

The Revolt of Political Spiritedness:
Machiavelli's Martial Modernity and the New Birth of Politics

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Ottawa, Ontario
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ABSTRACT:

This thesis discusses the role of the political philosophy of Niccolò Machiavelli in the origins of modern political thought. In particular, his teaching regarding political spiritedness. In discussing Machiavelli's attempt to re-introduce the political practice of the ancients, this thesis discerns and describes the original nature of Machiavelli's teaching in contrast to ancient and liberal modern political science. This difference can be traced to how these three schools of thought envision the role of political spiritedness in their respective political projects. Where the ancients seek to harness spiritedness and the liberal moderns intend to purge it, Machiavelli hopes to unleash it.

Machiavelli's plan to liberate political spiritedness is founded on three important roots; his goal to replace the classical gentleman-ruler with his Captain-Prince, the aristocratic republic of the ancients with his martial republic, and finally his founder-prophet takes the place of the classical philosopher and Christian saint. These three elements taken together form the basis of Machiavelli's attempt to restore ancient virtue to his native Italy in order to reverse the political corruption he sees in Florence, Italy, and the West in general. By doing so he founds a version of modernity; one that emphasizes martial virtue and imperial glory. Liberal moderns reject this Machiavellian modernity though and in contrast found a new version of modernity that accentuates comfortable self-preservation via the relief of man's estate and commercial republicanism. Machiavelli therefore, while not belonging to camp of Plato and Aristotle, cannot be called the founder of the modernity of Hobbes and Locke.

This thesis begins and concludes with a discussion of the absence of a debate on the role of political spiritedness in contemporary political science and advocates its return to a prominent position via the study of the history of political thought in order to provide political science with the necessary tools to understand the nature of citizens who desire political distinction.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

In the course of my doctoral studies I have accrued many debts, and in order to show that even after six years of reading and writing on Machiavelli I have not completely been won over, there are some acknowledgments to make. First, the Department of Political Science at Carleton University, where I have had the privilege to study and teach. Members of the Faculty have consistently proven themselves to be excellent mentors and colleagues, even to that smart mouth Machiavelli guy. Foremost among them is my teacher and supervisor, Waller R. Newell. He is without a doubt one of only a select few in this world that can speak authoritatively on Platonic Metaphysics and Rock Music, sometimes in the same conversation. More importantly, while I was writing this dissertation he was publishing his own study on Machiavelli, but still encouraged me to pursue lines of thought in contrast his own and treated my ideas with a seriousness and generosity that often made me forget I was only a student. Dr. Newell has taught me what it means to be a scholar, but more importantly; he has taught me what it means to be a gentleman. Thanks are also owed to the other members of my doctoral committee. Tom Darby, who always greeted me with good cheer and his full attention when I entered his office unannounced with a question and is still the only man I have ever witnessed receiving an order of “just drumsticks” for Wing Night at the *Arrow and Loon* upon asking. A special thanks is also in order for Marc Hanvelt who despite the time constraints provided excellent advice on writing and on life after the dissertation. I am also deeply obliged to Geoff Kellow of the College of Humanities and Travis Smith of Concordia University. Dr. Kellow’s comments and questions during the defence were challenging and stimulating and their impact is reflected in the final version of the dissertation. In addition to his comments and generosity in participating in the defence in person, Travis Smith remains an ongoing source of advice and support for which I am eternally grateful. A special mention is also owed to Sarah Cleary who in the last months of this project kindly assisted me in navigating the final administrative hurdles, and Jonathan Malloy who as Chair of the Political Science Department has assisted me professionally and has taken a consistent interest in my work. I have met numerous other graduate students in my time here at Carleton, and many of them have become friends and colleagues. Many of the ideas in this dissertation were first hashed out over beers at *Mike’s Place*, *Corner Bar*, and all the other pubs the Theory Mafia has congregated at and it would never have come into focus if it not for everyone’s –mostly- thoughtful criticisms. Two deserve special mention. Caleb Chaplin, who began his graduate career at Carleton in the fall of 2008 with me and has become a true friend as we pursue our non-academic, more *fantastical* interests and hobbies. I wish him luck as he soldiers on in the graduate corner office without me. The other is the now Calgary residing Dr. Tiago Lier. Tiago has been a constant source of support, criticism, and has served as a friendly ear, both here in Ottawa and from his new home in the west. It is unlikely that I would be here without my metaphysical friend; who has always been willing to overlook my predilections toward the *Agora* and the *Curia* and remind me to occasionally go beyond the walls of the city... so long as there is some shade. Finally, my greatest debt is to my Parents. I have been in one university or another for eleven years and they have been a constant source of encouragement and support, and have never once suggested I look at a more lucrative vocation. The stoic Epictetus tells us only the educated are free; if so, I owe my freedom to my Parents. Like all parental debts, this is one that can never be paid in full. I dedicate this dissertation to them as an acknowledgement of everything they have done for me.

“Now when the young man sees and hears all this, and, on the other hand, hears his father’s arguments and sees his practices at close hand contrasted with those of the others, he is drawn by both these influences. His father waters the calculating part of his soul, and causes it to grow; the others, the desiring and spirited parts. Because he doesn’t have a bad man’s nature, but has kept bad company with others, drawn by both these influences, he came to the middle, and turned over the rule in himself to the middle part, the part that loves victory and is spirited; he became a haughty-minded man who loves honour.”

-Plato, the Republic

“Past things throw light on things to come, for the world was ever of the same sort and all that which is and will be has been in other times, and the old things return with different names and colours.”

- Francesco Guicciardini, Ricordi

Preface

*“Wars begin at the will of anyone, but they do not end at anyone’s will”
-The Florentine Histories*

Introduction

Acres of forest and untold litres of ink have been sacrificed in order to debate the role played by Niccolò Machiavelli in the origins of modern political thought. For unlike Aristotle and Hobbes who are easily placed in the ancient and modern camps respectively; the case of the Florentine secretary is not so black and white. For some, Machiavelli is the reviver of a classical tradition stretching back to the Socratics and in turn serving as the inspiration for later English republicans and the American Founders. For others however, the Florentine’s new modes and orders herald the decisive break with antiquity and the emergence of modern political philosophy.

With this in mind, my dissertation may therefore be viewed by some as an act of recklessness as I seek to navigate between the Scylla and Charybdis of these established positions; but as Machiavelli himself reminds us, *fortuna* favours impetuous youths. So perhaps if I am audacious enough the goddess will reward me. It will be my goal to argue that while Machiavelli does make a break with ancient political *thought* with his new modes and orders his new birth of politics is decisively different from modern political philosophy as it is represented by Hobbes, Locke, and Montesquieu. Machiavelli’s project is to purge political life of the corruption invited in by Christian otherworldliness and classical ideal of the leisured gentleman. His intention therefore is to revive what he understands (with some justification) to be ancient political *practice*; particularly the practice of the Romans before they were corrupted by idleness and Athenian philosophy. By introducing his new modes and orders and founding his new Rome,

Italy will be freed from the humiliation handed out by the northern barbarians and *gloria* will once again become the crowning political achievement. Machiavelli's Rome however is not that of Cicero, Virgil or even Cato the Elder. The new Rome will emulate what the Florentine believes to be the best of ancient practice; martial virtue, austere liberty, and the new prince who introduces new modes and orders.

Machiavelli's admiration for ancient political life however puts him at odds with the stated goals of the founders of modern political thought. The modern project is carried forward by slogans such as the "relief of man's estate", "social peace" or "commodious living." In contrast to the Machiavellian ideal of severe republican liberty at home and imperial glory abroad. Therefore at the very beginning of the emergence of modern political thought we find two very different ideas on the shape of what modernity should be. On one side we find Machiavelli, gathering to him the public spirited, united in their goal of fighting back against the rule of priests and idle aristocrats. Those who love their own souls more than their fatherlands. On the other we have Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu and their allies; determined to undermine the attachment to martial glory and usher in the spirit of commerce to achieve social peace. In short, we have two versions of modernity.

As Joseph Cropsey admirably articulates, "Machiavelli can be understood as teaching a lesson intended to harden and inspire men. Hobbes, teaching life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, prepared what came to be known as the bourgeoisification of life..."¹ Therefore if Machiavelli is the founder of modernity, by maintaining ancient politics in the foundation of his enterprise, his modernity is decisively different from what will follow and his new modes and orders prove to be just as hostile to liberal modernity as they are to classical political philosophy.

¹ Joseph Cropsey, *Political Philosophy and the other Issues of Politics*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 6.

Machiavelli's is a martial enterprise and political thought of the liberal moderns stand and their commercial republicanism were founded just as much in reaction to Machiavelli as it was to classical political science.

The Importance of Machiavelli's Quarrel with the Ancient and Moderns

A study of Machiavelli's thought and his relation to his classical predecessors and modern successors potentially faces an objection over the relevance of such an exercise. After all, the fight waged between the heirs of the classical tradition, Machiavelli, and the moderns was decided a long time ago; with the evident triumph of the moderns. Yet, even if we accept the victory of the moderns as a blessing or at the very least a settled question; it must be admitted that there is some worth in reflecting on the nature of our modern liberal regimes. If only to better grasp how the ethos of commercial republics shape our understanding our citizenship, freedom, equality and the good life; particularly in how liberal regimes understand these questions in contrast to different kinds of regimes.

To better understand the modern liberal character it seems wise to go back to the foundations, to uncover what the founders of modernity intended. It is at the origins of modernity that we find the debate over what should constitute modern political thought in all of its vigour, before it became part of the landscape. It is upon studying the origins of modernity that we can come to understand that the path leading to our contemporary liberal regime was not the only one that could have been taken. The shape modernity took under the guidance of thinkers as diverse as Montaigne, Hobbes, and Smith involved a deliberate choice to reject or at the very least dilute the role of political spiritedness, or what Hobbes called vainglory and its most common expression; severe martial virtue.

Thinkers ranging from Montaigne to Montesquieu start from the premise that the ancients did not go far enough in moderating political spiritedness. Montaigne reminds us of the cruelty of ancient virtue, Hobbes and Locke view spiritedness as detrimental to social peace and either seek to crush it or like Montesquieu aim to tame and channel it into bourgeois commercialism in order to create a more peaceful and secure political order. Therefore, while the ideal classical and Renaissance republics are dominated by aristocratic gentlemen who in turn take their direction from philosophers dedicated to contemplation or priests hoping for Grace; the modern republic undermines the aristocratic class and places the source of political power in the hands of the people, who in turn are guided by practical philosophers dedicated to the relief of man's estate and the conquest of nature. They made the choice, in the words of Montesquieu to abandon the "grandeur of the ancients" in favour of the smaller souled but gentler bourgeois future.

The consequences of the incredible success of the liberal modern attempt to remove spiritedness from the political arena can demonstrated by the discomfort political ambition, courage, and martiality cause in contemporary political science; which views it as something alien, only able to understand it as the selfish pursuit of power and material gain. Modern social science's focus on material goods as the driving force in human pursuits is reflected in the debate between John Rawls, Robert Nozick and their heirs over the goals of political liberalism. Despite their differences, both Rawls and Nozick understand political debate as a question of the proper procedure to satisfy the private desires of citizens. Neither of them offers a political psychology that takes into account the striving for political distinction; the desire to be a Legislator or Founder in the traditional sense.² While the orientation of these scholars has its critics; it is

² Compare John Rawls, *A Theory Justice* (particularly Rawls' listing of "primary goods"), along with Nozick's opus *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, along Michael Walzer's *Spheres of Justice*. These three works formed the basis of much of the scholarly discourse over the past half century on the question of the good society or to use an older term, the best regime. None of them appear to think that the satisfaction of political ambition or desire for glory is a problem

important to note that Rawls, Nozick and others like them simply take the understanding of politics implicit in “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” to its logical conclusion. They represent the tendency of modern political thought to give economics primacy over politics, private desires over public deeds; just as Hobbes and his successors intended.

The loss of an appreciation for the spiritedness of “great men” brought about by Hobbes and the other liberals was noted early on by Hegel, who complained in his lectures on *The Philosophy of History* that even in his own time critics were attempting to cut world historical figures off at the knees; finding immoral reasons for their conquests.

Alexander of Macedon conquered part of Greece, and then Asia-*therefore* he must have had a *craving* for conquest. Or he acted from a craving for fame, and the supposed truth that this is what drove him is that his actions did bring him fame. What schoolmaster has not demonstrated that Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar were driven by such passions, and that they were therefore immoral? And from this it immediately follows that he, the schoolmaster, is more admirable than they, since he has no such passions-the proof being that *he* has not conquered Asia nor defeated Darius and Porus, but that *he* is willing to live and let live.³

Hegel’s observation of the tendency in historians of his own day to look back on the actions of Founders and Legislators as immoral should be very familiar to us. Indeed, our contemporary historians, thanks to the legacy of Freud, now have psychoanalysis to add to their toolkit of explaining away political ambition. Those who strive for distinction are either selfish aggrandizers, sociopaths, or both. This reading of political ambition comes straight from Hobbes who considers spiritedness or “vainglory” as an irrational madness and Locke who advises

that needs to be addressed. Those who came after them followed suit. The best example of the consequence of this line of thinking that I know is Michael J. Mazarr’s *Unmodern Men in the modern world: radical Islam, terrorism, and the war on modernity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Mazarr, unlike Rawls or Nozick is aware that his “unmodern men” –honour lovers- are disenchanted with liberal modernity. However, because he accepts the central premise of Hobbesian liberalism, he believes that this desire is a case of psychological illness and with enough work unmodern men can be turned into a version of Tom Wolfe’s *Masters of the Universe*. As this dissertation will in part demonstrate, I find this contention highly dubious.

³ G.W.F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, translated. Leo Rauch, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1988), 34.

against the reading of ancient histories, in fear that the young many seek to imitate their blood-soaked heroes.⁴

Machiavelli of course, as a quick perusal of his work indicates, does not share the modern distaste for the severity of ancient virtue nor a revulsion for blood-soaked heroes. In the words of his friend and critic Francesco Guicciardini, Machiavelli preferred rulers who took delight in extraordinary and violent remedies.⁵ Machiavelli shares the moderns' rejection of the teachings of classical and Christian political philosophers, but his reasons for doing so differ. Whereas the modern rejection of the ancients is based a great deal on their revulsion toward ancient political life; Machiavelli fully embraces it and seeks to found a form of politics that places public spiritedness and the pursuit of honour and glory at the centre. His quarrel with the ancients is that they go too far in taming spiritedness by insisting that the drive for political distinction must be subservient to the goals of philosophy. Machiavelli therefore attempts to expose to all the effectual truth of politics, the ambitions of princes and peoples and endeavours to show how everyone can finally get what they truly want.⁶

It is upon comparing Machiavelli's celebration of warrior-statesmen and his analysis of political psychology against the modern critique of ancient politics it becomes clear that what the moderns are really criticizing is Machiavellian politics rather than classical political thought, or at least conveniently blending the two together. To show this we only have to turn to Montesquieu whose presentation of the Romans and their city dedicated purely to the art of war

⁴ Interestingly, Plato would agree with Hobbes that the desire to become a tyrant is symptomatic of a sick soul or madness. Plato though maintains that the erotic and or spirited desire for distinction is part of a healthy psyche if properly channeled. Contrast Bks. II-V of the *Republic* to *Leviathan* Chapter X.

⁵ See *Selected Writings of Francesco Guicciardini*, translated by Cecil Grayson, (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1965).

⁶ Consider Machiavelli's *Mandragola* where after the characters become adherents of a Machiavellian morality and abandon their traditional morality they all enjoy their desires. Whether that be sex, good food, tithes for the Church or an heir.

in his *Consideration on the Causes of the Greatness of Romans and Their Decline* shows them in a distinctively Machiavellian light. By presenting the ancients as Machiavellians it proved far easier for the moderns to demand the purging of political spiritedness in favour of introducing the spirit of commerce.

While Montesquieu and others were successful in establishing the liberal-commercial order; it would be an understatement to say that this transition has never come under criticism. This has ranged from Alexis de Tocqueville's friendly concern over the tendency of bourgeois-liberalism to drift into a stifling soft democratic despotism, to the withering condemnation of the Enlightenment project initiated by Rousseau in his *First Discourse* and continued by the Romantics and German Idealists.⁷

The most powerful assault on Enlightenment liberalism however remains the hammer blow dealt by Nietzsche throughout the course of his writings. For Nietzsche, the Enlightenment represents decadence and decay rather than a triumphant ascent. The petty politics of democracy (Bismarck devoting resources to building a social safety net), the excessive obsession with levelling, are all signs of the emergence of the last man; who as prophesized by Zarathustra is like a flea hopping on the Earth. In the face of this appalling future Nietzsche's project therefore sought to counter the slow rot of the Enlightenment by setting off the dynamite that will usher in a day of decision that would give birth to the superman. While Nietzsche is certainly more reticent or perhaps uncertain regarding the shape of the regime of the superman; we can however draw some conclusion from his disgust regarding the politics of his time and his stated admiration for the *Imperium Romanum* and Cesare Borgia. As he declares in *Beyond Good and*

⁷ See Rousseau's *1st Discourse*, *Social Contract*, and *Discourse on the Virtue Most Necessary for a Hero*, along with the works of thinkers such as Fichte and Schelling in addition to writers of the Romantic period like Schiller and Stendhal. Hegel's attempt to hold the best of the ancient and modern together proved unable to survive his death.

Evil and *Ecce Homo*, the time of petty politics has reached its end. The fight for the dominion of the earth begins with him.⁸

These intellectual criticisms of the nature and effect of the liberal Enlightenment and its corresponding political regime do not exist in a vacuum. The critiques of modernity provided the intellectual basis and the inspiration for political men for whom the maintenance of commercial republics proved to be unsatisfying. As Leo Strauss shows in his 1941 lecture on the roots of German nihilism, a correlation can be drawn between the German philosophic critique of the modern project and the German political attack on liberal democracy.⁹ Strauss' analysis was foreshadowed a century earlier by one of the great defenders of the achievement of the American Revolution, Abraham Lincoln, who warned his contemporaries that some men would never be satisfied by the possibilities present in a liberal political order. In his speech "*The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions*," Lincoln reminds his audience that while they should be proud of the regime that their ancestors founded, they cannot presume to believe along with *Federalist #10* or modern political thought that the threat posed by "vainglorious men" to the liberal regime has come to an end. Lincoln argues that while there will be a number of decent men who will be willing to settle for a seat in Congress or the office of the Presidency; there remains a more ambitious breed whom for this is not enough.

What! Think you these places would satisfy an Alexander, a Caesar, or a Napoleon?- Never! Towering genius disdains a beaten path. It seeks regions hitherto unexplored.- It sees *no distinction* in adding story to story, upon the monuments of fame, erected to the memory of others. It *denies* that it is glory enough to serve under any chief. It *scorns* to tread in the footsteps of *any predecessor*, however illustrious. It thirsts and burns for distinction; and if possible, it will have it... It is unreasonable then to expect, that some man possessed of the loftiest genius, coupled with ambition sufficient to push it to its utmost stretch, will at some time, spring up among us? And when such a one does, it will

⁸ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, translated Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 208 and *Ecce Homo*, translated Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967) "Why I am Destiny."

⁹ Leo Strauss (David Janssens and Daniel Tanguay eds.), "German Nihilism," *Interpretation: a Journal of Political Philosophy* 26/3 (1999), 353-378.

require the people to be united with each other, attached to government and laws, and generally intelligent, to successfully frustrate his designs.¹⁰

Liberal democracies therefore always face potential bursts of spiritedness (what Plato calls *thumos*) that threaten to upset the social peace; because as Lincoln points out, certain human types will always be drawn towards the path of glory. No matter how much social science attempts to disparage the pursuit of glory, it continues to rise up. Indeed, perhaps Lincoln, like the moderns goes too far in demanding the frustration of the designs of the tribe of the eagle. If the politically spirited or honour lovers believe that their desires cannot be satisfied within the modern commercial regime then their desire for glory may lead them to conclude that a different regime would be more accommodating to what they seek.

