp. 168, 169; AG.I, p. 247].)

13. ARISTOTLE: ON THE DANGER OF ONE MAN'S HAVING POWER

"It is a precaution which is taken by all monarchs not to make one person great; but if one, then two or more should be raised, that they may look sharply after one another. If after all some one has to be made great, he should not be a man of bold spirit; for such dispositions are ever most inclined to strike. And if any one is to be deprived of his power, let it be diminished gradually, not taken from him all at once." (*Pol.* 5. 11. 16, 1315a9–14; Jowett translation.)

14. MACHIAVELLI: ON THE UNTRUSTWORTHINESS OF PRINCES

"When you change a government, the prince you have created suspects that you may appropriate what you have given him; he does not keep his promise or pact with you, because his fear of you yourself is greater than the obligation he contracted for. And as long as this fear persists, he takes pains to see that your line is wiped out and that you and yours are interred." ("*Capitolo dell' Ingratitude*," vv. 172–180 [Gaeta³, p. 311; Tusiani, p. 110; AG.II, p. 744].)

Chapter 4

1. GUICCIARDINI: ON THE KING OF FRANCE

"The power of the King of France is very great indeed, because his kingdom is large, populous, and full of very strong cities from which he derives great sums of money. He has a fine army and many lords; he has an infinite number of noblemen over whom he has more absolute rule, and of whom he can make more use, than can any prince or Christian king in his own domain." ("*On the Condition of Italy After the Battle of Ravenna*," *D.P.* III [Pal., p. 80].)

Chapter 5

1. MACHIAVELLI: ON FREEDOM

"Have you considered how important and how powerful, in a city such as this, is the name of freedom—a name that no force can subdue, no time can erode, and no deserving man can counterbalance?" [The spokesman continues, emphasizing the notion of time preserving the desire for freedom:] "That no time is long enough to destroy our desire for freedom is most certain; for one frequently observes that a city's freedom is regained by even those men who, never having enjoyed it, yet cherish it because of the free tradition bequeathed

them by their fathers. Therefore, once freedom has been recovered, they preserve it with the greatest perseverance, and at every hazard." (*History*, II, 34 [G², pp. 192–193; Htb, pp. 91–92; AG.III, p. 1124].)

Chapter 6

1. MACHIAVELLI: ON THE RELIABILITY OF THE PEOPLE

"The nature of the people is no more reprehensible than that of princes, for one man does as much wrong as another when everyone can do wrong without any control. . . . As for prudence and stability, I maintain that the people [*un popolo*] are more prudent and stable, and possess better judgment, than a prince. And it is not without reason that the voice of the people is likened to that of God. . . . I therefore maintain, about that defect of which writers accuse the people, that all men individually—and princes particularly—can be accused of it: for whoever goes unchecked by laws will commit the same errors as any unbridled people. . . . It also appears that in [the people's] selection of magistrates, they make far better choices than a prince does." (*D.*, I, 58 [B, pp. 262–264; ML, pp. 261–264; W.I, pp. 341–344; Pen., pp. 252–255; AG.I, pp. 314–316].)

Chapter 7

1. MACHIAVELLI: ON FRANCESCO SFORZA

"In the days of our fathers, Francesco Sforza lived in a dignified fashion during times of peace, and did so not only by tricking the Milanese who had hired him, but also by depriving them of their freedom and becoming their prince." (*War*, I [*Guerra*, p. 335; LLA, pp. 15–16; AG.II, p. 574].)

2. MACHIAVELLI: ON FRANCESCO SFORZA

"He was not restrained by fear or shame from breaking his word: for great men term it shame to lose by treacherous means, not to win by them." (*History*, VI, 17 [G², p. 411; Htb, p. 276; AG.III, p. 1304].)

3. GUICCIARDINI: ON CESARE BORGIA AND FRANCESCO SFORZA

[Sasso, *Pensiero politico* (p. 462, note 61), cites an interesting passage written by Guicciardini in 1516, which seems to indicate that he knew Chapter 7 of *The Prince*, since he uses both of Machiavelli's examples for precisely the same point.] "We have the example of [Cesare Borgia] and the lesson he teaches us: it is extremely difficult for individuals to win much territory; but it is even more difficult to hold on to it, because of the countless problems that accompany a new principedom, and particularly a new prince. Only Francesco Sforza suc-

ceeded in holding on to the state of Milan, but in his case there were many reasons that converged." ("On the Means For the House of Medici to Secure Power," *Dialogo e discorsi*, p. 270.)

4. MACHIAVELLI: ON CESARE BORGIA

"This prince is very splendid and magnificent; he is so courageous in military matters that no undertaking is too great not to appear insignificant to him. In order to win glory and territory [*stato*; possibly "power"], he never relaxes, never admits fatigue or danger: he arrives at one scene of battle before anyone is aware that he has left another. He is well loved by his troops, and has recruited the best men in Italy. These factors, coupled with constant good fortune, make him victorious and formidable." (June 26, 1502 [*Leg.*, I, 267–268].)

5. MACHIAVELLI AND GUICCIARDINI: ON CESARE'S ENEMIES

"No less of an asset to him is the laziness of his enemies when they close in upon him. I believe that it is now too late to do him much harm, for he has outfitted all the important cities with soldiers and has provisioned his fortresses splendidly." (October 23, 1502 [*Leg.*, I, 387; AG.I, p. 128].) [Guicciardini says that] "if the group had used more speed in attacking him, Valentino's affairs would certainly have become very dangerous." (*Italy*, V, 11 [Pan., II, 54].) [Ridolfi, *Life*, p. 281, note 17, points out that Guicciardini "followed and also copied" Machiavelli's remarks in historical writings as well as diplomatic ones.]

6: GIOVIO: ON CESARE'S RUTHLESSNESS

"[Cesare] lay his bloody hands on the barons of the faction and on the Orsini family. And first he arranged for the brutal killing of Vitellozzo, a man whom he hated for his valor and great courage." (Headnote to Book VIII of Giovio's *La prima parte dell' historie del suo tempo*.)