One loses count at the number of violent revolutions which have beset the past two centuries which have at their root the desire to emulate an Alexander, a Caesar, or a Napoleon. The true enemy of the modern political project was never the tired remnants of the Church and the feudal aristocracy that made up the Counter-Enlightenment, but the longing within the politically spirited who, if allowed to become disillusioned with modernity seek models of emulation in the grandeur of the ancient warrior-statesmen and their austere republics. To better fulfill Lincoln's goal of defending the modern regime it is paramount to fully understand the alternatives; particularly in what ways they may surpass our own regime. Machiavelli must be the focus of such a study because it is the Florentine with his call for new modes and orders that stands at the root of the admiration for ancient political practice ranging from Rousseau to Nietzsche. In addition to the inspiration he provided, and unlike Nietzsche, Machiavelli fully sketches out his positive project in addition to his critique of the ancients. He provides a fully

¹⁰ Abraham Lincoln, "The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions: Address Before The Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois January 27, 1838" in *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, ed. Roy P. Basler, Cleveland: De Capo Press (1946), 83.

thought out alternative to the modern commercial regime; a martial republic and is a reminder of the other path modernity could have taken and perhaps what it should not have left behind.

The Study of Machiavelli

The worth, nature, and intention of Machiavelli's thought became a point of contention as soon as his writings started to circulate among his friends and has not abated five hundred years later. As Isaiah Berlin has noted, Machiavelli is one of the few thinkers whom everyone has an opinion about and no one agrees on what he is saying. Patriot, toady, teacher of evil, satirist, technician, and philosopher are just a few of the ways readers have regarded him.¹¹

The fascination with "old Nick" was aided no doubt by the Church placing the vile Machiavelli on the index, which made him an immediate ally to later moderns who shared his anti-theological ire. Therefore in Francis Bacon's view Machiavelli's metaphor of *Fortuna* would become the new means of looking at nature and the grounding of the new science¹², and Rene Descartes wrote in his private correspondence that he accepted the principal precept of Machiavelli¹³. Different thinkers from Hobbes to Spinoza and Rousseau acknowledged a direct influence or some debt to Machiavelli. Finally at the end of modernity Nietzsche looking back wrote that Machiavelli was one of his favourite authors as his *Prince* looked directly at reality.¹⁴ The idea that thinkers as different from each other as Hobbes and Nietzsche could both find something in Machiavelli to approve may seem strange; but this pattern is constant not only among the great thinkers but scholars of political thought who fail to agree on exactly what Machiavelli's intention is.

¹¹ Berlin, *Against the Current*, (New York: Viking Press, 1980), 33-40.

¹² See Bacon's *The Advancement of Learning*.

¹³ Consider Descartes, *Oeuvres and Letters* (Pleiade ed.), A.-T. XI, 320.

¹⁴ See Nietzsche's *Twilight of the Idols*.

This debate over how to situate Machiavelli in the history of political thought partially lies in the manner Machiavelli presents his own thought. While in Chapter XV of *The Prince* he announces his intention to depart from the modes of others to write something useful, in the *Art of War* he contends to be seeking a way to revive the martial virtue of the ancient (the Romans in particular) to fix the modern corruption of the military art. In the *Discourses* meanwhile, Machiavelli takes this Janus-faced presentation of his thought to its peak. Writing a book dedicated to the study of the first decade of Livy's history for the purpose of reviving the political virtue of the ancients, while at the same time announcing his discovery of a new moral continent and his intention to found new modes and orders. With these apparent contradictions, Machiavelli appears as something of an enigma; allowing those who read him to see what they want; leading some to emphasise his connection to antiquity and others to seizing upon his originality.

Of the scholars who are more impressed by the Florentine's claim to be a reviver of ancient politics, the most noteworthy are J.G.A. Pocock and Quentin Skinner; who while recognizing the original nature of Machiavelli tend to view his thought within the framework of Renaissance humanism and downplay its radical nature. By arguing that Machiavelli is a somewhat eccentric proponent of Renaissance humanism Pocock, Skinner and those who follow them argue that Machiavelli is a reviver of the classical republicanism found in thinkers such as Aristotle and Cicero.

Pocock makes this contention the central thesis of his book *The Machiavellian Moment*. Here Pocock presents the argument that Machiavelli acts as a bridge between the classical republicanism of the ancient world to the modern Atlantic republicanism of England and the American Republic. Machiavelli therefore was a believer in a politics of the "common good" and

a proponent of what is now called civic humanism. By reviving Aristotelian politics Machiavelli is able to pass this understanding on to later republican thinkers. Despite this, Pocock is open to the possibility of Machiavelli's status as an innovator. He points out that Machiavelli unlike other civic humanists puts a great deal of emphasis on the founder-legislator or prophet, and that Machiavelli is clear that the civic virtue he wishes to promote is incompatible with Christian virtue.¹⁵ However, despite these details that Pocock acknowledges from the text, he still maintains that Machiavelli's goals are the same as other civic-humanists; namely republican self-government. Pocock argues that both *The Prince* and *Discourses* make the argument that man's nature is fulfilled in civic participation which Pocock claims is derived from Aristotelian republicanism. Rather than an "Augustinian" life of contemplation, the end of man is the *vivere civile*.¹⁶

There are problems with this conclusion. First, it is not immediately clear that Machiavelli and his humanist contemporaries understand "civic life" in the same way. Pocock points us toward several passages in *The Prince* where Machiavelli writes that it is difficult to conquer republics, and the argument in the *Discourses* that the people are more trustworthy than a prince (P.V.20¹⁷, D.I.58.¹⁸ These passages fail though to prove Pocock's argument as other textual examples contradict them or suggest that they do not mean what he interprets them as

¹⁵ Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 160,168, 192.

¹⁶ Pocock, 74-75. Pocock and many other scholars of consider Machiavelli a link between classical republicanism and later English and American republican thought are greatly indebted to the thought of Hannah Arendt. Despite, their mistakes, Pocock and the others are correct in asserting that Machiavelli is "civic" minded. Which is an important corrective to the Straussian tendency to highlight the "theoretical" side of Machiavelli. Their mistake is in misinterpreting the nature of his civic republicanism and how it relates to that of the classics, humanists, and latter moderns. Compare Pocock's *Machiavellian Moment* to Paul Rahe's *Republics Ancient and Modern: Classical Republicanism and the American Revolution*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

¹⁷ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, translated and with an introduction by Harvey C. Mansfield. 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998). References to *The Prince* will be chapter and page number.

¹⁸ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*. Translated by Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). References to the *Discourses* will be by book, chapter, and paragraph number.

arguing. Pocock therefore is forced to fall back on his historicist methodology which argues that Machiavelli and the humanists must share a mostly similar vision because they share the same intellectual context. Unfortunately this means that he is forced to argue along the lines of “at the back of our minds must lurk the possibility that for even Machiavelli, men who have been citizens have known the realization of their natures or *prima forma*.”¹⁹ Pocock’s assumption that Machiavelli must have had the same goal in mind as the other humanists because he lived at the same time therefore has the unfortunate effect of covering over his insights into the radical nature of Machiavellian republicanism.

Part of the reason Pocock claims that Machiavelli is so close to the humanists, is that he misunderstands the cosmological basis of the humanists and the classics. Pocock’s contention is that the humanists were rebelling against Augustinian Christianity is problematic but he is correct in arguing that classical thought was important to the humanists. He fails to grasp though that classical thought and therefore the humanists are not contesting against time or *Fortuna* as he believes. Polybius’ cycle is not something to overcome politically but through *contemplation*. Pocock fails to grasp that for the classics the cosmos is something to come into alignment with, not contest. The power of fortune may increase in the minds of the humanists in contrast to the classics but they do not share the idea of combativeness of Machiavelli. In this case it would seem that Pocock has allowed his understanding of Machiavelli to cloud his interpretation of other thinkers of the period.

Quentin Skinner’s interpretation of Machiavelli follows Pocock in decisive respects but in many ways fails to reach Pocock’s understanding of Machiavelli’s innovativeness. Skinner though in other ways provides a more theoretically comprehensive argument than Pocock due to

¹⁹ Pocock, 165.

his larger body of methodological literature. In a series of articles dealing with the history of political thought Skinner articulates a formidable case for the importance of historical context and argues that that no thinker can be understood outside of their time and place. For instance, in Skinner's interpretation of Machiavelli's *Prince* and *Discourses* he argues that the books must be understood in the context of other writings about political society in Renaissance Italy. Therefore a study of *The Prince* requires a comparison to other contemporary works of the "mirror of princes" genre by writers such as Pontano, Patrizi, and Castiglione. Skinner's assumption though is that a thinker never addresses timeless questions and can only be attempting to answer questions pertinent to their own time. "That Classic texts cannot be concerned with our questions and answers, but only with their own," and that therefore there is "simply no hope of seeking the point of studying the history of ideas in the attempt to learn directly from the classic authors by focusing on their attempted answers to supposedly timeless questions."²⁰

Building off of this in the same article, Skinner makes the claim that we cannot inflate an author's intentions with his "retrospective significance". While it may be legitimate to call a writer a founder (e.g. Machiavelli of modernity), but it is not to call that his intention.²¹ In other words Machiavelli could not have intended to found something that did not exist. One can wonder though how Skinner intends to interpret Machiavelli if he has already decided that Machiavelli cannot teach him anything. As Machiavelli himself argues that there *are* timeless questions and his historical studies have proved it. As for the intention of founding something new; Skinner ignores Machiavelli's insistence that he plans to do just that (P.15.61, D.I.Preface.1). Skinner's historicist methodology forces him to turn to Machiavelli's social

²⁰ Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas", *History and Theory* 8 (1969): 50. To be fair to Skinner, it is part of my contention that Machiavelli certainly did not intend to found the modernity of Hobbes and Locke. However, he did *intend* to found something new.

²¹ Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding", 22-24.

context in order to understand him because Machiavelli only speaks to his contemporaries. Thus Skinner asks what Machiavelli's relation is to contemporary writers. However, Machiavelli never explicitly compares himself to other writers of his period but to thinkers before his time. The only "mirror of the prince" author Machiavelli openly acknowledges in his writings is Xenophon and his work, *The Education of Cyrus*. But in his study of Machiavelli in *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* Skinner never mentions Xenophon.

Due to Skinner's understanding of the importance of context he understands Machiavelli's political goals and cosmological views as being similar to other humanist writers. Politically, Machiavelli is a partisan of republican government. Skinner writes that there are two different teachings in *The Prince* and the *Discourses*. In the former the focus is on security and in the later on liberty. While *The Prince* seems to be a departure from civic-humanism the concern with liberty *The Discourses* is back on more familiar humanistic ground and Skinner goes so far to say that in *The Art of War* Machiavelli's humanism stops him from giving prudent military advice.²² Skinner acknowledges though that Machiavelli is not typical of the humanist writers. The greatest difference being that Machiavelli makes a clear break with Christian morality. The degree of the break though is downplayed as Skinner insists that Machiavelli does not separate morality per se from politics but Christian morality and that Machiavelli did think that traditional virtues were good in of themselves. The other more troubling aspects of Machiavelli are put down to his love of paradox or his habit of throwing out shocking asides. Skinner apparently cannot bring himself to believe that Machiavelli would actually be advising the murder of a Pope.

²² Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Volume One: The Renaissance*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 173-175.

Part of the reason that Skinner finds Machiavelli so congenial to his contemporaries is that like Pocock he understands Machiavelli sharing a cosmology with the humanists. Skinner writes that the humanists are revolting against an “Augustinian” conception of Christianity and return to a classical view of man’s creative power against fortune.²³ Understanding the humanists in this light certainly makes Machiavelli appear as one of their number. However, Skinner’s understanding of the humanists is as incorrect as Pocock’s. If anything, humanists such as Petrarch look to St. Augustine’s Neo-Platonism as an alternative to Scholasticism and in classical thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero there is no concept of man’s creative will. Instead there is the rationally ordered cosmos. Both Skinner and Pocock fail to grasp the similarities between the classics, St. Augustine, and the humanists. Indeed, if Skinner had followed his own advice and compared Machiavelli to other contemporary “mirror of princes” writers such as Castiglione he would see that the differences between Machiavelli and the humanists are great indeed. Ironically they fail to grasp the nature of Machiavelli’s context and therefore fail to recognize Machiavelli’s originality.

Where Pocock, Skinner, and those who follow their approach find the tradition of classical republicanism; Leo Strauss and his students see the originator of modern political philosophy. While initially in his career Strauss accepted the more common view that Hobbes founded modern political thought; he would later revise his position by arguing that the true founder was Machiavelli and Hobbes only carried on the Florentine’s achievement in an original manner.²⁴

²³ Skinner, *Foundations*, 98-100,110.

²⁴ Leo Strauss *Natural Right and History*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 176-78.

In *Thoughts on Machiavelli* the Machiavelli Strauss presents us with seeks to decisively break with tradition and takes his compass by how men actually live, not how they ought.²⁵ In other writings Strauss elaborates on this theme by arguing that Machiavelli articulates a position that finds grounding in ancient conventionalism. Instead of a harmonious cosmos Machiavelli believes that human beings are driven by necessity.²⁶ Following in Strauss' wake are scholars such as Harvey Mansfield and Vickie Sullivan who with few exceptions re-articulate Strauss' position; that Machiavelli breaks from the ancients, that he criticizes Christianity, founds modernity and paves the way for founding of commercial liberal politics in the thought of Hobbes and Locke.²⁷ Mansfield's work is particularly adept at revealing that Machiavelli views himself as a kind of prince and his readers make up potential recruits for his new army.²⁸

Since the Straussian scholars focus more on the text and therefore are more open to learning from Machiavelli rather than deciding where Machiavelli fits in they generally provide much better exegetical interpretations than their fellow scholars. This is not to say though that there are not flaws in the Straussian approach. Due to Strauss' style of writing it can be at times unclear as to what he interprets Machiavelli to be saying. Perhaps due to reverence to Machiavelli's own method Strauss prefers hinting rather than outright revealing. Strauss also tends to view Machiavelli's activity as primarily being contemplative rather than active.

Machiavelli's call to arms is generally understood metaphorically and his warfare interpreted as

²⁵ Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) 9-11, 43.

²⁶ "Machiavelli and Classical Literature," *St. John's University Press* 1970: 7-25.

²⁷ Sullivan differs from Strauss' on Machiavelli's understanding of the utility of religion in *Machiavelli's Three Romes: Religion, Human Liberty, and Politics Reformed*, (DeKlab: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996), though her whole overall approach to Machiavelli remains the same. In a rare act of scholarly humility, Mansfield merely states that he more fully maps out the continent that Strauss discovered.

²⁸ See Mansfield's *New Modes and Orders: a study of the Discourses on Livy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) and *Machiavelli's Virtue*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) along with "Machiavelli's Political Science," *The American Political Science Review*, 75 no. 2 (1981): 293-305.

spiritual warfare, an interpretation that is rearticulated quite remarkably by Harvey Mansfield.²⁹ However if the heart of things is found in the surface of things, it is hard to square Strauss' interpretation with Machiavelli's preference for action over contemplation and what he presents as practical military advice. We are left with the impression that Machiavelli is only peripherally concerned with the political situation in Italy, which goes against the Florentine's actions after his removal from office. By interpreting Machiavelli's writings on martial virtue as a metaphor for spiritual warfare, it becomes easier to overlook the differences between the Florentine and later moderns and instead focus on their agreements. Thus leading to a tendency in Strauss to fit Machiavelli into a larger unfolding of modernity; that he prepares the way for later thinkers such as Hobbes and Locke.³⁰

This approach is often overemphasised by scholars who follow Strauss whose work treats later liberals as the natural outgrowth of Machiavelli (though at times Mansfield is more willing to consider Machiavelli consisting of more depth than Hobbes or Locke³¹). The problem with this is that it is not clear Machiavelli would have approved of what succeeded him or that later liberals viewed Machiavelli as their "father".³² Many Straussian scholars are aware that Machiavelli does not quite fit among the moderns but because it is equally clear that he does not

²⁹ See Patrick Coby's discussion of Strauss' interpretation in Coby's *Machiavelli's Romans*, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 1999), 2-11. Coby argues that by focusing on the literary aspects Strauss fails to shed light on the overt call to arms in Machiavelli.

³⁰ See especially Strauss' essay *The Three Waves Modernity*. At least in the way Strauss presents it Machiavelli's thought finds its culmination in Locke, which leads to the countermovement of Rousseau which leads to Nietzsche and the end of modernity. The suggestion seems to be that after Machiavelli the moderns are trapped on a one way street.

³¹ Consider Mansfield's discussion of Machiavelli's relationship to liberal modernity in "Machiavelli and the Modern Executive", *Understanding the Political Spirit*, Catherine H. Zuckert, ed., (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 88-110.

³² See Arlene Saxonhouse's critique of this approach in her review of Sullivan's book *Machiavelli, Hobbes, and the Formation of a Liberal Republicanism in England* in *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 67, No. 4 (Autumn, 2005), 778-781. Saxonhouse points out that while Sullivan rightly criticizes Pocock for claiming Machiavelli for civic humanism she falls into a similar trap of viewing Machiavelli as a linchpin for later thinkers of liberal republicanism.

belong among the ancients their attempts to situate Machiavelli can become problematic.³³ Yet with few exceptions these writers continue to place Machiavelli in the same camp as Hobbes. To do so puts too much emphasis on the similarities between different modern thinkers at the cost of ignoring their differences. This approach may make the history of political thought fit together more easily it does not necessarily do justice to the thinkers themselves (something scholars following Strauss often accuse others of doing).

However, to follow Strauss' own reading would mean that the interpreter must be open to the differences between not just those with whom Machiavelli breaks with but those who come after him and therefore perhaps become aware of the possibility of the differences between Machiavelli and his successors outweigh their similarities and that these differences far from being mere nuance change how we understand the history of political thought.

Plan of Dissertation

Both of these major schools of thought in their eagerness to place Machiavelli in a particular camp fail to consider whether he belongs in a camp of his own. The best way forward therefore is to combine the best elements of these two major schools while putting aside their mistakes. The dissertation therefore is mostly exegetical but does not lose sight of the argument advanced by Pocock and others that while Machiavelli was a writer, he was still deeply concerned with effecting change in his contemporary political situation. With this in mind, an exegesis of Machiavelli's becomes much more profitable. This dissertation therefore in order to grasp the nature of the Machiavellian project starts from the premise that Machiavelli means what he says; that he is both a reviver of ancient virtue and the founder of new modes and orders.

³³ Consider Paul Rahe's prolific studies on the origins of modern republicanism and Machiavelli's relation to it. In Particular, *Republics: Ancient and Modern*, 249-290 and *Against Throne and Altar: Machiavelli and Political Theory under the English Republic*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

In order to understand what Machiavelli means by this however, I will first begin with a discussion of the Florentine's critique of ancient and humanist political thought. Once we understand what in particular Machiavelli found objectionable in classical political science and what he found useful, we can understand why he felt a new beginning, founded on the best of ancient political practice was needed.

Following my investigation into Machiavelli's break with his predecessors, the dissertation will next move to an examination of the major tenants of the Machiavellian project. In particular, I focus on the three elements that Machiavelli seeks to put into place once he is finished tearing down classical political science. They are his new civic education with which he intends to mould future princes with in place of the classical gentleman; his martial republic or new Rome, which planned from the beginning will be an improvement over the old Rome that it is based on and more congenial to worldly glory with its tumultuous nature than the quiet leisured city of Aristotle; and finally the armed founder-prophet who as the peak of human achievement Machiavelli intends to replace the ancients' contemplative philosopher. With these three fundamentals in place Machiavelli can purge the corruption engendered by Athenian philosophy and Christian revelation and bring about his new birth of politics.

Finally, with the Machiavellian project articulated I will finish the dissertation by examining how the moderns who followed the Florentine rejected his hopes for new princes, a new Rome, and founder-prophets and instead sought to tame politics and create the liberal-commercial regime the West experiences today. By concluding a study of Machiavelli with how and why the moderns rejected him I will show that the modernity that Machiavelli sought to found is one that is at war with the one associated with Locke and Montesquieu. My model here is Montesquieu's *Consideration on the Causes of the Greatness of Romans and Their Decline*; in

which despite his later efforts in laying the ground work for the modern commercial republic, Montesquieu was still able to look at the grandeur of ancient Rome and admire its achievements and learn from them, without desiring to emulate it. Similarly, by understanding just what Machiavelli's new birth of politics intends I hope I will produce a greater appreciation for the achievements of modern political thought and at the same time suggest that in order to avoid another revolt of the honour lovers modern political science must take into account the desire for political distinction and find a way to harness it for the ends of our modern liberal democratic regimes.

Chapter I

Why the Princes of Italy have lost their States: Machiavelli and the Humiliation of Italy

“How much better they would have done... to seek to be like the ancients in the strong and harsh things, not in the delicate and soft ones, and in those that they did under the sun, not in the shade”
-The Art of War

Introduction

In this Chapter I will begin the study of Machiavelli's new birth of politics by first investigating his assessment of ancient and humanist political science and why he concluded that it was necessary to overturn the classical consensus and found new modes and orders. For the Florentine's enterprise to succeed, he had to dissect the Classical Tradition and reveal its flaws. The challenge facing Machiavelli was daunting. His opponents were entrenched with the weight of millennia behind them. The philosophical-political consensus that Machiavelli encountered stretched back to the foundations laid down by Socrates. From ancients such as: Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, Isocrates, Polybius, Cicero, Sallust, Tacitus, and Suetonius to humanists like Petrarch, Bruni, Pomponazzi, Ficino, Castiglione, Rucellai, and Corsi; all of these thinkers share an adherence to what I call the classical political project (in addition to the Christian overtones for the humanists).

The classical political project was the attempt, begun by Socrates, to bring philosophy down from the heavens and establish itself in the homes of the city. The Socratics did not do this with the goal of reducing philosophy to a tool of the city, or to transform it into ideology; but with the intention of reorienting the city by opening it up to a trans-political standard. By doing so the classics sought to moderate the excesses of city; in particular this meant transforming the honour lover or timocrat into the classical gentleman who by virtue of his contemplative nature is a friend of philosophy. From Plato, Aristotle, Xenophon, and Cicero *andreia* or *virtus* are slowly replaced by *megalopsuchia* and *humanitas* as the defining characteristic of the gentleman.

Rather than the boldness of the warrior or the grandeur of the conqueror; the gentleman becomes concerned with civility, letters, and oratory.

Once the warrior becomes the gentleman, the city too undergoes a transformation. Where before politics was directed toward empire and preparation for warfare; the city under the rule of the gentleman becomes oriented by questions of justice and education in virtue. Of course, no one would claim that the ancients lived in a Golden Age of peace and harmony; where rulers debated the finer points of magnanimity, where the ruled were treated justly, and everyone did what they were fitted for. This being said, one can note an important historical shift in the nature of the classical statesman and the ancient city following the intervention of the Socratics in political life. We only have to look at the examples of Dion, Scipio Africanus the Younger, Cicero, Brutus, Cato, and Marcus Aurelius in contrast to the heroes of Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War* to see that this is the case.

It was this understanding of virtue, statecraft, and political practice that was revived thanks to the studies of the humanists in Renaissance Italy; and it became the foundation for the works of writers such as Petrarch, Bruni, and Castiglione. These writers in turn either directly participated in political affairs (Bruni served as Florentine Chancellor) or while remaining private individuals, were able to ensure that the classical political project was disseminated into the ethos of the Renaissance.

Machiavelli's judgement on the Classical Tradition is twofold. On one hand, he argues that the classical project has been quite successful. The goal of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero to tame the spiritedness of the timocrat and offering an object for their *eros* within an rationally ordered cosmos was not only successful in reforming ancient political life; but continues to dominate the politics of his own time thanks to the revival of classical learning by the humanists.

The success of the classical project however also proves to be its failure for Machiavelli. It is the continued adherence to the classical project that has allowed for the decay of political virtue resulting in the ruin of Italy in particular and the weakening of the West in general.

In their attempt to reform politics by introducing a trans-political standard, in adhering to a standard of perfection that stands above the horizon of the city, classical and humanist writers lessened the importance of achieving power, glory, and liberty for the actual city. For Machiavelli, by moving beyond the city the alliance of Athens and Jerusalem commits its greatest error. For once we conclude that obedience to a trans-political end (whether it be Christian faith or the Platonic Ideas), outweighs the claims of our fatherland, political writers and would-be statesmen begin to neglect questions of political necessity; what does the city require for it to flourish?

For Machiavelli nowhere is this neglect more evident than the state of military affairs and martial virtue. A point Machiavelli drove home by publishing his *Art of War* in his own lifetime rather than circulating it in private like his *Prince* or leaving it among his personal effects as he did with the *Discourses*. Again, and again in his writings, he returns to admonishing Italian and other Christian rulers for their ignorance of military affairs. In particular he takes the princes of Italy to task for becoming effeminate, decadent, and relegating the conduct of warfare to mercenaries while foreign kings dominate Italy. They fiddle while Rome burns.

The Florentine is not totally surprised by this development, for the breakdown of virtue into corruption and decay is part of the natural cycle. In *The Florentine Histories* he writes that “virtue gives birth to quiet, quiet to leisure, leisure to disorder, disorder to ruin (FH.V.1.185).”³⁴ Machiavelli admits that even the best political order will eventually decay (something I will

³⁴ *Florentine Histories*. Translated by Laura Banfield and Harvey C. Mansfield, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988). References to the *Florentine Histories* are done by book, chapter and page number.

discuss in more detail in Chapters III), thus necessitating the need and the opportunity for creating new modes and orders. The problem is that the return to virtue from disorder is being held back. No one in Italy has been able to build upon the ruins of the old pagan Rome and establish a new principality because of the suffocating presence of an “extraordinary force”.

What is this extraordinary force that on other occasions Machiavelli will refer to as a “sinister opinion”? For some interpreters of Machiavelli, the sinister opinion is the Christian religion, whose founder left politics in the tomb he walked out of. The Florentine is therefore motivated by an “anti-theological ire” and radicalizes the tradition of Latin Averroism.³⁵ I however, maintain that this argument is insufficient. While Machiavelli certainly believes that the meekness and otherworldliness of Christianity has been culpable in the decline of political virtue, to suggest that without Christianity acting as the go-between Machiavelli would have found ancient thought more acceptable ignores that Machiavelli ultimately lays the source of the lack virtue, and therefore the blame, on a misunderstanding of nature or fortune. Both the ancients and Christians have fooled themselves into believing in imaginary republics and principalities because of their understanding of the cosmos. For the ancients there is an eternal rational order to come into alignment with and the Christians there is the truth shown through God’s Revelation.

Machiavelli on the other hand, as his focus on war suggests is a thinker of strife. He is a member of what Plato calls Homer’s army. Against the Socratic claims of a rational order he pits the Epicureanism of Lucretius; understanding nature not as man’s friend but as capricious; being

³⁵ See Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*. Compare to Clark Merrill, “Leo Strauss’ Indictment of Christian Philosophy”, *The Review of Politics* Winter 2000, 77-105. As Merrill points out, Strauss at times suggest that if he had been born under Islam, Machiavelli would have been fairly happy as a follower of Averroistic tradition and would have lacked the anti-theological ire he possessed for Christianity. Without Aquinas, there would have been no Machiavelli. While Machiavelli certainly was motivated by his opposition to Christianity, it is my contention that even without Scholasticism, the Machiavelli revolt would have taken place. As Socrates points out to his young companions in the *Republic*, eventually the timocrats grow weary of being subservient to their philosophic masters.

is hostile or indifferent to human striving. There is no order for us to come into line with, nor hierarchy of ends or a standard of virtue that transcends necessity. Italy's rulers allowed themselves to believe in the classical understanding of nature, and believing that quiet times were permanent found themselves swept away by the storm of changing fortune. It was their belief in this understanding of nature that is ultimately to blame for the humiliation of Italy. Only after his readers are freed from the wishful thinking of both the ancients and the Christians will the "sinister opinion" truly be removed.

Yet while Machiavelli may find Lucretius useful as a weapon to wield against his opponents, the Roman poet and his philosophic master are still proponents of contemplation, which Machiavelli insists corrupts virtue. The Florentine therefore is in agreement with Cato the Elder. Humanists, priests, philosophers of all stripes, and Italian statesmen have become beguiled by imaginary principalities and republics; grown soft, and fail to see how politics and the world actually operates. In following their classical models the humanists are not restoring virtue but instead deepening the corruption, and when the humanist project was interrupted by the sound of French cannon as Charles VII descended from the Alps and brushed aside Italian arms on his way to Naples, the depth of the corruption was laid bare for those willing to see.

I will begin this Chapter with a discussion of the components of classical and humanist political science that Machiavelli believed were most to blame for the corruption. Once the position of his predecessors has been lined out, I will turn to why Machiavelli so strongly believed that the classics were so badly mistaken; regarding politics, and human nature itself. Once we understand why Machiavelli thought the classics had so greatly erred, we can better grasp not only what Machiavelli hoped to put in their place, but the stronger foundation he hoped to build on.

The Classical Political Project

Before I examine the contours of the classical project, I first need to outline the problem the project was designed to solve. To do this I will briefly sketch out the teaching on spiritedness as it is presented in the writings of the pre-Socratic poets, historians, and sophists. In its appearance in the poetic works of Homer, *thumos* or spiritedness is closely linked with anger, grief, victory, hope, and fear. Indeed, upon reading the *Iliad* there is ample evidence to suggest that it is the *thumos* of Achilles that serves as the driving instrument of the plot. When the poem opens we find Achilles angrily withdrawing from the Achaean camp; furious that Agamemnon has taken the slave-girl Brises from him, whom he had captured earlier in the war. With his honour slighted, the hero spitefully stays on the sidelines watching as his fellow Greeks are pushed to the edge of defeat by Hector. It is only the death of Patroclus his comrade by Hector's hands that brings a wrathful Achilles back to the war. His rage is so great that after slaying Hector he desecrates the body of the Trojan prince and refuses to conduct the funeral rites for Patroclus.

Achilles' anger and grief are only cooled by the pleading of Priam for the return of his son's body and a reminder from the shade of Patroclus that he will not be able to enter the Underworld until the rites are performed. The spiritedness of Achilles is chaotic, undisciplined and violent. A slight to his honour sees him abandon the war, and his rage and grief are so great to cause him to literally rage against a river. It is not without reason that the *Iliad* begins with Homer's invocation to the muse to sing of the wrath of Achilles.³⁶

Other Homeric characters share the passion of Achilles. Hector for instance takes Achilles' armour from the dead Patroclus, knowing that this will only enrage Achilles more. He

³⁶ Homer, *The Iliad*, translated by Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin Classics, 1990).

then returns to the battlefield the next day; conscious that his death is a certainty but his honour demands that he faces Achilles. We are told in the *Odyssey* that after Achilles' death Ajax and Odysseus quarrel over Achilles' shield leading to his death. So angered is Ajax that even as a shade he refuses to speak with Odysseus in Hades. Other post-Homeric accounts expand upon Ajax's death. In Sophocles play *Ajax* once Achilles' armour is awarded to Odysseus the goddess Athena puts him under a spell. Imagining that a flock of sheep are the Greek leaders he slaughters them. Upon realizing his mistake and humiliated at his diminished honour he takes his own life rather than live in shame.³⁷

The poetic account of *thumos* reveals the primordial depths from which the passions spring. *Thumos* emerges suddenly and violently in the contest over goods, possessions, and status. This overwhelming passion reflects a deeper concern over the ephemeral nature of human achievements in a hostile universe.³⁸ According to the poets, this anxiety over the fleeting character of life's accomplishments drives human beings to hold on to and defend what they have all the more. For those with the most spiritedness, it pushes them to carry out deeds of great renown so that they can achieve some form of immortality.

It is with this in mind that Homer presents Achilles in the *Iliad* facing a crucial choice. When Agamemnon's embassy comes to convince Achilles to return to the war; he recounts to them his mother Thetis warning him "that two fates bear me on to the day of death. If I hold out here and I lay siege to Troy, my journey home is gone, but my glory never dies. If I voyage back

³⁷ See Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, translated by Rolfe Humphries (Indianapolis: Indiana University, 1955), Book XIII, 305-309 in comparison to Sophocles' *Ajax*.

³⁸ See Waller R. Newell *Ruling Passion: The Erotics of Statecraft in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 43-48.

to the fatherland I love, my pride, my glory dies".³⁹ Achilles chooses glory, and even though he perishes outside the walls of Troy, the memory of him and of his deeds lives on.

If the pursuit and attainment of glory becomes the best method of satisfying the desire for immortality, then the life of the timocrat who pursues honour through political ambition and martial virtue takes centre stage. Kings, conquerors, tyrants, and warriors become the models of the highest human types for others to follow. Even those who do not directly participate in politics still make statecraft, the pursuit of glory and empire the focus of their concern.

Herodotus tells us that he choose to write his *Histories* so that "from decay the remembrance of what men have done, and of preventing the great and wonderful actions of the Greeks and the Barbarians from losing their due meed of glory; and withal to put on record what were their grounds of feuds."⁴⁰ Herodotus succeeds in his undertaking. How can we fail to remember the wily Themistocles at Salamis or Leonidas and his Spartans fighting to the last in the pass at Thermopylae?

Thucydides too asks us to make the political things the principal concern of study. His work deals strictly with the greatest political act, war, and not just any war. For the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians, which he calls the greatest motion, reveals the truth of the human condition. Thus in the *Peloponnesian War* the great statesmen bestride the stage: Pericles and his Funeral Oration, Demosthenes brashly landing at Pylos, Brasidas marching through the North, and Alcibiades bewitching Athens. As for Thucydides himself, while he suggests that the contemplation and understanding of the political things is higher than actively pursuing empire and freedom (like his Diodotus) his focus does not go above the city. His discussion of the

³⁹ *The Iliad*, Bk. 9, 497-505.

⁴⁰ Herodotus, *The Histories*, translated by Aubrey De Sélincourt (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 3.

plague in Athens, and the question of whether the gods support justice, revolve around their impact on human affairs, not how they transcend them.

While the accounts that Herodotus and Thucydides provide certainly ensure that we remember the glorious deeds of Greeks and non-Greeks and guarantees that Pericles and the others achieve a form of immortality satisfying the needs of the timocrat; we are also reminded of the dangers that the effort to satisfy this desire as it is described by the pre-Socratics entails. The account of spiritedness that the poets provide us with emphasise the primordial depths from which it springs. As I noted earlier, *thumos* is most closely related to wrath, recklessness, and violence. Faced with the evanescence of our lives, *thumos* drives the most spirited souls to rashly seek to attain glory as the only way human beings can achieve some form of immortality; making *thumos* dangerous to the stability political life.

I have already noted the disruptive effect Achilles' *thumos* had upon the Trojan War in the *Iliad*, but we also see its effects in historical works. Whether it's Herodotus' portrayal of Xerxes drive for Persian domination or Thucydides implying the true cause of the Peloponnesian War was Sparta's fear about its loss of status. While the passion of *thumos* can have a positive outcome, as Thucydides shows the recklessness of Demosthenes and Brasidas leading to victories for both the Athenians and the Spartans; the Athenians indignation at an ally's betrayal sees them nearly go through with a terrible injustice.⁴¹ Thucydides most clearly displays the quandary with Pericles' Funeral Oration. While the Oration celebrates the Athenians' political daring, Thucydides has Pericles conclude by proclaiming "we have compelled every sea and land

⁴¹ Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, translated by Steven Lattimore (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1998), Bk.3.37-49, the "Mytilenean Debate."

to become open to our daring and populated every region with lasting monuments of our acts of harm and good".⁴²

The Athenian ambition for imperial greatness fails to take into consideration the morality of its actions. There may be monuments of harm and good, but the important thing for the Pericles and the Athenians is that there are monuments. This drive for greatness takes complete hold of the Athenians at the time of the Sicilian Expedition. The Athenians are so possessed with the grandeur of the idea of conquering Sicily, so filled with passion, that they never stop to consider the difficulties that stand in their way. Indeed, so enamoured of the idea that Nicias' attempt to damper their ambitions by outlining the difficulties inflames them all the more. Yet once the *Hermae* are defiled the Athenians' passion for conquest is replaced with dread and foreboding. The *thumos* of the city and its leading citizens pushes Athens into overreaching abroad and consuming itself at home. In Thucydides and Herodotus the grandeur and the danger of political spiritedness is on full display, yet they refuse to enter the political arena and instead take pleasure in the contemplation of the motion of the human and natural things. Since they view nature as *kinesis*, neither writer believes a cure for the danger of spiritedness can be provided.

The teachings of the sophists only add to the danger of spiritedness to the city. While Herodotus and Thucydides remain private men disseminating their teaching for a select few; the sophists publicly enter the marketplace proclaiming their "wisdom". They inoculate in their youthful aristocratic students the belief that *phusis* and *nomos* are at odds and that therefore there is no natural basis for morality. In Plato's presentation Gorgias admits that he does not teach virtue and justice as part of his art of rhetoric.⁴³ Since rhetoric has no moral implications and

⁴² Thucydides, 2.41.

⁴³ Plato, *Gorgias*, translated by Donald J. Zeyl (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1987), 452d-453a.

only consists of teaching persuasion, the sophists encourage the politically ambitious that the best life, the life most according to nature is the life of the tyrant. The “natural master”, as Callicles describes him in the *Gorgias* stands above and against the weak many. For the natural master ‘s ambition to be truly satisfied they must become the tyrant of the city and enslave the *demos*; or barring that imitate Periclean imperialism and meet out tyranny on other cities. The sophist meanwhile satisfies his desire for recognition by teaching the would-be tyrant on how to achieve power in a public manner. The passion for honour and distinction as understood by the pre-Socratics therefore opens the door for tumult at home and empire abroad and threatens the foundations of city itself.

Socrates and his progeny recognized the danger that spiritedness poses to political communities no less than Herodotus or Thucydides. Yet while these pre-Socratic “wise men” were resigned to the problem of spiritedness and choose not to directly intervene in political life; preferring to observe in private and subtly encourage moderation in the face of the *kinesis* of nature; the Socratic school, following the example of Plato, argued that spiritedness is only a danger if it is not properly moulded. If the timocrat can be brought to understand that true happiness can be achieved not by a life of tyranny or imperial conquest, but by living a life of virtue in accord with the rationally ordered cosmos (and potentially leaving behind the political life for one of contemplation); then a measure of order can be established and the city can be brought to rest for a time.⁴⁴

This can only be done if philosophy enters the political arena and attempts to rule, in one form or the other.⁴⁵ Thus in the words of Cicero; Socrates was the first to call philosophy down

⁴⁴ See Newell, *The Erotics of Statecraft*, 2-4, 103-140.