7. BACON: HOW PRINCES DELEGATE BRUTAL ACTIONS

"Ruthless ministers are employed by their sovereign in times of crisis when sanguinary measures are required; but once their task is accomplished, they are left to the mercy of the avenging mob which, unaware of the sovereign's true responsibility, acclaims and honours him." (*De sapiente veterum* [1609], quoted in Rossi, *Bacon*, pp. 110–111.)

8. MACHIAVELLI: ON THE PAPAL ELECTION

"The belief that it is to be [Giuliano della Rovere, the future Pope Julius II] has grown so strong that people are giving six-to-four odds on him. . . . Those who want to become pope talk at length with Duke Valentino, because of his

adherents, the Spanish cardinals. . . . People believe that the future pope will be committed to him: he lives in this expectation, that the new pontiff is to be one of his faction. Rouen [Georges d'Amboise, Cardinal of Rouen and chief advisor to Louis XII] has been very hard at work, and the cardinals who come to the palace are mostly on his side; people are rather unclear as to whether he leans in the direction of [della Rovere]; if that should be the case, the outcome is inevitable." (October 30, 1503 [*Leg.*, II, 585–586; AG.I, pp. 142–143].)

9. GUICCIARDINI: ON CESARE'S LACK OF FORESIGHT

"Although [Cesare Borgia] had often in the past considered all the unforeseen events that might occur at his father's death, and had thought up remedies for all of them, it had never occurred to him that he himself might simultaneously chance to be deterred by so dangerous an illness." (*Italy*, VI, 2 [Pan., II, 98; Alexander, 166].)

10. MACHIAVELLI: ON CESARE'S OVERCONFIDENCE

"The duke lets himself be carried away by that bold confidence of his; he believes that another man's word will be more reliable than his own is, and that the promise that was given about his marriage alliances is going to be kept." (November 4, 1503 [*Leg.*, II, 599–600; AG.I, 144].) [Cesare hoped to arrange a marriage between his daughter and Julius's nephew Francesco Maria della Rovere, heir to the Duchy of Urbino.]

11. GUICCIARDINI: ON CESARE'S DOWNFALL

"Thus Duke Valentino's power, which had grown rather quickly—no less from ruthlessness and fraud than from the arms and power of the church—ended with even more sudden destruction: he personally experienced deceptions similar to those with which he and his father had plagued others." (*Italy*, VI, 6 [Pan., II, 114; Alexander, p. 175].) [Guicciardini also says earlier (*Italy*, VI, 5) that Cesare "was now reduced to such calamitous circumstances that he was forced to follow any dangerous advice whatever and, no less than the others, was deceived by his own hopes." (Pan., II, 108; Alexander, p. 174).]

Chapter 9

1. MACHIAVELLI: ON MAINTAINING FRIENDSHIP WITH THE PEOPLE

"Truly I deem those princes unfortunate who are forced to embrace extraordinary methods for securing their power because the common people are their enemies. For whoever has enemies among the few is certain of being secure without taking any abrasive actions; but whoever has the crowd as his enemy

can never be secure. The more ruthlessness he employs, the weaker his princedom becomes. Therefore, his best remedy is to seek to make the people his friend." (*D.*, I, 16 [B, p. 175; ML, p. 162; W.I, p. 254; Pen., p. 155; AG.I, p. 236].)

Chapter 11

1. GUICCIARDINI: ON THE BALANCE OF POWER

"[Lorenzo de' Medici] realized that it would be very dangerous both to the Republic of Florence and to himself if any of the major powers extended their authority further. Thus he was very careful to arrange that matters in Italy would stay in balance, leaning no more toward one group than toward another. . . . A mutual defense alliance agreed upon by Ferdinand [I], King of Naples, Gian Galeazzo Sforza, Duke of Milan, and the Republic of Florence was readily maintained . . . with the principal aim of blocking the Venetians from achieving more power. . . . This quickly checked the greed of the Venetian Senate, but it did not join the members of the alliance in steadfast and faithful friendship." (*Italy*, I, 1 [Pan., I, 3–5; Alexander, pp. 4, 7–8; Grayson–Hale, pp. 86–88].)

2. MACHIAVELLI: ON RELIANCE UPON ROME

"The short lives of popes, the changes that attend a [papal] succession, the church's minimal fear of princes and her few scruples in making decisions—all these render it impossible for a secular prince to have total confidence in a pope or to be secure in putting his own fortune on a par with the pope's. Whoever is the pope's friend in wars and danger will possess companionship in victory—and solitude in defeat: for a pontiff is supported and defended by his spiritual power and his influence." (*History*, VIII, 17 [G², pp. 539–540; Htb, pp. 379–380; AG.III, pp. 1406–1407].)

3. GUICCIARDINI: ON ALEXANDER VI

"He assembled an excellent army that demonstrated how great could be the power of a pope who possessed a talented commander in whom he could be confident. Ultimately his situation developed so that he was considered to hold the balance in the war between France and Spain. In short, he was perhaps more evil and more fortunate than any pope had been for centuries." (*Florence* XXIV [P., pp. 264–265; Domandi², p. 242].)

Chapter 12

1. MACHIAVELLI: ON ARMIES

"All republics that have maintained and aggrandized themselves in the past have always had two primary means of support—justice and arms—so that they could control and govern their subjects and could defend themselves against their enemies. . . . The Republic of Florence has nicely gathered together and arranged a set of good, solemn laws for the administration of justice; all she lacks is the careful provision of armed forces. Yet lengthy experience, great expense, and much danger have caused her to realize how little trust she can have in the weapons of outsiders and in mercenary forces. For if they are many and prestigious, they are either intolerable or risky; if they are few and unprestigious, they are useless. . . . Better that she be armed with her own weapons and her own men." ("Provision" [*Guerra*, p. 101; AG.I, 103].)

2. MACHIAVELLI: ON MILITARY SUPPORT

"All the techniques [*arti*] that a society has established to bring about the common good of men, all the institutions it has created for them to live in fear of the laws and of God, all these would be in vain were they not provided with defenses which, when well set up, support them—even if they themselves are not set up as well. And so, by the same token, good institutions without military support fall into disorder, just as the rooms of a magnificent royal palace do, however bedecked with jewels and gold, if they are roofless and have no protection against the rain." ("Proem" to *War* [*Guerra*, p. 325; LLA, p. 4; AG.II, p. 566].)

3. GUICCIARDINI: ON CHARLES VIII

"Charles VIII, with a wondrous streak of good fortune—unprecedented beyond even the example of Julius Caesar—conquered before he saw; and with such ease that that expedition found it unnecessary ever to pitch a tent or even to break a lance." (*Italy*, I, 19 [Pan., I, 113; Alexander, p. 75; Grayson-Hale, p. 192].)

4. MACHIAVELLI: ON LEAVING MILITARY COMMANDERS FREE TO MAKE THEIR DECISIONS

[Machiavelli has made the point that Roman civil authorities gave full powers to the military and did not interfere with them.] "I have been very eager to take note of this matter because I am aware that contemporary republics, like Venice and Florence, understand things differently: if their [military] leaders, superintendants, and commissioners have to set up one cannon, [the civil authorities] want to know about it and recommend how it is to be done. This procedure

merits about as much praise as their other procedures, which, taken all together, have led them to the condition in which they now find themselves." (*D.*, II, 33 [B, p. 378; W.I, p. 455; ML, p. 395; Pen., p. 382; AG.I, p. 418].)

5. GUICCIARDINI: ON THE DOWNFALL OF VENICE

"Thus, with very great—almost stupefying—violence, the affairs of the Republic of Venice collapsed, calamity continually heaping itself upon calamity; whatever expectations they might have advanced disintegrated." (*Italy*, VIII, 7 [Pan., II, 282; Alexander, p. 202].)

6. ON BROTHERHOOD AMONG OPPOSING SOLDIERS

"Nothing, indeed, is more singular among the contradictions of this period than the humanity in the field displayed by hired captains. War was made less on adverse armies than on the population of provinces. The adventurers respected each other's lives, and treated each other with courtesy. They were a brotherhood who played at campaigning, rather than the representatives of forces seriously bent on crushing each other to extermination." (Symonds, I, 82; note 53.)

Chapter 13

1. MACHIAVELLI: ON FUNDING ONE'S OWN MILITIA

[In the spring of 1503 Florence was feeling the pressure of a potential attack from Cesare Borgia; at the same time she was anxious to pursue her war against Pisa. To raise a militia required money, and the Great Council of Florence had to be persuaded to impose new taxes. A partisan of any military proposals, Machiavelli presumably wrote the speech "Remarks" for the man designated to speak in behalf of the proposed fiscal legislation; see Ridolfi, *Life*, pp. 65–66. The speaker says, "You cannot always lay your hands on another man's sword; therefore it is a good thing to have one at your own side and to put it on when the enemy is still at a distance, because later another's sword will be too late and you will have no remedy." (*Guerra*, 60 [AG.III, p. 1442].) See Allan Gilbert's headnote (AG.III, 1439) for the suggestion that since the speech resembles the orations in *History*, it was written in the 1520's. For more on the question of dating, see Rubenstein, "World of Florentine Politics," pp. 11–13.

Chapter 15

1. VETTORI: ON HYPOTHETICAL UTOPIAS AND ACTUAL TYRANNIES

[Burd, p. 283, quotes the following passage from Francesco Vettori's *Sommario della storia d'Italia*, one of the earliest efforts at writing diplomatic history: "But to speak of the affairs of this world in all openness, and in all accordance with the truth, I submit that should there be created one of those republics that has been written about and conceived of [*immaginate*] by Plato, or found in the Utopia written about by the Englishman Thomas More, then perhaps those republics could be said not to be tyrannical governments. Yet all of the republics or principedoms which I know of through history or through observation seem to me to reek of tyranny."]

2. MACHIAVELLI: ON MAN'S NATURE

"As is pointed out by all those who discuss political institutions [*vivere civile*]—and all of history can furnish examples—whoever sets up a republic and establishes its laws must necessarily assume that all men are evil [*reo*] and that they will always have to make use of the malice [*malignità*] in their soul whenever opportunity gives them free reign. And if, for the moment, no malice should be apparent, that is a result of some hidden cause that people do not know about, having no experience of its opposite; but time, which men say is the father of all truth, will finally reveal it." (*D.*, I, 3 [B, p. 135; ML, p. 117; W.I, pp. 216–217; Pen., pp. 111–112; AG.I, p. 201].) [Machiavelli has chosen a significant word for "evil": *reo* emphasizes the social, civic, and political context basic to this passage and the one in Chapter 15 of *The Prince*. The word carries the connotation of a criminal accusation and of culpability on a criminal level. For more on this important point, see the note to Chapter 18, lines 33–36, and Guicciardini's *Considerations*, quoted in passage 5 to Chapter 18 in this Appendix.

Chapter 16

1. MACHIAVELLI: ON MAXIMILIAN'S ARMY

"That the Emperor Maximilian has many fine soldiers, no one denies; but the question is how he can keep them together. His difficulties are compounded because his army is unified only through the strength of his finances: on the one hand, he is short of cash for himself, unless other people supply it to him (about which we cannot be sure); on the other hand, he is too generous. And although generosity is a virtue [*virtù*] among princes, nevertheless it is inadequate to

satisfy a thousand men when you need twenty thousand; generosity is useless when it is unsuccessful." (February 8, 1507; *Leg. II*, 1099 [AG.I, p. 61; note 4].)