⁴⁵ This goes against Leo Strauss’ claim that philosophers do not seek to rule. As my argument makes clear, despite my obvious debt to Strauss, the thesis of my dissertation is in part directed against his thought.

from the heavens and establish it in the cities, to introduce it in households, and to compel it to inquire about men's life and manners as well as about the good and bad things; thus founding political philosophy. The primary goal of classical political philosophy therefore becomes the endeavour to harness or tame *thumos* in the service of reason; to bring the timocrat under the rule of the philosopher and bring actual cities into closer accord with the city in speech or best regime.⁴⁶

The main obstacle to the success of this project is its very *sine quo non*, the support of political men. While Sophists such as Protagoras, Thrasymachus, and Gorgias may view the Socratic philosopher as a rival for the attention of the city, the rulers or the potential rulers are the Socratic's main focus of concern. Plato confirms this for us by presenting Socrates for the most part in the company of aristocratic youths, ranging from Callicles and Alcibiades to Plato's brothers Glaucon and Adeimantus.

The difficulty of carrying out a *periagoge* on these youths is best demonstrated by Socrates' struggle to win over Callicles in the *Gorgias*. Plato presents the young aristocrat on the verge of embarking on a political career. Unlike Gorgias himself, who remains calm in the face of Socrates' criticism, Callicles' spiritedness erupts in a rage against Socrates. While at first he seeks to "save" Socrates by encouraging him to put aside childish things like philosophy; under the fierce Socratic examination he eventually has enough of the Socratic teaching. In particular, he is aghast at Socrates' contention that the greatest Athenian statesmen, men such as Themistocles and Pericles failed as leaders and that only Socrates himself truly practices politics in Athens. Socratic politics do not stand very high in Callicles' estimation. His admiration is

⁴⁶ The possible exception to this shared goal is Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*. Xenophon's Cyrus is not guided by philosophic reflection but by political prudence. He is coldly calculative rather than erotic. This no doubt is the main reason that Machiavelli preferred Xenophon (minus his Socratic writings) to all other ancient writers.

reserved for the grandeur of political life. He hopes to follow in the wake of Themistocles and restore imperial greatness to Athens with himself at the pinnacle. Socrates' demotion of statecraft to a kind of household management offers nothing to a man who has been convinced his desire for honour and glory can only be found on the battlefield or becoming the tyrant of a great city. Socrates had attempted to show the aspiring politician that his *eros*, currently directed at the boy Demos and the Athenian *demos* (despite his disgust with the "sheep"); in other words, aimed at winning political distinction, can only be properly satisfied by philosophy.⁴⁷ Callicles will have none of this however, and Socrates ends the dialogue in discourse with himself, as his interlocutor simply refuses to participate. For the man who considers himself a natural master, the Socratic statesman more closely resembles a eunuch monitoring a household than another Cyrus the Great. To Callicles, the Socratic project seems like a form of castration.⁴⁸

Similarly, Socrates' attempt to win over the great Alcibiades also ends in failure. While Alcibiades proves to be more open to Socrates' philosophic teaching, revealing to the participants of *The Symposium* that he considers the speeches of Socrates to be things of beauty and Socrates himself being the essence of moderation; he also informs them of his break with his former mentor. Partially this is due to his inability to seduce Socrates into seducing him, but as Alcibiades suggests the main reason appears to be the shame he was forced to feel in Socrates' presence because he was not virtuous enough. The statesman then left the company of Socrates with dire results.⁴⁹

Despite this difficulties Plato suggests that the philosopher can bring the politically spirited under their guidance, and that the timocrat can find satisfaction in coming into alignment

⁴⁷ *Gorgias*, 481d-482c.

⁴⁸ *Gorgias*, 483d-486d, 503b-509e.

⁴⁹ Plato, *Symposium*, translated by Seth Benardete (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 215a-222b.

with the eternal. In account of Diotima presented in the *Symposium* the founder or legislator is placed on the second rung in the ascent to the eternal. In this way the timocrat is able to participate in the eternal order and reach the peak of political achievement.⁵⁰ In the *Republic*, the spirited Glaucon begins the dialogue unsure whether he can find happiness in a life dedicated to justice or injustice. Socrates decides to show Glaucon the correct path by founding with him a city in speech. The evolution that the city in speech goes through mirrors the changes in Glaucon himself. The young man who objects to the city of pigs because he desires his relishes becomes purged of his excessive desires and becomes moderate; convinced of the necessity to strip the auxiliaries of any private possessions or attachments so that they are completely dedicated to the city. Where at first he is shocked at Socrates' suggestion that philosophers must rule, by the end he is disappointed that the city will only remain a pattern in the heavens. While the city and speech may remain in speech only, Glaucon at least has been turned around and made a friend of philosophy.⁵¹

The Platonic solution therefore to the problem of political spiritedness is to forge an alliance between reason and the passion of spiritedness to police desire. Thus in the *Republic* the martial auxiliaries become subservient to the philosopher-kings. As the above makes clear, even though Plato realized the unlikely possibility of philosophers ever ruling directly, he and the other Socratic philosophers remained committed to the goal of establishing the indirect rule of philosophy by making the ruling classes allies of philosophy.

We can see the project being carried out more thoroughly in Aristotle's political and ethical writings. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle begins with the Homeric warrior-hero and transforms him into the man of *megalopsuchia*; the magnanimous man, whom Aristotle tells us

⁵⁰ Plato, *The Symposium*, 208c-209c.

⁵¹ Plato, *The Republic*, 2nd edition translated by Allan Bloom, (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

is an adornment of all the virtues. This process begins with Aristotle's reworking of courage. He slowly downplays the role of daring on the battlefield arguing that the magnanimous man doesn't take risks all time but when it is appropriate. By taking away the reckless daring of an Achilles and introducing the magnanimous man the ideal becomes the reflective contemplative gentleman. The gentleman is concerned with honour, but only the greatest honours. He is beautiful, a man of full size who speaks steadily with a deep voice, and has a slow way of moving. The Aristotelian gentleman is not concerned with honour on the battlefield or becoming a conqueror; but flourishing through the habituation of the practical and intellectual virtues.⁵² The Aristotelian virtues though can only be practiced if the gentleman has leisure. Therefore Aristotelian political science replaces the Spartan regime dedicated to war with the polity dedicated to peace and leisure for the cultivation of virtue. The city is brought to rest so that the gentleman class may enjoy the virtues of reflection under the influence of the philosopher. Thus the *Ethics* and the *Politics* eventually lead to the conclusion that the contemplative life is the happiest life, and therefore the life the virtues are ultimately aimed at. The magnanimous man is certainly no philosopher, but due to his character formation under Aristotle's ethics has been made the friend of philosophy and philosophers and are oriented by reason.⁵³

Cicero continues this pattern in the Roman world. Despite his initial claim in his *res publica* that the life of action stands higher than the life of the mind; the argument of the dialogue in the end undermines this claim. Cicero has Scipio initially echo Socrates' claim that we should not concern ourselves with natural phenomenon but instead focus on the human things. However, we soon learn that Scipio himself would often discuss these very same

⁵² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by Joe Sachs, (Newburyport: Focus Publishing), Bk. 3, 1109b30-1119a18; Bk. 4, 1119a20-1128b36.

⁵³ See Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 142.

phenomenon even under the very walls of Carthage. Finally, the *res publica* ends with the Dream of Scipio (modeled on Plato's Myth of Er), which emphasises the smallness of the human things in contrast to the divine order of the cosmos.⁵⁴

The effect of Platonic-Aristotelian political philosophy is to replace nature as motion for nature as rest and orient politics to the eternal unchanging Ideas. Not only is the tyrant no longer the highest human type but even the benevolent monarch has been demoted to the second rank. The life of action has been replaced by the contemplative life. The ideal is no longer the warrior or the conqueror but the gentleman devoted to leisure, and the city devoted to war is replaced with one aimed at peace.⁵⁵

The effect of this new orientation anchored by the unchanging eternal order can be seen approach taken toward political life by the observers of politics following the Socratic revolution. Plutarch's *Lives* and Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars* are not biographies strictly speaking; but judgments of political men from a moral standard that transcends politics. Post Socratic writers are no longer as concerned with the grandeur of political actions, but on how closely they adhere to a natural order. Since the Ought becomes more important than the Is; the importance of politics itself recedes. Politics for a Thucydides, the student of sophists, is of greater significance than it is for Xenophon the student of Socrates. Following the guidance of political writers the ancient statesman undergoes a transformation as well.

Plutarch notes the revolution by pointing out the difference in the actions between the Athenian general Nicias in his retreat from Syracuse, and those of Dion on the eve of his campaign against Dionysus. While Nicias was filled with superstitious dread at the sight of an eclipse Dion paid it no mind. This only happened according to Plutarch because "the reputation

⁵⁴ Cicero, *The Republic*, translated by Niall Rudd, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁵⁵ Aristotle, *The Politics*, translated by Carnes Lord (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1271a42-b10.

of Plato, shining forth by his life, and because he subjected natural necessity to divine and more excellent principles took away the obloquy and scandal that had attached to such contemplations and obtained these studies currency among all people.⁵⁶

While the difference between Nicias and Dion reveals the effect of an education in natural philosophy we can also see the change in political and moral affairs as well. These include Scipio modeling himself on Xenophon's Cyrus, Cato the Younger reading the *Phaedo* before committing suicide following his defeat by Caesar, Marcus Brutus comforting himself with the works of Plato before Philippi and the case of Cicero himself. The character of these statesmen could not be more different than what Homer presents of Achilles. Nor can we imagine King Leonidas and his Spartans reading philosophy the night before Thermopylae.

Perhaps the most illuminating example of the difference between the psychology of the pre-Socratic statesman and the post Socratic can be found in a comparison of the presentation of Xerxes in Herodotus and Scipio Africanus the Younger in Polybius. Watching his army cross over the Hellespont, Xerxes is moved to tears, knowing that all his army and his works will one day fade away and be forgotten. Scipio Africanus the Younger is also moved by the sight of the final downfall of Carthage, knowing the same will one day come to Rome. Yet, while Xerxes is moved to tears by the realization of the finitude of the human things and the grandeur of his empire will be forgotten; Scipio is more serene. Polybius tells us he had never heard a remark more befitting of a statesman.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Plutarch, "The Life of Nicias", *Plutarch's Lives*, translated by John Dryden (New York: The Modern Library, 1992), 718-19. Indeed, one cannot help but draw a connection between Plato's teaching, his repeated voyages to Syracuse, and Dion's attempt to overthrow Dionysus' tyranny. The failure of Plato's time in Syracuse no doubt contributed to his contention that it is impossible for philosophers to rule directly. Something Martin Heidegger among others forgot.

⁵⁷ See Herodotus, *The Histories*, 433-34; Polybius *Histories*, XXIX.21, XXXVIII.21.

If we consider this in light of Cicero's presentation of Scipio and his Dream I would suggest that under the influence of Socratic political philosophy the classical statesman has become oriented by what transcends politics. The Socratic project of bringing philosophy into the cities and transforming the ruling classes and the city itself on the whole was a success. While no classical city or the Roman Principate ever truly reflected the Best Regime and tyranny and imperial war remained; the formulation of the philosopher, the gentleman-ruler, and the aristocratic regime as a method for understanding and judging politics was successful as possible in shaping classical politics.

The Humanist Adaptation

While Medieval Christianity continued in a fashion the classical formulation of the philosopher, the gentleman-ruler and the regime as the guideposts for political philosophy; it could not help but undermine the connection to political life that the classics had maintained even while they sought to transform it. After all, while the ancients celebrate the best of political life, Christianity (unlike Judaism or Islam) at its core is apolitical. Where Cicero tells us that Socrates was the first to call philosophy down from the heavens into the city and therefore founded political philosophy; the Gospels report Jesus informing Pilate that his kingdom "was not of this world" and teaching his followers to "render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's". Christianity by its otherworldly nature cannot help but undermine the attachment to political things; the love of honour, patriotism, and martial courage.

Thus despite their debt to the Greek and Roman pagans the political thought of Augustine and Aquinas lacks the richness of their predecessors' thought. Augustine dismisses the achievements of the earthly city as "splendid vices" which pale against the glory of the City of

God. Aquinas meanwhile, despite following Aristotle closely and more open to the merits political life still lacks the depth of Aristotle's political teaching. This is most clearly seen in Aquinas' discussion of kingship which largely ignores the republican aspect of Aristotle's politics. Even Dante, who certainly kept more distance between the Church and himself than Augustine or Aquinas is still is the author of *De Monarchia*; not a book on a universal republic. It would be left to humanists ranging from Petrarch to Castiglione with their emphasis on rhetoric and civic education to more fully restore the vigour of classical political analysis that would form the context which Machiavelli would react against most directly.

However, I do not wish to suggest that a simple division can be made with Medieval Christian political thought in one camp, and the humanists joining with the ancients in the other. Such a classification merely repeats in a different fashion the mistaken account of the Medieval era being dominated by the Aristotelianism of the scholastics and the Renaissance witnessing the revival of Platonism; or as it is sometimes argued, while the scholastics centred their studies on God, the humanists shifted the focus to man.⁵⁸

To better grasp the nature of the humanist revival we must first go back to its origins and how from its beginning in Petrarch's recovery of classical learning it adapted itself to the classical political project as demonstrated by Castiglione's *The Courtier*. We return therefore to

⁵⁸ This is certainly the account presented by Quentin Skinner who puts forward the claim that the humanism built on the foundation laid by Petrarch, should be understood as revolting against an Augustinian inspired life of contemplation in favour of a robust *vita activa* based on the writings of ancient authors. For Skinner, humanists such as Manetti, Pico della Mirandola and others follow Petrarch's "classical" conception of virtue as man's creative powers being brought to bear against fortune. As we have seen, this is certainly not an understanding of virtue that the classics would have recognized and neither would the Renaissance humanists. See Skinner; *Foundations of Modern Political Thought* vol. I., 94-101. Skinner's misinterpretation of classical and humanist conceptions of virtue explains his and his fellow contextualists inability to fully grasp the nature of Machiavelli's thought. They mistake Machiavelli's conception of virtue for that of the humanists and the classics. For a corrective to this approach see Waller Newell; "How Original is Machiavelli? A Consideration of Quentin Skinner's Interpretation of Virtue and Fortune", *Political Theory* 15 (1987), 612-634 and Nathan Tarcov "Quentin Skinner's Method and Machiavelli's *Prince*," *Ethics* 92 (1982).

the beginning. The name humanism comes from the *Studia Humanitatis* or the humanities. Therefore humanism should not be considered to be a specific philosophy but an educational or cultural program based on studies of classical sources with the goal being an education towards the desirable type of human being.⁵⁹ The humanists opposed and criticized the schoolmen because in their view the scholastics were too focused on questions of natural philosophy and were unconcerned with moral philosophy.

Far from turning away from questions of faith, the early humanists were profoundly concerned with religious life and were deeply opposed to the “scientism” of the Aristotelians. In a letter to Boccaccio, Petrarch famously wrote the schoolmen’s answer to any question was to sound out the name of Aristotle. Despite the rhetorical passion of Petrarch it is unwise to view the early humanists as being completely opposed to Aristotle or natural philosophy. Since it was an educational program, the early humanists tended to be teachers of rhetoric or literary men and were not arguing for the removal of natural philosophy from the school but instead were trying to move their own studies to a position of greater prominence. The early humanists therefore should not be considered thinkers of the level of Aquinas or Ficino who adapted his Neo-Platonism to the humanist movement. In the beginning they were rhetoricians, poets and writers (though Petrarch was willing to accept the title of “moral philosopher) who sought to bring about reform.

Why did they think reform was necessary? The humanists were concerned that the scholastic focus on natural philosophy did not give proper attention to moral virtue and their version of Aristotle appeared to undermine Christianity. However, with the arrival in Italy of Greek scholars fleeing from the decaying remnant of the Byzantine Empire the West was given access to an unprecedented amount of lost writings and would eventually lead to better

⁵⁹ Paul Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and its Sources*, edited by Michael Mooney (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 22-24.

translations of the Greek texts, including the work of Plato and Aristotle. Petrarch did not know Greek but he encouraged its study and corresponded with Byzantine scholars. The influx of new texts led to a call to go back to the origins; particularly back to Augustine and the roots of Christianity. Petrarch, as a devotee of Augustine encouraged the reading of Plato. Not because he knew Plato but because Augustine gave him his approval. Petrarch's writings are centered on how an individual was to lead his life as a moral being with a distinctive Augustinian flavour in its depreciation of worldly honour.

In *On the Remedies of Good and Bad Fortune* Petrarch creates a series of dialogues between Reason, Hope, and Joy. The purpose of the dialogues is to show the frailty of human things. Reason spends the dialogue rebuking Hope and Joy and trying to rein them in. In the first dialogue Joy and Hope celebrate their youth, but Reason responds that their life is already passing away. When Joy tries to celebrate its physical beauty Reason responds that physical beauty is fleeting.⁶⁰ All of the dialogues aim at undermining the things of this world. Fame and happiness so praised by Joy and Hope are given a thrashing by Reason. Of fame Reason exclaims that "Fame, as certain wise men have said, is almost a shadow of virtue; it accompanies it and follows it..." and happiness is not something anyone can possess until they depart "this vale of miseries"⁶¹. The arguments presented by Petrarch find their inspiration in the writings of Augustine. The honours of this life are worthless. True happiness is found in the next life which comes from faith.

We can see further evidence of Petrarch's critique of the *viva activa* and the pursuit of honour in his rebuking of Cicero in his epistles. In his letter to the ancient statesman Petrarch

⁶⁰ Petrarch, "On the Remedies of Good and Bad Fortune" in *Renaissance Philosophy Volume I*, eds. Fallico and Shapiro (New York: The Modern Library, 1967), 7.

⁶¹ Good and Bad Fortune, 22-23.

rebukes Cicero for debasing himself by entering the political fray in the last days of the Republic. He tells him “how much better it would have been, how much more fitting for a philosopher, to have grown old peacefully in the country, meditating, as you yourself have somewhere said, upon the life that endures for ever, and not upon this poor fragment of life; to have known no fasces, yearned for no triumphs, found no Catilines to fill the soul with ambitious longings!”⁶²

Petrarch no less than his hero Augustine therefore is highly critical of public spiritedness and Petrarchian humanism then cannot be interpreted as a break from Augustinian Christianity. It is in fact an attempt to revive it. Instead of viewing his brand of humanism as a break with the Medieval Christian tradition a more accurate interpretation would be that it was a modification of the tradition. Now that the West had access to the lost classical writings Petrarch believed that it possible to the roots of the tradition and strengthen it. With his emphasis on moral virtue Petrarch thought he could help provoke a return to the intentions of the Christian Fathers. When he died Petrarch was believed to have amassed the largest library in the West. His followers took up the call and began a program of translating and publishing the rediscovered material coming out of the Greek East.

Seen in this light, Petrarchian humanism continues the tendency established by earlier Christian thinkers to emphasize the merits of the life of contemplation over the life of the timocrat to an even greater degree than the ancients. The emphasis on virtue transcending the city is carried forward by Petrarch’s *quattrocento* humanist heirs. Pico Della Mirandola directly echoes the classical teaching in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man* in formulating a teleology that places the philosopher as the highest human type and who in rising above his animal desires becomes a

⁶² Petrarch, *Letters*, translated by James Harvey Robinson and Henry Winchester Rolf, (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1909), 213.

creature of heaven and not of earth. Manetti in his *On the Dignity and Excellence of Man* similarly argues that true virtue is found only upon realizing the soul is of divine origin and by cultivating virtue one can attain the beatitude of tranquil immortality. Finally, Marsilio Ficino the greatest of the Renaissance Neo-Platonic philosophers made the central tenant of his Platonism the immortality of the soul. Arguing that the soul's immortality is an essential part of its dignity and if the soul was not immortal man's soul would be inferior to that of the beasts. The soul needs to be immortal because the aim of man and especially the philosopher is the ascent to the contemplation or the direct vision of God. The contemplative life is the highest form of human existence because it makes possible the contemplation of God or the eternal Ideas.⁶³

To demonstrate just how closely the humanists attempted to follow their classical masters within the Christian context, I will briefly consider the humanistic argument on behalf of the ideal of the classical gentleman *par excellence*, Baldesar Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*. Castiglione was among the most celebrated diplomats, scholars, and soldiers of the Renaissance and upon his death Emperor Charles V declared "I tell you, one of the finest gentlemen in the world is dead". While Castiglione himself was regarded as possessing many of the gentlemanly virtues; his ambition was to engender an entire class of virtuous gentlemen through his writings in order to correct the disorder plaguing Italy and the West and restore virtuous rule to Christendom. Castiglione admits that some may find his attempt to uncover the perfect courtier to be a vain pursuit for it may be difficult or impossible to find or cultivate a man as perfect as he wishes the courtier to be. However, he tells that if this is the case then he is glad to err in the company of Plato, Xenophon, and Cicero who also sought for the Idea of the Perfect Republic, the Perfect King and the Perfect Orator.⁶⁴

⁶³ *Renaissance Philosophy*, 65-101, 105-171.