2. GUICCIARDINI: ON JULIUS'S LIBERALITY

"But the excessive and infinite promises he had made to cardinals, princes, barons, and anybody who might be useful to him in a given matter—promising them as much as they could ask for—improved his position much more. Furthermore, he had the wherewithal to bestow not only money, but also ecclesiastical benefits and offices—his own as well as those of others—because his reputation for liberality spontaneously drew together many people who offered their money, names, and offices for his deliberate use." (*Italy*, VI, 5 [Pan., II, 107–108; Alexander, p. 172].)

Chapter 17

1. GUICCIARDINI: ON CESARE IN THE ROMAGNA

"Because of his authority, his greatness, and his honest administration of justice, their region [the Romagna] had remained undisturbed by the factional uprisings which had always been harrasing them with constant assassinations before. Such deeds made the hearts of the people kindly disposed toward him." (*Italy*, VI, 4 [Pan., II, 100–101; Alexander, p. 168].)

2. GUICCIARDINI: ON THE POPULARITY OF CESARE BORGIA

[After the election of Julius II in 1503,] "only the cities in the Romagna stayed firm. And had Cesare remained in good health, he certainly would have retained them, for he had put men in charge who had ruled these people with such great justice and integrity that he would have been exceedingly beloved by the populace." (*Florence*, XXIV [P., p. 266; Domandi?, p. 244].) [See also note to Chapter 7, line 155 above.]

Chapter 18

1. MACHIAVELLI: ON MAN'S FUTILE PURSUIT OF THE GOOD

"And nobody can ever be so foolish or so wise, so evil or so good, that were he given the choice between two types of men, he would not praise the praiseworthy and blame the blameworthy. In the long run, nevertheless, almost everyone—taken in by false good or false glory—either willfully or ignorantly lets themselves fall into the position of deserving more blame than praise. . . . And beyond a doubt, any man born of humankind will be terrified to imitate evil periods [of history] and will be kindled with an immense desire to emulate

the good ones." (*D.*, I, 10 [B, pp. 156, 159; ML, pp. 141–142, 145; W.I, pp. 236, 239; Pen., pp. 135, 138; AG.I, pp. 220, 223].)

2. MACHIAVELLI: ON MAN'S DECEITFULNESS

"And since religion and the fear of God have been extinguished in everybody, oaths and promises are valid only insofar as they are useful; thus men use them not to honor them, but as a means to deceive more easily. The more facile and safe the deception, the more glory and praise it receives." (*History*, III, 5 [G², p. 219; Htb, p. 114; AG.III, pp. 1145–1146].)

3. GUICCIARDINI: ON FERDINAND'S DECEITFULNESS

"But it was universally considered that Ferdinand's integrity and faithfulness were no less lacking. Everybody marveled that, because of his greed to obtain some area of the Kingdom of Naples, he should have conspired against a king of his own blood; and, in order to overthrow him more simply, he had always nourished him with false promises of help." (*Italy*, V, 5 [Pan. II, 22; Alexander, p. 158].)

4. MACHIAVELLI: ON PROMISES NOT GIVEN FREELY

"Forced promises affecting the common weal will always be broken when the force is not operative—without disgrace for whoever breaks them. . . . And it is not only forced promises that princes do not keep when the force is no longer operative; all other promises, too, are broken when the reasons which caused them to be made are no longer operative. Whether or not this fact is praiseworthy, whether or not princes ought to comply with such methods, we have discussed at length in our treatise *De principe*; therefore nothing will be said about it now." (*D.*, III, 42 [B, p. 496; ML, p. 529; W.I, p. 574; Pen., p. 516; AG.I, p. 520].)

5. GUICCIARDINI: ON MAN'S INHERENT GOODNESS

"It is assumed too absolutely that 'men never do anything good except out of necessity,' and that whoever organizes a republic ought to assume that all men are bad. For many men, even when they have the power to do evil, do good: all men are not bad. . . . All men are inclined by nature to goodness. Everything else being equal, they prefer good over evil." (*Considerations* [Pal., pp. 8–9; Grayson, pp. 66–67].)

6. GUICCIARDINI: ON CESARE AND ALEXANDER VI

"Their lies and hypocrisy were noted so much at the Court of Rome that there arose a common saying: 'The pope never did what he said, and Valentino never said what he did.'" (*Italy*, VI, 2 [Pan., II, 92].)

7. GUICCIARDINI: ON CURRYING PANDOLFO PETRUCCI'S FAVOR

"Burning with the desire that just as Pandolfo had been the friend of [those at Senigallia] in life, so he might be their friend in death, they did the best they could to lull him with the same devices [*arti*] with which they lulled [those at Senigallia], by writing very courteous briefs and letters and sending him messages through their own couriers, full of affection and good nature." (*Italy*, V, 12 [Pan., II, 61].)

8. MACHIAVELLI: ON WHAT ONE MUST DO
TO SAVE ONE'S COUNTRY

"This advice [that no alternative whatever for preserving the country is to be rejected] deserves to be heeded and imitated by every citizen who is in a position to advise his native land. For in cases where [in all respects] it is a decision about the safety of one's native land, no consideration must be given to justice or injustice, compassion or ruthlessness, praiseworthiness or infamy. Instead, setting aside all other scruples, [one must] follow to the utmost that alternative which saves her life and maintains her freedom." (*D.*, III, 41 [B, p. 495; ML, p. 528; W.I, pp. 572–573; Pen., p. 515; AG.I, p. 519].)

9. MACHIAVELLI: ON POPE JULIUS II AND
REORGANIZING A GOVERNMENT

"He did not heed what the other popes had done or even what he himself had done, because both he and they had been unable to act differently: necessity, not desire, had caused them to approve those arrangements. But when the time came for revising the arrangements, it seemed to him that were he not to do so there would be no excuses that he could make before God; for this reason, he acted. And his aim was to bring it about that, as people say, Bologna might live well. He intended to go to Bologna personally: if the methods of government there satisfied him, he would approve them; if they did not, he would alter them. And in order that he might do so by military means—should other means be inadequate—he was mobilizing an army of such capacity as to frighten not only Bologna, but all of Italy." (October 3, 1506 [*Leg.*, II, 1007–1008; AG.I, p. 66, note 4].)

10. MACHIAVELLI: ON HIS OWN VIEWPOINT

"And this [advice] would amaze me if my fate had not shown me so many various things that I am forced rarely to be amazed, rarely to admit that I have not understood—either through reading or through experience—the actions of men and their methods of procedure. I know you and the compass of your navigation; if it could be blamed (which it cannot be), I still should not blame it, since I see to what ports it has guided you and with what expectation it may nurture you. Hence I think not with your mirror, where nothing but prudence

is visible, but with the mirror of the many, which must see the ends, not the means, of affairs. And I see a variety of acts that bring about the same thing, and many men acting differently who bring about the same result: the actions of [Julius II] and the outcome of those actions have added anything necessary to satisfy this opinion." (See Introduction, p. 11, note 19. From the letter known as "Fantasies" [G¹, pp. 228–229; Hale, p. 127; Gpb, p. 97; AG.II, pp. 895–896].)

11. MACHIAVELLI: ON MEANS AND ENDS

"A judicious intellect will never criticize anyone for any unusual action committed in establishing a kingdom or forming a republic. It is quite appropriate that if the act accuses a man, the consequence should excuse him; and when the consequence is good, as in the example of Romulus, it will always excuse him. For it is the man who uses violence for destruction who ought to be blamed, not he who uses it for restoration [*racconciare*]." (*D.*, I, 9 [B, pp. 153–154; ML, p. 139; W.I, p. 234; Pen., p. 132; AG.I, p. 218].)

Chapter 19

1. MACHIAVELLI: ON MAXIMILIAN'S DECEIVERS

"His good and easygoing nature causes him to be deceived by all those who surround him. One of his advisers—having discovered the fact for himself—told me that every man and every circumstance can deceive him but once; and yet there are so many men, so many circumstances, that it can happen that he is deceived every single day, even if he is always aware of it." ("German Report" [*Guerra*, p. 202].)

2. MACHIAVELLI: ON RESTRAINTS UPON THE KING OF FRANCE

"France lives in security for no other reason than this: her kings are constrained by numerous laws, including laws for the security of her entire population. The king who founded that country desired that kings should do as they please about military and financial matters, but concerning all other matters they could act in no other way except as the laws prescribe." (*D.*, I, 16 [B, p. 176; ML, p. 164; W.I, p. 255; Pen., pp. 156–157; AG.I, p. 237–238].)

3. MACHIAVELLI: ON THE FRENCH PARLEMENTS

"We notice what good results this reform brings about in France, which more than any other kingdom lives under laws and institutions." [He goes on to point out how the *parlements* of France, and especially that of Paris, are both the protectors and the reformers of French laws and institutions:] "Until now it has

retained its position because it has been a dogged force against the French nobility. But were there to be any time when it permitted an offense to go unpunished, and were such occasions to increase, the unquestionable result would be either that the offenses would have to be punished—at the price of great confusion—or else that France would disintegrate.” (*D.*, III, 1 [B, p. 383; ML, p. 402; W.I, p. 463; Pen., pp. 389–390; AG.I, p. 422].) [The *parlement* of Paris, a high court of justice, was established during the reign of Louis IX (Saint Louis) in the mid-thirteenth century.]

4. VETTORI: ON FRENCH INJUSTICES

“In order to get down to examples and show that, by and large, all regimes are despotic [*tirannici*], let us take the kingdom of France and assume that it possesses the most perfect of kings. But it still does not cease to be a major despotism [*tirannide*], in which the nobility has weapons while others do not, and pays no taxes at all while all taxation is imposed on the poor peasants. There are *parlements* where litigations last so long that the poor cannot get any justice. In many cities there are extremely rich canonries which exclude all who are not noble. And yet the kingdom of France is held to be a realm that is governed well, as is no other kingdom in Christendom, with justice and every kind of other benefit.” (*Sommario*, quoted in Burd, p. 315; see passage 1 to Chapter 15 in this Appendix.)

5. MACHIAVELLI: ON ASSASSINS ACTING ALONE

“I believe that many men . . . decide to act because there is no retribution or danger in the decision. But there are few men who act in such a way; of those who do, few or none escape being killed in the very act. Therefore one finds nobody who seeks to go to a certain death.” (*D.*, III, 6 [B, p. 393; ML, p. 413; Pen., p. 402; AG.I, p. 431].)

6. MACHIAVELLI: ON MAKING EMPTY THREATS

“Threats do princes more harm and cause more effective conspiracies than do actual injuries. A prince, therefore, ought to be on guard against making threats. For he must either cherish men or protect himself against them, but he should never reduce them to such a state that they are obliged to think that they must either die themselves, or cause others to die.” (*D.*, III, 6 [B, pp. 401–402; ML, p. 423; W.I, pp. 481–482; Pen., p. 412; AG.I, p. 438].) [Obviously by “others” Machiavelli means princes, who should never put men into a position where they must kill or be killed; see note to Chapter 3, lines 118–119, and passage 5 to Chapter 3 in this Appendix.]

7. MACHIAVELLI: ON THE GLORY OF PATRIOTISM

"I believe that the greatest honor men can have is that which their native city gives willingly to them; I believe that the greatest good to be done, and the most pleasing to God, is that which is done for one's native city. . . . No man is so greatly enhanced by any of his deeds as he who has reformed republics and kingdoms with laws and institutions. . . . And because those who have had the opportunity to do so have been few, and those who have known how to do so still fewer, that number of men is small." ("Florentine Affairs" [*Guerra*, p. 275; AG.I, pp. 113–114].)

Chapter 20

1. MACHIAVELLI: ON TROOPS COMPOSED OF MEN WHO ARE NOT PROFESSIONAL SOLDIERS

"A king should compose his army of men who make their living by something other than military service; when the war is over, the administrative class, the nobility, and the soldiers return to their several occupations. . . . Each of these groups is willing to make war in order to have peace, but they do not try to agitate during peacetime so that they may have a war." (*War*, I [*Guerra*, p. 340; LLA, p. 21; AG.II, p. 578].)