⁶⁴ Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, translated by George Bull (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 35.

The Book of the Courtier is presented as a recollection of the gathering of the Court of Urbino over four evenings in March of 1507 after Pope Julius II had passed through the region. The group of gentlemen and ladies of the Court assemble around Elisabetta Gonzaga, the Duchess of Urbino and over the course of their gathering discuss what they would desire in the “perfect courtier”. The book therefore follows the classic “Mirror of Princes” genre which Castiglione himself alludes to in his dedicatory letter. Castiglione closely follows his classical models. The Urbino that he presents us with is an idealized version of history and the members of the Court themselves have been stripped of their more unappealing qualities and have been (in Platonic terms) made young and beautiful. Castiglione even follows the Platonic and Xenophonic model by claiming that he himself was on a mission to England and only heard a report of the discussion.

The first and second evenings are guided by a discussion of what qualities the group desires in their courtier. Following the leadership of Federico Fregoso and Count Lodovico the party generally agree that their courtier should be of noble birth, possess a natural beauty and carry themselves with grace. The courtier should vigorously pursue the practice of arms, be loyal and have an undaunted spirit. During battle they should ensure that they are seen doing courageous deeds yet never become boastful. They should be kind and avoid ostentation; only claiming the honours that they deserve.⁶⁵ The courtier should become proficient in the arts of speaking and writing, develop into a skilled musician and take up other forms of art, whether painting or sculpture; and finally they should be in love with the perfect lady.

The initial sketch of the perfect courtier that Castiglione’s characters provide reminds us of Aristotle’s magnanimous man. Despite their martial attributes, the courtier’s primary virtues

⁶⁵ *The Courtier*, 54-55.

are good manners, habits. He is tall but not too tall, an excellent speaker and writer, possesses grace and wit; and regularly partakes in hunting while competing in fencing and tennis to display his prowess and physical form. In short, Castiglione's courtier is the very model of the classical gentleman rather than a Christian Saint.

Like the classical gentleman, the virtues of the perfect courtier are not merely aesthetic. They serve an ethical purpose. The role of the courtier, and how they are to use their virtues becomes the main topic of discussion in the fourth book which takes place on the fourth and final evening of the gathering. After the third evening -in which Giuliano de' Medici defends the virtue of women against the arguments of signor Gaspare while sketching the perfect lady of the court- Ottaviano Fregoso takes up the task of explaining the end that the perfect courtier aims at. According to Ottaviano the end of the courtier is to win the mind and favour of the prince he serves so that he can and always will tell him the truth about all he needs to know, and to oppose the prince if he seeks to do something unworthy.⁶⁶ The goal then of the courtier is to guide the prince toward the practice of virtue and therefore bring about the possibility of virtuous rule.

By doing this Castiglione's courtier will act as the cure to what his Ottaviano describes as the corruption of evil living that Italy's rulers have fallen into. He relates that some princes hate reason and justice because they think that they act as a bridle to their desires. Castiglione has Ottaviano explicitly echo Plato and the other classics by arguing that reason must rule the passions and the prince must be brought to realize that true happiness can only be found allowing his soul to be guided by reason and justice. For in yet another resonance of Socrates' teaching in the *Republic*; Ottaviano declares that "if they enjoyed true knowledge there is no doubt that they would not fall into error".⁶⁷ Vice for Castiglione therefore has its roots in ignorance while virtue

⁶⁶ *The Courtier*, 284.

⁶⁷ *The Courtier*, 293.

is knowledge. Since the courtier is in possession of the virtues and has true knowledge they are able to teach the prince by example and therefore will be able to instil virtue into their ruler.

What will the prince be like once his education under the perfect courtier has been completed? “He will be very just, continent, temperate, strong and wise, full of liberality, munificence, religion and clemency; in short, he will earn glory and favour among men and God, through whose grace he will acquire that heroic virtue that will raise him above human limitations, and be capable of being regarded as a demigod rather than a mortal man”.⁶⁸

Once the prince himself has become virtuous the possibility of founding a just regime enters the discussion. After debating the merits of monarchies and republics, Ottaviano and the others conclude that monarchy is preferable because it is more in accord with the rational order of the cosmos. However, the monarch’s rule is not unlimited. They must assemble a council of the wisest gentlemen in their kingdom to serve as ministers and advisors; in effect creating the classics preferred rule of the *aristoi*.⁶⁹

It is therefore the duty of the good ruler to ensure that his subjects are able to live dignified lives in tranquility and how to make use of the fruits of leisure. Following Aristotle (and as we will see contra Machiavelli), Castiglione has his Ottaviano argue that

It is wrong to always be at war and not seek to attain peace as the objective; although to be sure, some rulers suppose that their principal aim must be to subjugate their neighbours, and in consequence they incite their people to become bellicose and aggressive in rapine, murder and so forth, and they encourage this with rewards, and call it virtue.⁷⁰

Such an approach is impossible to sustain unless a prince wishes to conquer the world.

Therefore rulers should

⁶⁸ The description of the virtuous prince as a demigod rather than a mortal man owes far more to a pagan mindset than a Christian.

⁶⁹ *The Courtier*, 293.

⁷⁰ *The Courtier*, 303.

“make their people warlike not for lust of conquest but in order to ensure the defence of themselves and their subjects against anyone endeavouring to enslave or injure them in any way, or to expel tyrants and give good government to those who are abused or to enslave those whose nature is such as to qualify them for slavery, with the purpose of governing them fairly and bringing them peace, tranquillity and leisure”.⁷¹

The aim of Castiglione’s humanist politics follow in the wake of Plato and Aristotle.

Castiglione’s best regime is a mixture of monarchy and aristocracy. Foreign policy is secondary to the internal maintenance of the regime which is concerned not with greatness understood as power but having virtuous citizens and subjects. For Castiglione, the courtier performs a similar political function in relation to the ruling classes as Plato and Aristotle did in their own time. He has Ottaviano claim “nor do I think that Aristotle and Plato would have scorned the name of perfect courtier, because it is perfectly clear that they themselves carried out the functions of courtiership to the same end, the former with Alexander the Great and the latter with the kings of Sicily”.⁷² By imitating the example of the ancient philosophers Castiglione’s perfect courtier (who perhaps is Castiglione himself) is able to guide gentlemen, ladies, and princes to the peak of virtue.

After discussing the proper arrangement of political life, Castiglione moves on to the conclusion of the dialogue which reveals itself to a free imitation of Plato’s *Symposium*. Once Ottaviano finishes his discussion of the ends of the courtier, Signor Gaspare raises a criticism. On the previous evening it had been decided that the perfect courtier must be in love. However, during Ottaviano’s treatment of the courtier’s relationship with the prince they determined that the courtier must be older so as to act as a mentor to the prince. Since according to Gaspare to be in love is only for the young, he asks how the courtier can know love while educating his prince.

⁷¹ *The Courtier*, 309.

⁷² *The Courtier*, 321.

At this point Pietro Bembo –who has stayed silent for most of the four evenings- interrupts to claim that even an old courtier can know love; going on to provide a re-articulation of Diotima’s Ladder. Love according to Bembo is the

longing to possess beauty; and since this longing can only be for things that are known already, knowledge must always of necessity precede desire, which by its nature wishes for what is good, but of itself is blind and so cannot perceive what is good. So Nature has ruled that every appetitive faculty or desire, be accompanied by a cognitive faculty or power of understanding.⁷³

Thus there are three ascending levels of faculties of the soul; the senses, rational thought and intellect (will), which correspond to three kinds of love. The lowest form of love is that which is based on sensual pleasure, the desire to possess the beautiful represented by the body; the second is the rational which loves the beautiful soul; and finally the highest which loves the beautiful itself, in its own simplicity and purity.

Once this is accomplished the courtier may leave behind the ephemeral nature of the human things and contemplate the eternal.

So instead of directing his thoughts to the outward world, as those who must do who wish to consider bodily beauty, let him turn within himself to contemplate what he sees with the eyes of the mind, which begin to be penetrating and clear sighted once those of the body have lost the flower of their delight; and in this manner, having shed all evil, purged by the study of true philosophy, directed toward the life of the spirit, and practiced in the things of the intellect, the soul turns to contemplate its own substance, and as if awakened from deepest sleep it opens the eyes which all men possess but few use and perceives in itself a ray of light which is the true image of the angelic beauty that has been transmitted to it, and of which in turn it transmits a faint impression of the body.⁷⁴

It is only by arriving at this peak of contemplation that we are able to “find a most happy end to our desires, true rest from our labours, a sure remedy for our miseries, a wholesome medicine for our infirmities, a most safe harbour from the raging storms of the tempestuous sea of this life”.⁷⁵

⁷³ *The Courtier*, 339.

⁷⁴ *The Courtier*, 339-40.

⁷⁵ *The Courtier*, 341.

Bembo concludes his discourse on love with a prayer to the god Love, tying the human desire for the beautiful with the fabric of the cosmos itself. At the conclusion of the prayer the group realizes that the night has past and dawn is breaking and as they depart to their bedchambers Castiglione ends the dialogue.

Castiglione therefore represents a re-articulation of the classical project. The gentleman-courtier must be educated in the virtues in order to instruct and guide his prince towards the attainment of virtue and to carry out virtuous rule. The end of politics is the cultivation of virtue; the proper regime therefore is a benevolent monarchy guided by an educated gentleman class. The education of the gentleman however ultimately points beyond the acquiring of virtues of the “great souled man” and the best regime to the contemplation of the eternal and the life of true happiness. Hence, the courtier fulfils the role of political philosopher, imitating the example of Plato and Aristotle in giving order to political life, educating the ruling class, and guiding the best toward the life of the mind.⁷⁶

While Castiglione’s *Courtier* was not published until 1529 (two years after the death of Machiavelli), its account of the perfect courtier and the ideal of the gentleman-ruler is reflected in the way the adherents of the *studia humanitatis* attempted to reform political life, just as the classics did before them. Marsilio Ficino and his circle carried out such a project in Florence in the years leading up to the French invasion of 1494. The great Neo-Platonic philosopher viewed himself as carrying out for Florence what Socrates has done for Athens. He would be his city’s “doctor of souls”. Through his relationships with the powerful families of Florence Ficino was able to shape how statesmen such as Lorenzo Medici and Bernardo Rucellai viewed political life.

⁷⁶ It is after an examination of Castiglione that Pocock and Skinner’s thesis on the cosmological commitments of the humanists begins to fall apart. Castiglione (along with Plato) are closer to their understanding of Augustine rather than arguing for a contest against nature. While the views that Skinner and other understand Machiavelli as having on this issue are true, he does not share them with the humanists.

Ficino's influence begins with the Medici during his youth. After Gemistus Pletho's visit in 1438 during the Council of Florence Cosimo de' Medici became convinced of the need to revive Platonic philosophy in Italy and turned only a few years later to the still youthful Ficino to establish a centre of learning and to translate Plato's dialogues. As his biographer reports; upon meeting Ficino Cosimo declared that he had been sent down from heaven to heal souls.⁷⁷

After the removal of the Medici from power in 1494 the influence of Ficino's Platonism continued to keep its hold on the Florentine aristocrats. One of the leading citizens was Bernardo Rucellai; who had both served as one of Lorenzo's lieutenants and followed Ficino. From his famed Gardens, the *Orti Oricellari* he became the centre of the aristocratic opposition to first Savonarola and then the Soderini dominated Popular Florentine Republic that Machiavelli served in and eventually helped conspire in the return of the Medici family to Florence.

Rucellai even more than Lorenzo d' Medici, is representative of the classical political tradition, as should be expected from a disciple of Ficino. His promotion of aristocratic republicanism, defence of the mixed regime and generally distrust of the *vulgus* is built on a foundation laid by Plato and Aristotle and his claim that Rome was representative of the classical Best Regime is found in Cicero. In doing this he was following in the tradition of humanist statesmen like Leonardo Bruni. So committed to the classical vision was Rucellai that he was unwilling to support any regime that failed to meet these standards. Despite his political program though it must be kept in mind that despite the centrality of politics and history in the *Orti Oricellari* Rucellai and his friends still accepted the Platonic hierarchy of Ficino. There were no new philosophical departures and the presence of Giovanni Corsi, Francesco da Diaceto and Rucellai himself ensured that the life of contemplation with its aim of raising man above the

⁷⁷ Giovanni Corsi, "The Life of Marsilio Ficino," in *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino III*. London: Shephard-Walwyn (1981), 138.

ephemeral to the eternal remained the peak.⁷⁸ When the gatherings of the *Orti Oricellari* began for the second time in the latter half of the 1510's following the death of Rucellai, Machiavelli would have encountered the spirit of Platonism and therefore the classical project.

The Humiliation of Italy

The investigation of the classical project in both its ancient and humanist manifestations revealed that politics as a way of life and a focus of study becomes secondary to a life of contemplation and the practice of virtue; as Cicero's *Dream of Scipio* and Castiglione's re-articulation of Diotima's Ladder demonstrated. No longer are empire and freedom considered the greatest things, rather the attainment of superlative virtue and salvation of the soul take their place. The pursuit of earthly honours is at best secondary. It is this transformation that Machiavelli believes sowed the seeds of corruption that have continued to plague Italy in particular and the West as a whole.

To illuminate just how stark the differences between Machiavelli's project and that of his predecessors let us reconsider Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* from a Machiavellian perspective. The setting of *The Courtier* in Court of Urbino suggests a relaxed affair. There is no urgency to the discussion. The lords and ladies of the Court often gather together in the company of the Duchess and find ways to entertain themselves. The investigation into the perfect courtier is introduced as a "game" they will play. There is a lightness, or a sense of levity to the entire enterprise. In the early stages of the discussion the martial virtues of the perfect courtier are emphasized but they gradually recede into the background. Upon hearing the initial sketch of a martial courtier, one of the younger ladies in attendance rejects this version by recounting a story of a gentleman who was only interested in martial valour. All the participants agree that a

⁷⁸ Felix Gilbert, "Bernardo Rucellai and the Orti Oricellari: A Study on the Origins of Modern Political Thought." *Journal of the Warburg and Courland Institutes* 12 (1949), 101-131.

courtier who possessed only skill in fighting would be a bore; their martial virtue is secondary to their grace, charm, and refinement.

This desire for a courtier embodying these aristocratic manners is reflected by the participants themselves. The lords and ladies spend the evenings laughing, flirting, and dancing. Even though the conversation eventually leads to a discussion on the need for reforming politics, the participants never treat with it concretely beyond debating how the courtier can educate his prince in virtue. It is Bembo's prayer to Love that serves as the peak of their gathering. In this, we can say Castiglione's characters appear to follow the manner of Plato and Aristotle.

Machiavelli would not have known the contents of *The Book of the Courtier*, but we can surmise what his impressions of Castiglione's program would have been though from what Machiavelli does tell us of a similar humanist circle in Florence; the *Orti Oricellari* in his dialogue *The Art War*.

The Art of War was published by Machiavelli in 1521 and presents itself as recollection of a conversation between the mercenary captain Fabrizio Colonna and a group of aristocratic youths lead by Cosimo Rucellai (the grandson of Bernardo) in 1516 when Fabrizio was visiting the city. Joining Cosimo are Zanobi Buondelmonti, Bastia della Palla, and Luigi Alamanni. These four young Florentines made up Machiavelli's circle of friends in the *Orti Oricellari* whom it was said he would read his *Discourses* to. One year after the publication of *The Art of War* Zanobi, Bastia, and Luigi would go into exile after a failed conspiracy against the Medici in favour of Machiavelli's political patron Piero Soderini.⁷⁹ The characters who will be instructed

⁷⁹ Buondelmonti and Alamanni are the dedicatees of *The Life of Castruccio Castracani* and Buondelmonti is also along with Cosimo a dedicatee of *The Discourses*. It is hard to believe that there is no connection between the young aristocrats' attempt to restore Soderini and their friendship with Machiavelli though Niccolo was left unmolested by the Medici after the conspiracy fell apart. Still he left Buondelmonti as a dedicatee of his *Discourses* to be published after he was safely in the grave. Cosimo's early death in 1519 makes it impossible to know whether his loyalty to his family's alliance with the Medici would have outweighed his Machiavellian education. See Maurizio Viroli,

therefore are all young men; those whom elsewhere Machiavelli writes “deserve to be princes”. No less important than the youths is the central character Fabrizio. The *condottieri* is an interesting choice as a spokesman. Fabrizio is a mercenary; a man who had fought for the French and the Spanish. Machiavelli the Florentine patriot is famous for his denouncement of mercenaries and partially blames them for Italy’s subjection. Why then chose him as a mouthpiece?⁸⁰

The reason why Fabrizio makes such a good stand in for Machiavelli is that the captain is tied to the military campaigns of 1512 just as he is. Fabrizio commanded the Spanish cavalry at the Battle of Ravenna and was forced to withdraw from the field due to French artillery fire. Fabrizio therefore was present at the battle where artillery was first decisively used in the field and witnessed the dawn of a new age of warfare. Something that military strategists such as Machiavelli were beginning to grapple with. More importantly though, Fabrizio’s presence during the campaigns of 1512 could not help but remind Machiavelli’s contemporary readers of the defeat of the Florentine militia at Prato which Machiavelli had organized. He therefore draws our attention to his own political failure by making Fabrizio a character. Later when Fabrizio speaks of his own failure to introduce new modes of the art of war by himself, and his hope that by educating his youthful companions the reforms he wishes to initiate will live on; the parallel with Machiavelli’s own stated desire is unmistakable.

When we compare Machiavelli’s characters to those we encountered in the *Book of the Courtier* we can make some important distinctions. None of Machiavelli’s characters are women,

Niccolò’s Smile: A Biography of Machiavelli, translated by Antony Shugar, (New York: Straus and Giroux, 2000) and J.N. Stephens, *The Fall of the Florentine Republic*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 117-21.

⁸⁰ While scholarly opinion generally assumes Fabrizio speaks for Machiavelli this assumption is challenged by Harvey Mansfield who claims that it is Cosimo and his friends that stand in for Machiavelli as the undermine Fabrizio throughout the dialogue, see Mansfield’s *Machiavelli’s Virtue*, 194-198, 202. Despite Mansfield’s often insightful analysis in the end I find his conclusions unconvincing and prefer Christopher Lynch’s position that Fabrizio is a restrained version of Machiavelli himself Lynch, *Art of War*, xxv.

nor are there poets, writers, or anyone else engaged in an activity that the Florentine would call an “honourable leisure”. Rather than having a Duchess preside over the gathering and its concluding passages orated by a poet-philosopher; Machiavelli’s two most important characters are a mercenary captain and the leading member of a political active aristocratic family. A political tone is established immediately by his choice of characters.