2. MACHIAVELLI: ON KEEPING ONE'S TERRITORIES DISUNITED

"The cities one has conquered can neither be made subject to, nor made to pay tribute to, the city in which one is a tyrant, for creating power within one's city is disadvantageous to one; it is to one's advantage to keep one's regime disunited and to make each city and province acknowledge one's rule." (*D.*, II, 2 [B, pp. 280–281; ML, p. 283; W.I, p. 362; Pen., p. 276; AG.I, p. 329].)

3. GUICCIARDINI: ON THE FALL OF BRESCIA

"No more did the people of Brescia have that old sort of spirit with which, during the war with Filippo Maria Visconti in the days of their ancestors, they had withstood an extremely difficult siege in order to retain their position within the Venetian realm. Instead, they were predisposed to give themselves over to the French—partly out of terror of the French, and partly because of the encouragements of Count Giovanfrancesco da Gambara, the leader of the Ghibelline faction. Thus the French wrested the walls of the city from them the day after the defeat." (*Italy*, VIII, 4 [Pan., II, 272–273].)

4. GUICCIARDINI: ON CERTAIN THEORIES HELD BY MACHIAVELLI

[Guicciardini begins by noting that admiration of the ancients ought not to preclude respect for modern institutions that the ancients did not have. Modern history is full of instances when fortresses have been useful:] "The reasons seem so obvious to me that I am amazed that this opinion has detractors." [He takes up some of Machiavelli's examples, explaining why the Romans did not build fortresses and admitting that there may be situations when fortresses are insufficient. Yet, he concludes,] "Fortresses are often useful to those who hold them: for protecting themselves against conspiracies, for escaping to during revolts, and for recovering lost territory." (*Considerations* [Pal., pp. 57, 59; Grayson, pp. 117, 119].)

5. MACHIAVELLI AND GUICCIARDINI: ON THE BRAVADO OF CATERINA SFORZA

[In *Discourses*, III, 6, Machiavelli relates how Caterina Sforza, the Countess of Forlì, foiled the Orsi conspiracy (the story is unsubstantiated, since it is not included in the two existing eyewitness accounts). The conspirators were eager to capture the fortress of Ravaldino; Caterina and her children were outside its walls. She told the conspirators that they could keep her little children as hostages while she went inside, and that she would see to it that Tommaso Feo, the commander of the fortress, would hand it over to them. Thus she escaped, mounted the walls of the fortress, and exposed her genitalia to the conspirators' eyes, saying that she still had "the mold for casting more children" (B, pp. 407–408; ML, p. 430; W.I, p. 487; Pen., p. 419; AG.I, p. 444). She governed with even greater ruthlessness once she was restored to power (*History*, VIII, 34); Machiavelli praises her for her "courageous undertaking" in attempting to withstand Cesare Borgia, but cites her fortress as an example of poor construction (*War*, VII [*Guerra*, pp. 496–497; LLA, pp. 186–187; AG.II, 706].) Discussing Cesare's siege of her fortress, Guicciardini calls her "an extremely courageous and masculine woman . . . but she was deserted by everybody because nobody ventured to oppose those men who bore the banner and approval of France. Eventually her people revolted and she shut herself up and was besieged in the fortress (*Florence*, XIX [P., p. 193; Domandi², p. 178]). In *Italy*, IV, 13, he contrasts her "masculine courage" with the spirit of her "cowardly" and "feminine" troops (Pan., I, 384; Alexander, p. 152).]

Chapter 21

1. MACHIAVELLI: ON FERDINAND THE CATHOLIC

“He has risen to these heights from a low and feeble fortune; he has always had to contend with new states and doubtful subjects. One method for holding onto new territories . . . is to arouse great expectations of oneself, always keeping men’s minds busy with trying to judge the outcome of one’s decisions and new undertakings. Ferdinand has recognized the need for this, and has employed it to advantage; hence his attacks on the Moorish Kingdom of Granada and on Africa, his entry into the Kingdom of Naples, and all his other various enterprises. He has not [tried to] foresee the outcome: for his aim is not a definite gain or a definite victory; rather, he has striven to win prestige among his people and to keep them in suspense with his countless deeds. Therefore he courageously takes the initiative, later giving it that end which chance puts before him and which necessity teaches him.” (Letter to Vettori, April 29, 1513 [G¹, p. 257; Gpb, pp. 115–116; AG.II, p. 909].)

2. MACHIAVELLI: ON THE UNRELIABILITY OF ALLIANCES

“It can easily happen that your ally will lose, and, having lost, be dependent upon the conqueror’s will. The conqueror will have no desire to form an alliance with you—either because you no longer have the opportunity to seek one, or because of the hate he bears toward you for your alliance with his enemy.” (“Florentine Affairs” [*Guerra*, p. 266; AG.I, p. 105].)

3. GUICCIARDINI: ON FLORENTINE NEUTRALITY

“Similarly, affairs in Florence came under consideration. The Florentines, full of mistrust, were beginning to taste the fruits of an imprudently employed policy of neutrality and to realize that it was an insufficient defense to have an abundance of justice on their side, when at the same time they lacked prudence.” (*Italy*, XI, 2 [Pan., III, 218; Alexander, pp. 254–255].)

4. MACHIAVELLI: ON THE INEVITABILITY OF OBSTACLES

“If one gives close attention to all human affairs, one notices that an obstacle can never be removed without another one replacing it. . . . Hence in all our decisions we ought to judge exactly where the fewer obstacles exist and adopt that as the better course; for there is never anything that is totally clear cut, totally without risk.” (*D.*, I, 6 [B, p. 144; ML, p. 127; W.I, p. 225; Pen., p. 121; AG.I, p. 209].)

5. GUICCIARDINI: ON CHOOSING THE LESSER OF TWO EVILS

"It is the duty of a wise prince, in order to avoid the greater evil, to opt for espousing the lesser evil for the sake of the good and the useful; he must not try to extricate himself from one danger and one confusion only to rush into other more serious or more disgraceful ones." (*Italy*, XII, 4 [Pan., III, 313].)

Chapter 23

1. GUICCIARDINI: ON MAXIMILIAN'S FORTUNE AND CHARACTER

"In 1519 . . . he died at Linz . . . with a Fortune similar to that with which he had almost always lived. I do not know whether that Fortune, which had been most gracious in offering him the greatest opportunities, was not equally unfavorable in not permitting those opportunities to succeed; or whether somehow what Fortune had brought him—and also his dynasty—had been taken away from him by his fickleness and his intemperate notions (which often differed from the opinions of other men), as well as by his excessive lavishness and wasteful spending. These factors cut off all his successes and opportunities. Otherwise, this prince was most skillful in warfare; he was painstaking, discreet, highly industrious, clement, kind, and full of many outstanding qualities and graces." (*Italy*, XIII, 11 [Pan., IV, 53–54; Alexander, p. 309].)

2. MACHIAVELLI: ON LEARNING FROM THE QUESTIONS OF OTHERS

"I shall be pleased to be asked questions: I am just as eager to learn from you by means of your questions as you are eager to learn from me by my answers, because many times a wise questioner makes one think through many problems and learn of many others about which, had they not been raised, one would never have known." (*War*, I [*Guerra*, p. 331; LLA, p. 11; AG.II, pp. 570–571].)

Chapter 24

1. MACHIAVELLI: ON PHILIP V OF MACEDON

"For, being a prudent man, he deemed it more disastrous to lose his prestige through his inability to defend what he had set out to defend than to lose it as if it were something abandoned, by letting it become the enemy's spoils." (*D.*, III, 37 [B, p. 488; ML, p. 520; W.I, p. 566; Pen., pp. 507–508; AG.I, pp. 513–514].)

2. MACHIAVELLI: ON PRINCELY IDLENESS AND LUXURY

“Before they sampled the tragedies of war from beyond the Alps, our Italian princes believed that it was sufficient for a prince to sit in his study thinking out a pointed response; to write a good letter; to demonstrate subtlety and animation in words and mottoes; to weave the strands of a fraud; to bedeck himself with jewels and gold; to sleep and eat with greater magnificence than other men; to be surrounded by every kind of lasciviousness; to deal meanly and arrogantly with his subjects; to fester in idleness; to hand out military commissions as favors; to scorn anyone who might suggest some praiseworthy method; to want his words to be understood as oracular judgments. Those poor individuals never realized that they were preparing to be the spoils of anybody who attacked them. As a result, then, there were great terrors, sudden flights, and amazing losses in 1494; consequently three of the most powerful governments in Italy [Milan, Venice, and Florence] have been pillaged and devastated time and time again. But what is worse is that those who remain persist in the same errors and live by the same disorderly habits.” (*War*, VII [*Guerra*, p. 518; LLA, pp. 210–211; AG.II, pp. 724–725].)

3. MONTAIGNE: ON THE ITALIANS’ EFFETENESS

“When our King Charles VIII, without having to draw his sword from its sheath, saw himself master of the Kingdom of Naples and of a healthy part of Tuscany, the noblemen in his entourage attributed the unexpected ease of this conquest to the fact that the Italian nobility enjoyed being witty and erudite more than they enjoyed being vigorous and warlike.” (Montaigne, *Essais*, I, 25 [Rat ed., 1962, p. 143].)

Chapter 25

1. MACHIAVELLI: ON BEING INDEPENDENT OF FORTUNE

“In every kind of Fortune, great men are always the same: if Fortune alters—raising them up one moment, letting them drop the next—they themselves do not alter, but always keep their courage steadfast, linking it so intimately with their way of life that it is clearly apparent that Fortune has no power over any one of them.” (*D.*, III, 31 [B, p. 469; ML, p. 500; W.I, p. 549; Pen., p. 488; AG.I, p. 498].)

2. MACHIAVELLI: ON THOSE WHO CHOOSE FORTUNE OVER VIRTÙ

“They are anxious to stick with Fortune and not with their own *virtù*; they realize that, when there is little *virtù* present, Fortune controls everything, and they are anxious that Fortune govern them, not that they govern her.” (*War*, II [*Guerra*, p. 396; LLA, p. 80; AG.II, p. 624].)

3. MACHIAVELLI: ON THOSE WHO ARE DOMINATED BY FORTUNE

“Daily we see amazing losses and amazing gains. For where men have little *virtù*, Fortune makes a strong demonstration of her power. Because she is fickle, republics and governments change often, and will continue to change until there emerges someone who is so much an admirer of antiquity that he controls Fortune to the extent that she has no reason to show off what she can do during every revolution of the sun.” (*D.*, II, 30 [B, p. 371; ML, pp. 387–388; W.I, pp. 449–450; Pen., pp. 375–376; AG.I, p. 412].)

4. MACHIAVELLI: ON SUITING ONE’S ACTIONS TO THE TIMES

“I believe that as Nature has created men with different faces, so she has created them with different aptitudes and ways of thinking. As a result, each man behaves according to his aptitudes and thoughts. And, on the other hand, because times change and the disposition of affairs can differ, one man’s hopes may turn out as he desired they would. The man who makes his tactics consistent with the conditions of the times is successful; the man whose tactics are at odds with the times and the disposition of affairs is unsuccessful. Hence it can well be that two men can achieve the same goal by means of different tactics, because each one of them can conform with his own inner consistency; there are as many dispositions of affairs as there are regions and governments. But because times and affairs often change—both in general and in particular—and because men do not change their thoughts and their tactics accordingly, it occurs that a man has good fortune at one time and bad fortune at another. And truly, anyone wise enough to adapt to and understand the times and the disposition of affairs would always have good fortune, or would always protect himself against bad fortune; and it would be true that the wise man could control the stars and the Fates. But such wise men do not exist: in the first place, men are shortsighted; in the second place, they are unable to master their own natures. Thus it follows that Fortune is fickle, controlling men and keeping them under her yoke.” (From the letter known as “Fantasies” [G¹, pp. 230–231; Hale, p. 129; Gpb, p. 99; AG.II, pp. 896–897].)