Just as with Castiglione’s dialogue, the setting of the *Art of War* is also of great importance. Just as Machiavelli makes a crucial statement by including certain characters, he makes another statement by setting the dialogue where he would often speak with his friends; the *Orti Oricellari*. From the beginning, Machiavelli presents his readers with part of his overall intention simply by providing a setting and dramatis personae. We are presented with a group of young aristocrats gathering in the place where the previous generation’s humanists and statesmen met. Now though the young have replaced the old. Cosimo has taken the place of his grandfather as host and Fabrizio has supplanted Ficino as the guiding spirit. Instead of debate being guiding by contemplation, the discussion will be concerned with war. The suggestion that the new and martial is unseating the dead and effeminate hangs over the dialogue. As a spokesman Fabrizio himself is representative of this. Rather than a foreign philosopher or scholar coming to educate the Florentine youths, Machiavelli provides them with a captain of war who in the course of the dialogue will attempt to purify the corruption present by providing a new art of war modeled after the warlike ancients.

The action of the dialogue begins with Cosimo inviting the visiting Fabrizio to his family gardens along with some friends who are interested in the same studies. Because of the great heat Cosimo leads the party into the most shady and most secret part of the garden. While settling down Fabrizio is taken aback by the different trees and plants, many of which he does not seem

to recognize. Noticing this Cosimo informs him that “you perhaps do not have knowledge of some of these trees. But do not marvel at this, for some of these are more celebrated by the ancients than by common usage today (AW.I.14).”⁸¹ Cosimo goes on to explain that his grandfather went to a great deal of effort and expense to cultivate the garden in accordance with the ancient catalogues.

This explanation opens the door for Fabrizio. He responds that the gardens remind him of similar places of study in the Kingdom of Naples. He then cautiously presents his opinion:

If I did not believe I would offend, I would state my opinion; but I do not believe I would, since I am speaking with friends so as to dispute things and not calumniate them. How much better they would have done, may it be said with everyone’s leave, to seek to be like the ancients in the strong and harsh things, not in the delicate and soft ones, and in those that they did under the sun, not in the shade, and to take up the modes of the true and perfect antiquity, not the false and corrupt one. For after these studies pleased my Romans, my fatherland went to ruin (AW.I.16-17).

This openly salvo from the aged *condottieri* sets the stage for the rest of the dialogue as Fabrizio begins to instruct his youthful companions into the proper modes and orders. We are introduced to several important ideas here, the most important being that there are at least two different versions of antiquity. There is the true antiquity, and the corrupt one.

The question therefore is what the true is and what is the corrupt? Fabrizio offers the following clue; the true antiquity is the actions that the ancients undertook under the sun while the corrupt is found under the shade. In other words, ancient deeds in the political arena or on the battlefield are worthy of imitation rather than what was contemplated in the schools under the porticos and the trees.⁸² The Rucellai Gardens therefore are an imitation of the false and corrupt

⁸¹ Machiavelli, *The Art of War*, translated by Christopher Lynch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), references to the *Art of War* are by book and line number.

⁸² Machiavelli’s allusion to the shade could be a reference to the setting of several Platonic and Ciceronian dialogues. In the *Phaedrus* Socrates and Phaedrus find refuge from the heat under a tree while in Cicero’s *Laws* Cicero and his companions walk under the shade of trees. Other ancients though were not found under the shade. As Cosimo’s response to Fabrizio alludes to, Diogenes the Cynic was known for rolling naked in the sand or in the snow and perhaps more importantly; ancient warriors fought their battles under the heat of the sun.

antiquity. If the Romans were brought to ruin when they began to take pleasure in such studies what will happen to Florence or more accurately what has happened to Florence? Italy according to Fabrizio has been corrupted by these studies; in Book VII of the dialogue he exclaims that

Before they tasted the blows of the ultramontane wars, our Italian princes used to believe that it was enough for a prince to know how to think of a sharp response in his studies, to write a beautiful letter, to show quick wit and quickness in deeds and words... Nor did these wretches perceive that they were preparing themselves to be the prey of whoever assaulted them. From here then arose in 1494 great terrors, sudden flights, and miraculous losses; and thus three very powerful states that were in Italy have been sacked and wasted. But what is worse, those who are left persist in the same error and the same disorder (AW. VII.236-38)

This argument is repeated by Machiavelli in his other principle works. The claim that Rome was corrupted by philosophical studies is presented in BK. V of *The Florentine Histories* and Fabrizio's description of failures of Italy's rulers is repeated just as forcefully in Ch. XXIV of *The Prince* in Machiavelli's own name.

In the *Art of War* though, this argument takes on an added significance. While in *The Prince* the rulers of Italy in general are held to account for their sins; here in the shade of the *Orti Oricellari* by direct implication Fabrizio claims that Bernardo Rucellai and the other humanists far from helping their fatherland have led it deeper into corruption. This is a powerful criticism and Bernardo's grandson refuses to simply accept this affront to his grandfather's civic project. Cosimo therefore presents a counter to the *condottieri's* (and Machiavelli's) accusation. First, he responds, he wishes to excuse his family. According to Cosimo his grandfather more than any other man of his time despised the soft life and was a lover of hardness. Yet despite his true preferences he could not educate his children in the way he wanted if he wanted to avoid being ridiculed. His era was one of too much corruption so he was forced to imitate those modes which

would cause less amazement from his fellows. Bernardo was forced into compromising his beliefs.⁸³

Fabrizio accepts Cosimo's defence of his family's honour but responds by claiming that what he has in mind does not involve the extremes that Cosimo suggests Bernardo favoured. Instead he is thinking of more "humane" modes that are more in conformity with the present and which would not be difficult for a prince or a republic to introduce. At this point the difference between Bernardo and Fabrizio is twofold. First as I have already noted, Fabrizio claims that Rucellai and others like him chose the wrong antiquity; rather than the strong they chose the corrupt. The second difference between them that Fabrizio highlights is that Bernardo selected a model that was too difficult to reintroduce. The mercenary warrior though claims that his model is easy to restore. Cosimo quickly points out that if the modes Fabrizio admires are easier to bring back then why has he not reformed his own art of war along ancient lines? If Cosimo's grandfather is a failure then so is Fabrizio. Underneath this discussion between the two characters Machiavelli is acknowledging his own position vis-à-vis Bernardo. Rucellai proved to be a failure in his attempt to institute an aristocratic regime in Florence while Machiavelli failed to reform the Florentine military. How does the Florentine Secretary respond to this charge and how does he plan to reverse it?

Fabrizio's response is to admit to the charge that he has been unable so far to bring his thought in action. In BK I while he and Cosimo are still trading accusations his reply is that while he could make an easy excuse instead he suggests to Cosimo that appearances can be

⁸³ It should be pointed out that in his defense of his grandfather Cosimo lists the maniacal wisdom of Diogenes, the bestial courage of the Spartans and the austere restraint of the early Romans but drops the 4th cardinal virtue, justice, and that the three virtues that are named are taken to their extreme. What is interesting is that Machiavelli's representation of Bernardo does not match the historical record that we have. Perhaps Machiavelli is quietly stacking the deck against Rucellai by making him look more extreme than he actually was. In Cosimo's defense there is no mention of Plato or Ficino.

deceiving. He justifies his inaction by arguing that “men who want to do something must first prepare themselves with every industriousness to be set to satisfy that which they have set themselves to do when the opportunity comes.” Furthermore he declares that “And because when the preparations are made cautiously they are not recognized, one cannot accuse anyone of negligence if it is not discovered before the opportunity (AW.I.37-39).” Fabrizio’s initial defence is to claim that he has cautiously been laying the foundation for re-introducing the ancient orders but since the opportunity has yet to appear his plan has been unable to go into action. From this point on the dialogue will be concerned with Fabrizio showing why the opportunity has not yet arrived and the nature of the modes and orders he wishes to bring into the modern world.

By the end of the dialogue after educating his pupils in the new art of war he returns to Cosimo’s critique that he has been unable to put his plan into action. He claims that there are two kinds of captains. The first because his army is already well ordered only has to know how to defeat the enemy. The second though upon finding his army in disorder must first know how to reorder it and then engage the enemy. Examples of these are Philip of Macedon and Cyrus the Great. Captains of Italy’s armies are of the second sort since Italian arms are in such poor shape. In addition to this Fabrizio laments the fact that as a mercenary he will only ever be able to command foreign armies and men not obligated to others. He will never be a captain like Philip (AW.VII.245-248). In this, Fabrizio is like Machiavelli. Now that he has been removed from office Machiavelli can no longer institute the martial orders that are needed to renew Florence and Italy. What he can do though is introduce the modes and orders needed to educate Italian captains and leave it to his students to carry out his designs. Fabrizio alludes to this need at the beginning of the dialogue when he tells Cosimo he prefers speaking to youths rather than old men.

I am very content, Cosimo, that you with these other youths here should question me. For I believe that youth makes you more friendly to military things and more ready to believe what will be said by me. By already having white heads and ice in their veins, some of these others are accustomed to being enemies of war... (AW.I.47-48)⁸⁴

It is the impetuous young (those whom *fortuna* favours) that Fabrizio and Machiavelli rely on to carry their vision forward. Fabrizio's argument that Italy requires a captain who can command an army that is obligated to him also sheds light on his choice of companions. All of the young aristocrats, particularly Cosimo, have the standing in Florence to become rulers and institute Fabrizio's new modes. They are Machiavelli's future princes.

The *Art of War* therefore could not be more different than the *Book of the Courtier* and its ancient models. Fabrizio has no time for the study of plants that the Rucellai's have managed to cultivate; nor does he discuss music and there is very little laughter. Politics is something to be taken with the utmost seriousness. The Florentine therefore intends to reveal the classical project for what it is to prepare the way for a new political science celebrating politics as politics; a political science that actually teaches rulers how to rule.

As Machiavelli puts it in his denouncement of Italy's rulers in Chapter XXIV of *The Prince* for their failure to preserve their states;

And if one considers those lords of Italy who have lost their states in our times, like the King of Naples, the duke of Milan, and others, one will find in them, first, a common defect as to arms, the causes of which have been discussed at length above; then, one will see that some of them either had a hostile people or if they had friendly peoples, did not know how to secure against the great... Therefore these princes of ours who have been in their principalities for many years may not accuse fortune when they have lost them afterwards, but their own indolence; for never having thought that quiet times could change (which is a common defect of men, not to take account of the storm during the

⁸⁴ The emphasis on the young is a recurring theme in Machiavelli works and sets him at odds with the tradition represented by Aristotle. The Peripatetic believing that youths are more likely to be innovative argues that they should be barred from politics till they reach an appropriate age. Machiavelli agrees with Aristotle but due to the revolutionary nature of his politics openly courts the young. The connection between youth and revolution is noted by Plato as well who presents *The Republic* as a conversation between Socrates and politically ambitious youths away from the traditional authority of Old Athens.

calm), when later the times became adverse, they thought of fleeing and not of defending themselves (P.XXIV.96-97)

I draw attention to this passage for several reasons. First, Machiavelli repeats the criticism that he has Fabrizio provide. Namely, that the princes of Italy have lost their states because they have ignored the art of war, nor did they properly practice politics. More importantly however, Machiavelli postulates a philosophical reason for the defects of Italian rulers; they did not properly understand fortune, and therefore do not understand the nature of the world. Thus in one paragraph the Florentine links theory to practice or to borrow a wiser man's words, Machiavelli begins with the surface before working his way down into the depths. The Machiavellian critique of the classical tradition therefore is not simply one of political preference, but goes to the very core of the classical project.

The Cycle of Fortuna

As I recounted above, the classical project was begun in contrast to the Pre-Socratic account of nature and politics which can be summed up as war is the father of all things or as Socrates describes it; rest is merely disguised motion. The classics on the other hand from Socrates to Castiglione counter that rest takes precedence over motion. The entire classical project (unless it is to decay into ideology or propaganda) from its insistence on a morality that transcends the city to its preference for leisure, peace, and kingship or aristocratic republicanism stems from this claim.

Machiavelli however does not accept the classical position that there exists an eternal rational order that we as human beings or political life can come into alignment with. Instead of a rational order Machiavelli returns to the older view of nature being motion or strife; repeating patterns of fortune that human beings must strive or exert their will against in an endless struggle. Where his humanist contemporaries build their understanding of nature on the thought

of Plato and Aristotle, Machiavelli in turn follows the Socratics' rivals; the Epicureans or more specifically, the Roman Epicurean poet Lucretius.

Machiavelli's interest and debt to the Roman poet Lucretius has often gone unnoticed by scholars.⁸⁵ When seeking the inspiration or the foundation of his cosmology many (those who do not fall for the ruse that he is an unorthodox Christian) fall back on Renaissance astrology or a form of paganism to explain Machiavelli's often veiled discourses on *fortuna*.⁸⁶ On careful examination of the internal and external evidence though, Machiavelli's Epicurean connection is extensive, and while it is true that Machiavelli never mentions Lucretius by name, the poet figures into his writings in several crucial ways.

The reasons why the Florentine needed to camouflage his debt to Lucretius springs from the suspect reputation the poet and his admirers had garnered stretching back to the writings of the Church Fathers. Lucretius' *De rerum natura* was recovered in 1417 after being lost for five hundred years in Germany by Poggio Bracciolini. The poet along with his master Epicurus' dubious reputation had not been forgotten during their absence by the Church and its defenders; but many Renaissance humanists, moved by their love ancient learning, and by the poetry of

⁸⁵ We know that Machiavelli was familiar with Lucretius and was interested in his ideas thanks to the discovery in the Vatican Library of a copy of *De rerum natura* written out by Machiavelli himself following the 1495 Venetian edition. See Chauncey E. Finch, "Machiavelli's Copy of Lucretius," *The Classical Journal* 56 (1960), 29-32.

⁸⁶ See Anthony Parel, *The Machiavellian Cosmos*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), for an interesting but ultimately unconvincing argument for astrology forming the basis of Machiavelli's thought. Isaiah Berlin must be counted among those who while recognizing that NM is no Christian still maintains that he follows a pagan morality. Berlin, *Against the Current*, 25-79. Two scholars who through admirable detective work have uncovered Machiavelli's debt to Lucretius are Paul Rahe in *Against Throne and Altar: Machiavelli and Political Theory under the English Republic*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) and Alison Brown in *The Return of Lucretius to Renaissance Florence*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010). Brown in particular is adept at filling in the details of the "epicurean underground" that Machiavelli was connected to. However, Brown over-estimates the debt by concluding that the mature Machiavelli gives up on politics like Lucretius. Rahe's thesis that Machiavelli starts with Lucretius and modifies him to meet his own needs is superior but Rahe too makes a mistake in denying NM's being strongly influenced by other classical writers particularly Xenophon. For a corrective to Rahe see W.R. Newell "Machiavelli and Xenophon on Princely Rule: A Double-Edged Encounter" *The Journal of Politics* V 50 No. 1, 1988.

Lucretius himself, were willing to risk disapproval and sought out copies of the poem.⁸⁷

Lucretius was able to garner enthusiasm and followers in Medicean Florence in particular.

Thanks to the library of the Medici, scholars under their patronage were able to take advantage of the copies of the poem they found there. Finally as *The Life of Castruccio Castracani* make clear, Machiavelli had access to Diogenes Laërtius' *Lives of the Philosophers* and it seems unlikely that he would have passed over the *Life of Epicurus*.

The best place to begin an exploration of the Florentine's subtle Epicureanism is in D.I.2 where Machiavelli offers his account of the origin of society and the cycle of regimes.

These variations of governments arise by chance among men. For since inhabitants were sparse in the beginning of the world, they lived dispersed for a time like beasts; then, as generations multiplied, they gathered together, and to be able to defend themselves better, they began to look to whoever among them was more robust and of greater heart, and they made him a head... from this arose the knowledge of things honest and good, differing from the pernicious and bad (D.I.2.3)

After accounting for the origins he continues to describe the regime cycle; as the three good regimes decay into their corrupt counterparts. The cycle of regimes is a fixture of classical political science originating with Aristotle and the passage as a whole is often taken to be a gloss of Ch. VI of Polybius' *Histories*. By concentrating on the beginning of the passage however, the distinction between Polybius and Machiavelli is striking.

In the account the Greek historian provides, in the beginning human beings come together ... Machiavelli on the other hand crucially adds that men lived like beasts. This is not an insignificant detail. By arguing for a "bestial" origin to society Machiavelli rejects the claim of Polybius and the other ancient writers that man is by nature a political animal. The ancient author

⁸⁷ For an in depth account of the rediscovery of Lucretius and his influence on Renaissance thought see Brown; *The Return of Lucretius to Renaissance Florence*.

who is in agreement with Machiavelli is Lucretius. When we turn to *De rerum natura* we find a passage similar to the one we have examined in the *Discourses*. The poet writes;

Through many decades of the sun's cyclic course they lived out their lives in the fashion of wild beasts roaming at large... They could have no thought of the common good, no notion of the mutual restraint of morals and laws. The individual taught only to live and fend for himself, carried off on his own account such prey as fortune brought him.⁸⁸

Lucretius goes on to articulate another version of the cycle of regimes. Both the poet and the Florentine share the belief that man in the beginning is a beast that has no thought of a common good and only enters society under duress.

Lucretius rejects the idea that man has a “political” nature because he rejects contra Aristotle the teleological account of the universe. “You must not imagine that the bright orbs of our eyes are created purposely... to interpret these or other phenomena on these lines is to turn the truth upside down” he writes. “In fact, nothing in our bodies was born in order that we might be able to use it, but whatever thing is born creates its own use.”⁸⁹ In place of the teleological account Lucretius provides an alternative based on the physics of Epicurus. In the first book of *De rerum natura* he expounds on the atomistic theory. He tells his dedicatee M. that nothing is ever created out of nothing for this would entail a universe without laws and we would witness trees growing different fruit every year. Instead nature resolves everything into component atoms and never reduces anything to nothing. All matter is composed of atoms.⁹⁰

All bodies of matter meanwhile move within space; Lucretius writes that nothing can exist that is distinct both from body and from vacuity. There is no organizing principle to Lucretius' nature. The atoms come together to form bodies which then move through the void.

⁸⁸ Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe*, translated by Robert E. Latham, (New York: Penguin Classics, 1994), Bk. V 930-60.

⁸⁹ Lucretius, BK. IV 824-34.

⁹⁰ Lucretius, 1.50.

While they do this through somewhat recognizable parameters it cannot be said to do so according to design. This line of argument could not be more different than the cosmology presented in Plato's *Statesman* or the *Timaeus*. For Plato the Idea of the Good acts as the organizing principle on which the cosmos is designed.

Within a purposeless universe though man cannot be said to have an end according to nature because there is no plan. The Lucretian interpretation of the origin of political community as noted previously starts from a radically different premise than it does for Aristotle. This is the consequence of the Epicurean contention that nature is matter in motion. If nature is indifferent to human striving then politics loses the grounding it had in Platonic or Aristotelian thought. Epicurean physics also forces a redefinition of the nature of philosophy. While the Epicurean sage agrees with his Platonic counterpart that philosophy is the highest form of life, his reasons for doing so are different. The Platonic philosopher considers his activity as the highest because only the philosopher is able to bask in the glow of the sun and see the Good and partake more fully in eternity. The Epicurean meanwhile celebrates the contemplative life because only the sage is able to remove himself from the pain of Lucretius account of matter emerging from of the political world. Lucretius describes the tranquility of the sage the void is closer in spirit to the Christian conception of creation coming into being through God's Will.

These arguments are echoed in Machiavelli's own writings. We have already seen how the account of the beginnings of society in the *Discourses* is Epicurean in origin, but the influence goes further. In D.II.5 Machiavelli poses the question of whether the universe is eternal as the philosophers maintain or if has a beginning and ending as the Christian religion insists. While initially nodding in the direction of creation *ex nihilo* by the end of the chapter he turns the tables and suggests that the world could be eternal, the reason why history fails to reach back

more than a few thousand years is due to a cycle of natural cataclysms (floods, plagues, etc.) which destroy civilizations or the emergence of new sects that eliminate all memory of the previous epoch (something Machiavelli claims Christianity tried to do to paganism). This account of a natural cycle is similar to the one Polybius provides and can be found in other versions in classical writings such as Plato's *Laws*. Machiavelli's natural cycle though is given a distinctive Epicurean flavour.