5. MACHIAVELLI: ON COMING TO TERMS WITH THE TIMES

“In their tactics and, even more, in deeds that are of great moment, men ought to give thought to the times and come to terms with them. In most cases, those men who fail to adapt themselves to the times, through either poor judgment or natural inclination, are unfortunate in their lives and unsuccessful in the outcomes of their deeds. But it is the other way round for those men who live harmoniously with the times.” (*D.*, III, 8 [B, p. 415; ML, p. 439; W.I, p. 495; Pen., p. 428; AG.I, p. 450].)

6. GUICCIARDINI: ON THE SUCCESS OF FABIVS MAXIMVS

“Even those who attribute everything to prudence and *virtù*, leaving out the power of Fortune as much as possible, must at least admit that it is very important either to happen upon or to be born in a time when *virtù* or the qualities you esteem in yourself are valued. [He ends on the note that] “whoever could change his nature according to the circumstances of the times, a thing that is most difficult and perhaps impossible to do, would be overpowered much less by Fortune.” (*Ricordi*, C. 31 [Pal., p. 291; Domandi¹, p. 49; Grayson, p. 13]. Cf. B. 52 [Pal., p. 250; Domandi¹, p. 109].)

7. GUICCIARDINI: ON THE CHARACTER OF POPE JULIVS II

“[He was] a courageous prince with inestimable perseverance, but irascible and too much of a schemer; if these qualities did not precipitate the downfall of his career, it was because his support came more from the church’s veneration, the dissension among princes, and the circumstances of the period than from discretion and prudence. He would certainly have been worthy of the pinnacle of glory if he had been a secular prince, or if he had used that care and deliberation by which he raised the church to temporal heights through the arts of war, to raise it to spiritual matters through the arts of peace.” (*Italy*, XI, 8 [Pan., III, 257; Alexander, 273].)

8. GUICCIARDINI: ON JULIVS’S HEADSTRONGNESS

“But the pope’s nature, impatient and hasty, sought to pursue his own desires by impetuous means, against every difficulty and objection. For he summoned the cardinals to a consistory, justified the reason that motivated him to deliver from tyranny the cities of Bologna and Perugia (such noble and important members of that See), and indicated that he wanted to go there personally. He pointed out that in addition to his own army he would have the help of the King of France, of the Florentines, and of many other Italian cities; and the just Lord God was not about to forsake anyone who helped His Church. Once this matter was made known in France, the king found it so absurd that the pontiff would pledge the aid of his troops without outside assurances that he laughed out loud. And, anxious to curb the pope’s exhilaration (which had been noted by everyone), he said that the pope must have been too greatly excited by wine the night before. He did not realize that this impetuous resolution compelled him either to come into open dispute with the pope, or else, against his will, to grant the pope his own troops.” (*Italy*, VII, 3 [Pan., II, 177–178].)

9. GUICCIARDINI: ON PATIENCE BEING PREFERABLE TO IMPETUOSITY

[Guicciardini contrasts the impetuosity of Julius II with the patience of Clement VII, yet notes that both popes effected great and similar deeds. Both qualities are useful in the proper circumstances:] “Anyone able to synthesize them and use each one on his own terms would be divine. But because this synthesis is

virtually impossible, I believe that, all things considered, patience and moderation can produce greater achievements than can impetuosity and haste." (*Ricordi*, B, 159 [Pal., p. 274; Domandi¹, p. 135].)

10. MACHIAVELLI: ON MAN'S INTRACTABILITY

"There are two reasons why we are unable to alter our ways: first, we cannot oppose what our nature has predisposed us to do; second, when a man has had great success with one method of action, it is impossible to persuade him that he can succeed by acting differently. Thus it happens that a man's fortune changes, for it alters his conditions and he does not alter his tactics." (*D.*, III, 9 [B, p. 418; ML, pp. 442–443; W.I, p. 498; Pen., pp. 431–432; AG.I, p. 453].)

Chapter 26

1. MACHIAVELLI: ON THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ITALY'S PRINCES FOR HER DOWNFALL

"Not having had wise princes, the Italians have not adopted any good institutions and, because they are not compelled by necessity as the Spaniards were, they do not adopt any. Thus they remain the disgraced people of the world. But the populace is not guilty; its princes are. They have borne punishment for it, a just punishment for their ignorance: the shameful loss of their power, a loss without one single example of *virtù*. Would you care to see if what I say is true? Consider how many wars have taken place in Italy from the invasion of Charles VIII to the present day. Normally war causes men to be soldierly and esteemed; but the more widespread and savage these wars have been, the greater has been the esteem lost by the citizens and their leaders. This outcome was inevitable: for the traditional institutions were not, and are not, good. As for new ones, nobody among us knows where to begin. Never think that any prestige will ever come to Italian armed forces, unless it be through that process I have described, and by means of princes who hold great power in Italy; for men who are simple, primitive, and native can be moulded into such a form, but those who are evil, poorly governed, and alien cannot. There will never be a good sculptor who thinks he can make a fine statue out of a piece of poorly boasted marble more easily than he can from an untouched piece." (*War*, VII [*Guerra*, pp. 517–518; LLA, pp. 209–210; AG.II, pp. 723–724].)

2. GUICCIARDINI: ON AN IDEAL WORLD

"I am anxious to see three things before I die, but even were I to live a long time I fear I shall see none of them. I want to see a well-established republican form of government in our city; I want to see Italy released from all the barbarians; and I want to see the world liberated from the tyranny of these villainous priests." (*Ricordi*, B., 14 [Q², 17] [Pal., p. 243; Domandi¹, p. 101].)

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