By accepting the Epicurean account of the universe as articulated by Lucretius the Florentine has to reject the Socratic account of the nature of man. The exercise of virtue for the sake of virtue and the ends of politics being oriented by the Good or God's Will is an error rooted in an imaginary conception of the nature of man and the cosmos. Following Lucretius, for Machiavelli the universe is indifferent if not hostile to human aspirations. There is no Providential God; the world is ruled by chance and the soul is mortal. Nature is matter in the void that goes through cycles of growth and decay which is reflected in the rise and fall of civilization. The only thing that endures is matter which takes on new forms as it goes through the cycle.

If nature is as Lucretius describes it, then the Epicurean teaching also must be applied to politics. For Machiavelli it provides a theoretical explanation for what he has "uncovered" in his reading of history and furnishes a justification for his rejection for the classical political model.⁹¹ In D.I.6 Machiavelli writes that if it were possible to order a republic after Sparta as the ancients and their modern admirers' desire, he believes that this would be "the true political way of life"

⁹¹ It is the tradition of classical Epicureanism that Machiavelli helps keep alive. We can therefore reformulate Pocock's thesis and argue that Machiavelli is an eccentric follower of another ancient tradition that stands opposed to the heirs of Socrates.

and suggests that he would join his contemporaries in their work. However, he insists that the “preferred” way of life is not possible due to the nature of things.

But since all things of men are in motion and cannot stay steady, they must either rise or fall; and to many things that reason does not bring you, necessity brings you. So when a republic that has been ordered so as to be capable of maintaining itself does not expand, and necessity leads it to expand, this would come to take away its foundations and make its ruin come sooner. So, on the other hand, if heaven were so kind that it did not have to make war, from that it would arise the idleness to make it either effeminate or divided; these two things or each by itself, would be the cause of its ruin. Therefore since one cannot, as I believe, balance this thing nor maintain this middle way exactly, in ordering a republic there is need to think of the more honourable part and to order it so that if indeed necessity brings it to expand, it can conserve what it has seized (D.I.6.4)

Machiavelli’s Epicureanism makes it impossible for him to accept the political moderation of the Socratics. The very attempt to maintain a middle course brings about the ruin of the republic sooner than it would naturally.⁹²

Yet while Machiavelli and Lucretius share a rejection of the foundations of Socratic political thought, the Florentine differs from his teacher in his refusal to abandon political life. Instead it convinces him of its centrality. In his attempt to free his readers from their fear of death, Lucretius concludes by declaring that the corpse of Scipio is no different than any other.⁹³ The poet’s teaching following that of his master is to withdraw from political life to the quiet of the Epicurean Garden. True happiness is possible for the sage who is able to derive pleasure from the contemplation of the epicurean cosmos. Political glory is meaningless. Scipio does not reside in some otherworldly abode watching how human beings revere him. Once we die we cease to exist.

⁹² A comparison here can be made with Thucydides’ account of *stasis* in Greek cities during the Peloponnesian War. Once custom breaks down and nature takes control the moderates are easily overcome by the extremists. The difference between the Athenian and the Florentine is that while Thucydides sympathizes with the moderates Machiavelli sees no reason to waste tears on the politically naïve.

⁹³ Lucretius, 3.1042.

Lucretius' teaching on the ends of human life stand in opposition to the Florentine's stated goal of re-founding political life. Machiavelli instead turns Lucretius' epicureanism back against itself. Arguing that the retreat back into the seclusion of the philosophic life cannot save the epicurean sage from dangers of a hostile or indifferent universe. If there is no "middle way" for us to align ourselves with and instead we are thrown about by necessity; the epicurean finds themselves open to caprices of fortune just as much as the Socratic. Machiavelli therefore refuses to follow the Epicurean sage into the Garden; for to do so would be a repetition of the error made by the classics and the humanists to favour contemplation over action. Corruption is not caused by Christian contemplation alone but by any form of leisurely idleness.

To claim therefore that Machiavelli represents a return to the pre-Socratics or the epicureans is false. While he accepts their teaching on nature, he would never claim like Lucretius does that the corpse of Scipio holds no significance and that political glory is meaningless. On the contrary, Machiavelli argues (following Platonic characters such as Callicles) that in a universe without a rational order; political glory, the founding of new modes and orders, to bring form to matter is the peak of human achievement. The philosophic life with contemplation as its central activity whether Socratic or pre-Socratic is a form of passivity, decadence.

What Machiavelli does take from Lucretius is the philosophical justification for why the classical project failed politically; clarifying how Socratic philosophy –in both its ancient and humanistic manifestations- is responsible for the humiliation of Italy. The attachment of Plato and Castiglione to a rational order that transcends the city leads them into believing in the existence of their imaginary republics and principalities. They blind themselves to the truth. By presenting his form of epicureanism, even in this subtle manner, Machiavelli shows why he

thinks Italy and the West remain under the spell of the “sinister opinion”. Through his veiled allusions to Lucretius he seeks to liberate the minds of his readers and convince them to return within the walls of the city.

Conclusion

In Bk. V of *The Florentine Histories* Machiavelli notes with approval Cato the Censor’s response to the Athenian philosophers effect on the Roman youth; informing us that “since he recognized the evil that could result to his fatherland from this honourable leisure, he saw to it that no philosopher could be accepted in Rome (FH.V.185).” Philosophy, despite being an “honourable leisure” is also a corrupting influence and its adoption by the ruling class is a sign of decay setting in.

With their focus on the contemplative life; Plato, Aristotle, Cicero and the host of writers that followed in their wake undermined political life rather than strengthening it as Cato the Elder warned they would. While the emergence of Christianity certainly played a major role in the corruption of political virtue; the rot was already present in the modes and orders of the classical philosophers. Nietzsche therefore was not the first to claim that Christianity is Platonism for the people. For Machiavelli the rule of philosophers is little different from the rule of priests. Both the Platonic philosopher and the Christian priest are fundamentally contemplative rather than active. Platonism and Christianity direct human beings to look beyond earthly concerns to the transcendent, to worry about the Ought rather than the Is and to set our course by imaginary principalities and republics.

This is an error because as I have shown, there is no transcendent for Machiavelli. The Ought does not come from an eternal standard but from the dictates of necessity. The Florentine’s readers do not necessarily have to follow Machiavelli into the epicurean depths to

grasp the lesson he wishes to impart. Indeed, he would rather the politically spirited not become interested in such matters; for the activity of the epicurean sage despite their better understanding of the nature of things is still passive and corrupt. All Machiavelli's students need to know is that classical political science needs to be rejected because due to its adherence to imaginary principalities and republics it naturally leads to the decay of political virtue; the practical consequence being the Italian powers being reduced to secondary status as Spain, the Holy Roman Empire, and France divide up the spoils and perhaps more ominously, the martial Turks encroaching ever closer on the West.

Uncovering why Italy in particular and the West and general lacks the virtue of the ancient Romans is only half of Machiavelli's project however. For as his Fabrizio demonstrates in the *Art of War*, an order of new modes must also know what they wish to replace the corrupt modes with. Machiavelli therefore must offer an alternative to the classical gentleman, the city at rest, and the philosopher/priest if he is to convince his potential princes to follow him into the Promised Land.

Chapter II The Captain-Prince: Machiavelli's Civic Education

“This arises, I believe, not so much from the weakness into which the present religion has led the world, or from the weakness that an ambitious idleness has done to many Christian provinces and cities, as from not having a true knowledge of the histories”

-Discourses on Livy Bk. I proem

Introduction

While Machiavelli's critique of classical and humanist political science is a powerful one; it remains for him to offer something in its place. If the Aristotelian or Ciceronian gentleman and the *paideia* that shaped them are representative of decadent or corrupt types and therefore indicative of a wider corruption within a political community itself, then it is incumbent on Machiavelli to offer an alternative in their place that represents the qualities he desires to foster. In short, what does the Machiavellian prince look like and how is one cultivated?

This Chapter therefore will examine Machiavelli's alternative education to the civic *paideia* of classical political science. If the education of the ancients and humanists aimed at making political men gentler, then it should come as no surprise following the *Art of War* that Machiavelli's education aims at imitating the ancients in the strong and harsh things which will be necessary in order to rescue Italy from its plight. Machiavelli's pupils therefore must be liberated from their attachment to imaginary political orders built on an equally fanciful belief in a teleological nature. The Florentine must introduce them to the effectual truth; teach them to see the true nature of things; nature is strife and to flourish one must go to war against it.

To do this though Machiavelli does not advise his readers to cease reading the ancients as Hobbes will later do. While the dour Englishman blamed the reading of histories for the tumults of his age; Machiavelli instead complains of a *lack* of knowledge of history among his

contemporaries. At first this strikes us as a peculiar claim. How can an age that prided itself on its recovery of ancient learning lack historical understanding? Machiavelli's point however is what is lacking is a *true* knowledge of history. He suggests that we take a closer look at the ancients and after a "judicious" reading we will possess true knowledge. Such a reading is necessary because as he writes in *The Prince* "ancient writers sought to teach covertly".

Therefore (as first proposed in the *Art of War*) against the ancients of the humanists he will counter with ancients of his own. In the instruction of Machiavelli's princes the deeds of ancient statesmen and analysis of actual classical republics and principalities is to be used as a counter the dreams of philosophers. This is why Machiavelli's works are filled with references to historians such as Livy, Polybius, and Tacitus; while we find only a handful of mentions of Plato, Cicero, or Aristotle. Of all the ancient writers Machiavelli chooses Xenophon as the ancient author *par excellence* because his political works prove to be far more attentive to the desire for empire and domination in political men than Plato and Aristotle, who insisted on defending an isolationist aristocratic republican regime. It is also in Xenophon's *Hiero* that we find the closest thing to a Machiavellian openness to at least discussing the improvement of tyrannical rule. Other Greek and Roman historians are given supporting roles through their studies of the Roman republic and its heroes and The Bible itself is mined for examples of statecraft.

Of course, The Bible does not present itself as study of politics but as the revelation of God's Will. Xenophon meanwhile, may depart from his contemporary Plato in his rejection of the self-sufficient republic in his study of Cyrus, but he still remains firmly within the Socratic orbit. Even the historians in their role of recording actual deeds do not come to the same conclusions on politics and the nature of man as Machiavelli does. Most notably Livy condemns

Hannibal's cruelty while Machiavelli counts it among his virtues and Tacitus while criticizing previous thinkers for "imagining" republics and revealing the base natures and intentions of Rome's emperors and leading citizens, refuses to reject morality as the standard of judgement and praises Sparta over Machiavelli's preferred Rome.

Despite these problems these are the ancients that Machiavelli chooses to use against his opponents. The Florentine's weaving of these various sources together propounds what Machiavelli calls the effectual truth of the matter. He uncovers what the ancient writers truly reveal in their writings, even if they are unaware of this truth. His judicious reading of history reveals a world that does not support conventional morality and it does so in such a convincing fashion that Machiavelli sees no need to speaking about *phusis* as motion openly. For the Florentine this truth is simply revealed by history itself. Those who attempt to be virtuous in the Platonic or Christian sense are the losers of history while the winners time and time again demonstrate that committing acts that violate conventional morality often lead to success.

The lessons learned in the study of history open the door for Machiavelli's teaching on virtue. If historical precedent reveals that actions that many consider vices prove to be the means for achieving glory, Machiavelli asks his students to question whether or not they are really vices. Since there is no eternal standard of morality for us to come into alignment with, that changing fortune throws down anyone who attempts to hold a "middle way," Machiavelli instead teaches that the would-be prince must learn to follow the dictates of necessity. If necessity requires one to break faith or to be cruel to achieve ends rather than be faithful or merciful than the prince must not hesitate. After all, as Machiavelli's discussion of other great rulers and founders seeks to prove, the great men of the past should no hesitation in following the virtues of necessity. Unlike simply criminal princes such as Agathocles, men such as Moses and Cyrus

acted in such a way that their *reputation* for upholding the morality of the many remained intact.⁹⁴ Learning to be seen as one thing by the many but being something else proves to be the most crucial element of Machiavelli's teaching on virtue.

The Florentine's teaching on the virtues of leads to the question of what the ethos of the Machiavellian prince will be. What is the end that justifies doing what is necessary? Whereas the classical gentleman despite participating in political affairs is contemplative (one thinks of Cicero's presentation of Scipio among his friends in *res publica*), the Machiavellian prince is a warrior-statesman, who as Machiavelli writes should make the art of war their only concern. Machiavelli's insistence that his future princes be martial follows from his belief that politics is war and it is in war that necessity often triumphs. More than this however, it is Machiavelli's claim that the greatest error of classical political science was to depreciate martial virtue and the military art. By restoring the art of war to its proper place Machiavelli believes he will be able to offer a new beginning to statesmanship.

Finally, as a capstone to the investigation into the cultivation of the Machiavellian prince I will turn to examine Machiavelli's short work the *Life of Castruccio Castracani*. I do this because it is my conjecture that the Castruccio Machiavelli presents his young dedicatees with, in his preference for the martial life over the priestly, his ruthlessness, his military cunning, and perhaps most important of all Castruccio's preference for the Empire over the Papacy; fully emulates the qualities of the ruler he wishes to cultivate. Therefore by examining the *Life* the contours of the Machiavellian prince are clarified and as a final lesson we can discern why

⁹⁴ Consider NM's discussion of Agathocles in Chapter VIII of *The Prince* alongside the references to Moses and the other great virtuous princes discussed throughout *The Prince* but particularly in Chapter VI. Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, and Theseus commit arguably worse acts than Agathocles but they are to be considered among the most virtuous. What separates them from rulers like Agathocles therefore cannot simply be engaging in what NM calls criminal acts.

Machiavelli believed a rebirth of the warrior-statesman was not enough to bring about a new birth of politics.

Machiavellian History: An Introduction to the Effectual Truth

If the Machiavellian historical education can be said to have a primary purpose; it is to teach potential princes the way the world truly works. The method in which the celebrated founders and princes of the past actually achieved their fame, and in doing so break the hold the sinister opinion of classical political thought holds on his contemporaries.⁹⁵ Once his students have been inducted into the Machiavellian education they will begin to doubt whether there is a necessary connection between glory and the morality of a transcendent good. With this doubt planted, the Florentine will be ready to build the spirit of his potential princes from the ground up.

We first become aware that the Machiavellian study of history departs from its predecessors upon reading the proems to his two works that present themselves as devoted primarily to historical study; the *Discourses on Livy* and *The Florentine Histories*. He opens the *Discourses* by bemoaning that the real obstacle to a resurrection of ancient virtue is ignorance of true knowledge of history. The weakness of the present religion and ambitious idleness are contributing factors, but Machiavelli implies that once we possessed true knowledge, adherence to these opinions will fall away. The difficulty now becomes properly instructing potential rulers. Before this can be done the obstruction that is the current study of history must be removed.

As I established in Chapter I, Machiavelli's humanist rivals were faithful to the classical model of political and classical writing. While Cicero is the best ancient example of this mode

⁹⁵ Fabrizio uses the term "sinister opinion" in *AW*.IV.440 in the context of removing a corrupting belief among the multitude that stands in the way of a renewal of martial virtue. From the context, it is clear that the sinister opinion is Christian and the teachings of those who adhere to the deeds of the ancients done in the shade.

even Livy's *Ab urbe condita* is equally a panegyric to the idea of Rome as it is a sober presentation of the rise of the city to world dominance. The humanist contribution to this tradition meanwhile is best articulated by Leonardo Bruni; who with his *Laudatio florentinae urbis* did for Florence what Cicero had done for Rome.⁹⁶

In addition to the study of regimes, writers of the “*Mirror of Princes*” genre as we saw with Castiglione performed a similar role by providing individual princes and gentlemen with idealized models for emulation. In this they too followed a classical exemplar; Xenophon. As noted in Chapter I, Castiglione himself informs us in *The Courtier* that Xenophon was considered by the humanists to offer an account of the ideal ruler in the same fashion that Plato presents us with the best regime in *The Republic*. This high regard for Xenophon among the humanists is shared by Machiavelli (for a variety of reasons), as some scholars have admirably shown; but for Machiavelli this means that Xenophon's teaching must be modified, not followed.⁹⁷

In the *Cyropaedia* Xenophon presents an idealized account of the life of Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire. This is a Cyrus, and a Persia which differs from what we know of their historical counterparts. The Persia that Xenophon describes with its republican government and civic education is closer to Sparta than it is to the Persia we find in the pages of Herodotus' *History*. Likewise the Cyrus we encounter in Xenophon is a just and beneficent ruler who dies of old age surrounded by friends and family; rather than the rapacious conqueror who upon his death in battle has his head removed and put into a cask filled with blood so his bloodlust will

⁹⁶ See Harvey Mansfield's “Bruni and Machiavelli on Civic Humanism,” *Renaissance Civic Humanism*, ed. James Hankin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 223-246.

⁹⁷ See Waller R. Newell's “Machiavelli and Xenophon on Princely Rule: A Double-Edged Encounter.”

finally be quenched. But the Athenian makes clear that his intention is not to produce a history proper, but to investigate the problem of political rule.

Xenophon begins his work by stating the difficulty facing the art of successful ruling is the instability of political regimes. Democracies are overthrown by those seeking to be ruled by other forms of government, monarchies and oligarchies are overthrown by the people and tyrannies by their nature are particularly unstable. This state of affairs could lead one to despair over the possibility of ruling according to Xenophon if it were not for the example of Cyrus, the Persian. Whose ability to secure the obedience of so many men, cities, and nations “compelled us to change our opinion and to conclude that ruling human beings is neither impossible nor difficult provided someone does it with knowledge.”⁹⁸ Thus Xenophon offers his readers not a biography of Cyrus the man, but a meditation on the art of ruling. Xenophon indicates the difference by making his work *The Education of Cyrus* not *The Life of Cyrus*. By proceeding in this manner Xenophon plays down the more unsavory aspects and focuses on those elements he can weave into an ideal image of ruling.

Machiavelli on the other hand has no interest in playing down the unsavoury aspects of princes and politics. Instead he puts it centre stage as he does in his description of Hannibal’s infinite cruelty as the source of his virtue in *The Prince* all the while complaining that “other” writers fail to consider in the connection between his virtue and his cruelty, and as many have noted, he takes a positive delight in doing so.

Machiavelli provides a detailed rationale for his departure from classical and humanist writers in the *Florentine Histories* (FH.pr.6-8). Explaining his method in the preface; he informs us that his finished work departs from his original plan. At first, his intention was to begin his

⁹⁸ Xenophon, *The Education of Cyrus*, translated by David Ambler (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), I 1.

account of the deeds done by the Florentines at home and abroad starting in the year 1434; when the Medici family rose to a position of pre-eminence in the city because he believed that previous writers such as Leonardo Arezzo and Poggio Braccionlini had sufficiently covered the period before. However, upon reading their histories Machiavelli discovered that they were so brief or all together silent regarding civil discords and internal enmities as to be of no use to readers or pleasurable to anyone (FH.pr.6)⁹⁹ He tells us that he believes they did this “either because these actions seemed to them so feeble that they judged them unworthy of being committed to memory by written word, or because they feared that they might offend the descendants of those they might have to slander in their narrations.” Machiavelli strongly objects to this; continuing that these two causes are unworthy of great men and that only are details important in the writing of history, but that “if no other lesson is useful to the citizens who govern republics, it is that which shows causes of the hatreds and divisions in the city, so that when they become wise through the dangers of others, they may be able to maintain themselves united FH.pr.6).”

Finally, Machiavelli concludes his criticism of his predecessors, writing:

I do not know therefore what cause would make these divisions unworthy of being described in detail. And if those very noble writers were restrained so as not to offend... they were deceived and showed they knew little about the ambition of men and desire they have to perpetuate the name of their ancestors as well as their own: nor did they remember that many who have not had the opportunity to acquire fame through some praiseworthy deed have contrived to acquire it with despicable things. Nor did they consider that actions that have greatness in themselves, as do those of governments and states, however they are treated or whatever end they may have, always appear to bring men more honour than blame (FH.pr.7-8).

By passing over internal strife in silence Arezzo and Braccionlini are continuing the classical tradition of historical writing which oriented by the idea of civic harmony attempts to bring actual cities closer to the model by papering over internal discord. By singling Arezzo and

⁹⁹ NM does not inform us why reading accounts of civil strife would be “pleasurable.”

Braccionlini out for rebuke, Machiavelli by extension reproaches the entire tradition they represent. The humanists and their teachers are trapped either by their adherence to imaginary republics and principalities or their cowardice in fearing offence (which may stem from the same problem). Because of this they fail teach what is necessary for rulers of republics (and principalities) and lead to a poor knowledge of politics.¹⁰⁰

We should be careful however not to make the mistake that in contrast to the classical “dramatic” presentation of history Machiavelli founds a “scientific” approach aimed at uncovering the facts. Even a cursory reading of his works demonstrates that his manner of writing is closer to the ancients than the research methods of our modern historians. As many commentators have pointed out, the Florentine regularly misquotes, changes dates, names, and invents characters in addition to continuing the classical tradition of writing speeches for the figures he is discussing. This is not to say that Machiavelli distorts ancient (and contemporary) sources just for the sake of doing so. Instead the changes are the key to pushing through the imagination of even the soberest of the ancient authors to reveal the effectual truth. Clearly, Machiavelli’s opposition to humanist and classical writing is not based on the principle that history should be the reporting of facts as they really happened.

Instead he derives many important lessons from Xenophon and the others and applies them for his own ends and at times claims that he is only continuing an ancient tradition. For example in *The Prince* he suggests that his famous image of the need for a prince to be both half-man, half-beast has its roots in the classics; writing “this role was taught covertly to princes by

¹⁰⁰ We can only conclude that Machiavelli takes an even dimmer view of historians such as Plutarch and Suetonius, who while certainly not hiding that princes are required to be deceitful and use fraud to succeed, and politics can be a dirty business; they also imply therefore that a moral person would be better off not entering the arena. As I argued in Chapter I Machiavelli views it as naïve to withdraw from political life under the belief that the serenity can be found in private contemplation. Tacitus is treated with respect by Machiavelli, calling him a weighty author, despite his shared orientation with Suetonius. Perhaps the Florentine shared Guicciardini’s view that while Tacitus taught people how to recognize a tyrant he also taught tyrants how to rule.

ancient writers, who wrote that Achilles, and many other ancient princes, were given to Chiron the centaur to be raised... (P.XVIII.69)” The use of fiction and dramatic imagery are modes that would not have been viewed with askance by a man who called himself a poet. History and myth are interwoven for the Florentine which is demonstrated by his inclusion of mythical founders such as Theseus alongside historical figures such as Cyrus and his sly insistence on calling Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia* the life of Cyrus. As he encourages his princely pupils in Chapter XIV of *The Prince*, they should select a historical predecessor to follow; “as they say Alexander the Great imitated Achilles; Caesar, Alexander; Scipio, Cyrus. And whoever reads the life of Cyrus written by Xenophon will then recognize in the life of Scipio how much glory that imitation brought him... (P.XIV.60)”

The real root of the disagreement between Machiavelli on the one hand and Xenophon and his heirs on the other could be said to be more of a question of “presentation” rather than a scientific vs. dramatic approach. As I noted above, Machiavelli believed his fellow Florentine historians had done a disservice by ignoring the periods of civil strife that had plagued the city and instead focused on civil harmony. Machiavelli’s critique of Xenophon follows a similar line. In D.II.13, Machiavelli asks the question whether it is more likely for one to rise from a base position to great fortune through force or fraud. His conclusion is that fraud in the end proves to be more useful writing “anyone found in base fortune is ever found to attain great empire through open force alone and ingenuously, but it is done quite well through fraud alone... (D.II.13.1)” This is of course a typical Machiavellian maxim and we should not be surprised in his approval of the ways of the fox. What is interesting is that he bases his conclusion from a lesson he claims he derives from Xenophon. He writes that

Xenophon in his life of Cyrus shows this necessity to deceive, considering that the first expedition that he has Cyrus make against the king of Armenia is full of fraud, and that

he makes him seize his kingdom through deception and not through force. And he does not conclude otherwise from this action than that it is necessary for a prince who wishes to do great things to learn to deceive (D.II.13.1).

When we turn to the passages in the *Cyropaedia* that Machiavelli draws our attention to we discover he is correct; Xenophon too, is perfectly aware of the dirty side of politics and according to Machiavelli shows his hero engaging in them in order to succeed.¹⁰¹

The problem for Machiavelli though is that Xenophon does not do this often enough. While the student of Socrates may be forced to admit that a prince must engage in fraud, he does not draw attention to it. Therefore Scipio, who sought to imitate the Cyrus he found in Xenophon's work becomes an exemplar of mercy, humanity, and justice; but (as Machiavelli never tires of reminding us) faced a mutiny from his men over his excessive mercy and was censured in the Senate and was ultimately forced to practice the cruelty he so despised. In contrast Hannibal, Scipio's great opponent (and presumably not a reader of Xenophon) was a great practitioner of fraud and never faced a mutiny from his men. By drawing more attention to Cyrus' humanity, Xenophon leads those who read him down a path to ruin.

Machiavelli therefore promises to show his readers to the dirty side of politics, the despicable things that must be done in order to achieve fame. This is Machiavelli's introduction to the effectual truth. The way of things as they actually exist purged of wishful thinking. The study of history therefore, when undertaken carefully reveals this truth. By doing so he attempts to show that *his* version of history is the true history, which the lack of knowledge of continues to stymie a revival of *virtù*. Machiavelli is convinced that his history is the true one, because it conforms to his own experience in politics, his understanding of nature, and therefore his understanding of human beings, which matches his reading of Lucretius' *De rerum natura*.

¹⁰¹ Consider *The Education of Cyrus*, I 6; II 4-III-1; IV 1, 5; V 5.

To better understand what Machiavelli has in mind let us investigate his treatment of Moses in his study of the Bible. In D.III.30 he tells us that “whoever reads the Bible judiciously will see that since he wished his laws and orders to go forward, Moses was forced to kill infinite men, who moved by nothing other than envy, were opposed to his plans (D.III.30.1). The deliverer of the Hebrews makes another appearance earlier in Bk. II where Machiavelli discusses the causes and effects of peoples being forced by necessity to seek new lands.

When they are a great number, then they entered with violence into the countries of others, kill the inhabitants, take possession of their goods, make a new kingdom, and change the province’s name, as did Moses and the peoples who seized the Roman Empire. For the new names of Italy and in the other provinces do not arise from anything other than having been thus named by the new occupants: as what was called Gallia Cisalpina is Lombardy; France was called Gallia Transalpina and now is named after the Franks... Moses also called the part of Syria seized by him Judea (D.II.8.2).

This version of Moses; more dedicated to establishing and maintaining his rule than fulfilling God’s Plan, is regularly referred to throughout the *Discourses*. Here, Moses, as he is in *The Prince* is categorized as a founder of a new civilization like Cyrus and Romulus. Indeed, by assimilating Moses into a founder-prince and describing the Hebrews as another migratory people leaving their own land and creating a new home Machiavelli deprives Moses and his people of any special status compared to other founders or peoples. There is no mention of being chosen by God or a flight from slavery in Egypt to the promise land. Moses is another example of a successful founder and the Hebrews another conquering people. The divine has been removed from the narrative.

It is true that in *The Prince* when speaking of Moses, Machiavelli also makes reference to his relationship with God but upon closer examination what appears as adhering to conventional opinion is in reality another example of the Florentine’s “attentive” reading. Let us turn to the passage in question. In Chapter VI he writes:

But, to come to those who have become princes by their own virtue and not by fortune, I say that the most excellent are Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, Theseus, and the like. And although one should not reason about Moses, as he was a mere executor of things that had been ordered for him by God, nonetheless he should be admired if only for that grace which made him deserving of speaking with God (P.VI.22).

So far so good; any admiration for Moses is owed ultimately to God. However, Machiavelli continues “but let us consider Cyrus and the others who have acquired or founded kingdoms: you will find them all admirable; and if their particular actions and orders are considered, they will appear no different from those of Moses, who had so great a teacher P.VI.23).” While at first Moses’ distinction from the others was stark, now it appears to be more ambiguous. The distinction then becomes completely blurred in the next paragraph as Machiavelli writes that as Moses needed to find the Hebrews in bondage, so Romulus needed to be driven from Alba and Theseus to discover the Athenians dispersed. They all shared the opportunity that fortune (not God) gave them. By the end of the chapter we are left with the impression that which made Moses a success was like the others, his ability to take advantage of the opportunity given to him and that he was armed, not that he owed his success to his “teacher”.

The actions which Machiavelli reports Moses engaging in leads us to the heart of the purpose of the Florentine’s historical education for the future prince; a lesson in the effectual truth. Moses according to Machiavelli stands alongside the other great founder-prophets; Cyrus, Theseus, and Romulus. When we turn to *The Prince* we find these four classified under those who obtained their principalities through their own virtue; in contrast to those who succeed through fortune or through crime. While I will engage in an investigation of the contrast between virtue and fortune later on; for the moment I want to consider the relation between obtaining a principality through virtue and through crime.

Machiavelli provides both an ancient and modern example of a prince who seized a principality through crime, Agathocles and Liverotto da Fermo. The modern Liverotto, arranged to have his uncle and other leading citizens of Fermo murdered and became prince of Fermo and according to Machiavelli would have become irremovable if he had not allowed himself to be deceived by Cesare Borgia and betrayed (thus committing what for Machiavelli is a standard modern mistake; having “faith”) . Of more interest to us is the case of Agathocles. The Syracusan was born a son of a lowly potter, and though according to Machiavelli his whole life was full of crime, he had such virtue that upon entering the military life he rose quickly in the ranks. Upon deciding to become prince he gathered the Senate of Syracuse together in one place and signaled his men to kill all the senators and the richest people in the city. Once in power, and despite suffering several defeats at the hands of the Carthaginians before turning the tide, Agathocles never faced any opposition to his rule within the city (P.VIII.35).

Machiavelli concludes that like Moses or Romulus, Agathocles succeeded purely through his own virtue and not fortune. Yet, the Florentine hurries to insist that one cannot call it virtue to “kill ones citizens, betray one’s friends, to be without faith, without mercy, without religion; these modes can enable one to acquire empire, but not glory” (P.VIII.35). This sounds reassuring; but Machiavelli then goes on to say that “if one considers the virtue of Agathocles in entering into and escaping dangers, and the greatness of his spirit in enduring and overcoming adversities, one does not see why he has to be judged inferior to any most excellent captain”. This appraisal seems to completely reverse Machiavelli’s previous judgement of Agathocles. However, in a final reassurance to his decent minded readers, the Florentine concludes by stating “his savage cruelty and inhumanity, together with his infinite crimes, do not permit him to be celebrated among the most excellent men” (P.VIII.35).

Despite his concluding remarks, the discerning reader is quick to realize that by throwing the praise in with the blame Machiavelli is leaving a confusing portrait of Agathocles. Are we to admire his virtues or to criticize his infinite crimes? If we are to be honest with ourselves; we must admit that Machiavelli praises Agathocles far more than he blames him. However, we cannot ignore his conclusion that because of his savage crimes and inhumanity he cannot be celebrated among the most excellent of men. This conclusion is the key, but not in the sense that Machiavelli's lesson is that one should commit crimes. As we saw with Machiavelli's presentation of Moses, murdering people does not preclude admiration. Indeed all of the princes who obtained their principality through their own virtue appear on closer inspection to behave in a remarkably similar manner as Agathocles. Moses killed infinite men, Romulus committed a fratricide, Cyrus was filled with a bloodlust and Theseus left more than a few bodies in his wake. In short, the four most celebrated of princes, the men who founded new modes and orders, commit crimes on a grander scale than the petty tyrant Agathocles ever could.

The conclusion we are left to draw from this is not that Machiavelli condemns the criminal acts of Agathocles and therefore cannot be considered virtuous; but that he garnered a *reputation* for criminality and because history remembers him as such he cannot be celebrated. Moses and the others on the other hand despite committing criminal acts are not remembered as tyrants or murderers but as founders and deliverers of their people.

The purpose of Machiavelli's historical studies therefore are to reveal to the potential prince that the actions condemned by the defenders of conventional morality are central to their success. There is no linkage between glory and a transcendent good as understood by classical and humanist political science. Once we have a true knowledge of history we see that this is the way that it has always been and as Machiavelli's treatment of Xenophon suggests; even the

ancients were aware of this truth even if they refused to admit it. By teaching his readers that the source of their admiration for the great statesmen of the past lies not in their moralism but in their glorious reputation; they are prepared to cut the cord to the teachings of classical political science on virtue with its focus on the best regime and the good citizen and instead take the first step in becoming Machiavelli's warrior-statesmen.

Necessity or Severity?

The judicious study of history reveals that it is not always the most moral men who succeed in politics. On the contrary, as Machiavelli shows, those who managed to become princes, conquerors, or heroes were forced by necessity to do many distasteful acts. More than this however, Machiavelli never stops to offer a moral condemnation of the historical figures he mentions engaging in this questionable deeds. On the contrary, he appears to derive a certain pleasure in shocking his readers by describing these acts. As I noted above, there is no hint of the moral tone of Plutarch or Suetonius in the Machiavellian corpus.

By leaving out moralism and instead presenting "the effectual truth", the potential prince is left wondering what his educator considers to be virtue or vice. As it turns out, there need not be much confusion for Machiavelli's teaching on virtue as we will see is fairly straightforward. In Chapter XV of *The Prince* Machiavelli famously announces his dissatisfaction with the work of his predecessors and states his intention to leave their imaginary principalities and republics behind and instead write something useful. He is compelled to do this because a prince after reading the works of a Cicero or Plutarch will be left with the belief that they must endeavour to do "good" in all things. This for Machiavelli is a recipe for disaster. Writing "he who lets go of what is done for what should be done learns his ruin rather than his preservation" (P.XV.61).

Using the Machiavellian study of history as a foundation, the future prince must be taught in the virtues of necessity, rather than what we wish people would do. Machiavelli therefore in an echo (or parody?) of Aristotle and the Bible provides a list of virtues and their corresponding vices: liberal-mean, giver-rapacious, merciful-cruel, effeminate-spirited, humane-proud, chaste-lascivious, honest-astute, agreeable-hard, light-grave, and religious-unbelieving (P.XV.61-62). At this point (without revealing which he thinks are the virtues and which are the vices), Machiavelli argues that while everyone would agree that it would be admirable to be in possession of all the good qualities, the human condition does not permit it, so necessity dictates that a wise prince must learn when to be one and when to be the other and perhaps even more crucially; not to worry about incurring the infamy practicing the vices may create when protecting ones principality or republic.¹⁰²

The initial conclusion one can draw from Machiavelli's discussion of the qualities a prince should have is that depending on the situation a prince could either be generous or miserly, faithful or unfaithful. Necessity should dictate the prince's actions. This conclusion itself represents a decisive departure from classical political science which while certainly seeking to provide latitude for statesmen would never go as far as Machiavelli. The classical statesman uses his prudence to make decisions within specific situations but never loses sight of

¹⁰² It is easy to see why Machiavelli's discussion of virtue and vice in Chapter XV has led to so much confusion and debate over what his intentions are. Is he arguing for a complete rejection of Christianity or simply its removal from the political sphere? Is he founding a new morality or continuing a version of pagan morality, if in an original fashion. It is Isiah Berlin's contention that while Machiavelli departs from a Christian morality, he remains an adherent to classical pagan morality. See Berlin, *Against the Current*, 49-64. In certain respects I agree with Berlin's thesis, but he does not go far enough in clarifying whether he thinks there are multiple pagan moralities or a general pagan consensus. Berlin also makes the mistake in suggesting that Machiavelli thinks Christian morality is fine as long as it remains in the private sphere, see 57-60. Upon reading Machiavelli's comedies, particularly *Mandragola* it is clear that NM's rejection of traditional morality does not stop at the threshold of the private home. This is unfortunate because in other respects Berlin's essay on Machiavelli is excellent in demonstrating NM's originality.

the overarching moral standard.¹⁰³ Machiavelli at this point appears to consider necessity itself to be standard.

Is this Machiavelli's final word on the matter, that the means are secondary to the ends? This to a degree is the conventional interpretation of Machiavellianism; the famous "the ends justify the means". But are we to conclude the ethos of the Machiavellian prince is adaptability or is there something deeper? If we were to skip over the next several chapters to his concluding remarks on the "qualities" in Chapter XVIII we find ample evidence to believe this is the case. Here he summarizes his discussion of qualities by alluding to his initial account in Chapter XV; writing that:

Thus, it is not necessary for a prince to have all the above mentioned qualities in fact, but it is necessary to appear to have them. Nay, I dare say this, that by having them and always observing them they are harmful; and by appearing to have them they are useful, as to appear merciful, faithful, humane, honest, and religious, and to be so; but to remain with a spirit built so that, if you need not to be those things, you are able and know how to change to the contrary. This has to be understood: that a prince, and especially a new prince, cannot observe all those things for which men are held good, since he is often under a necessity, to maintain his state, of acting against faith, against charity, against humanity, against religion. And so he needs to have a spirit disposed to change as the winds of fortune and variations of things command him, as I said above, not to depart from good, when possible, but know how to enter into evil, when forced by necessity (P.XVIII.70).

Machiavelli goes on to conclude that nothing is more necessary to appear to have all the qualities celebrated by conventional morality (most importantly religion) because the many are never close enough to touch you and can only see you while the few are close but dare not oppose the many (P.XVIII.71). The lesson therefore appears to be that in order to avoid the

¹⁰³ As articulated by Leo Strauss; "Machiavelli denies natural right, because he takes his bearings by the extreme situations in which the demands of justice are reduced to the requirements of necessity, and not by the normal situations in which the demands of justice in the strict sense are the highest law... The true statesman in the Aristotelian sense, on the other hand, takes his bearings by the normal situation and by what is normally right, and he only reluctantly deviates from what is normally right only in order to save the cause of justice and humanity itself". See Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 162.

reputation of an Agathocles, one must *appear* in a way acceptable to the many while cultivating a spirit that is capable of setting its course by the winds of necessity and therefore liberated from the insistence of classical political science that the practicing of the virtues are good in and of themselves. The maintenance or the founding of a state appears to take priority for Machiavelli.

The Florentine echoes the argument for adaptability in Chapter XXV of *The Prince* stating that one who is happy adapts themselves to the times while one who is unhappy goes against the times. For sometimes one who proceeds cautiously succeeds while other times it is the rash or imprudent one who triumphs. Therefore Julius II who proceeded recklessly in all his affairs proved to be incredibly successful but if he had lived longer he would have met his ruin since the times would have changed and Julius would not have been able to change his nature (P.XXV.100).

From this we can potentially draw the conclusion that the view of Machiavelli as arguing for the ends justify the means; for the importance of following the dictates of necessity, to know how to be good and to be bad. It is this interpretation that leads to apologies for Machiavelli. Ranging from the claim that the Florentine takes a neutral stance towards questions of morality in favour of efficiency to the claim that while Machiavelli would prefer princes to be good, due to his “realistic” view of human nature he is forced to advise the use of “questionable actions.” Even those who are more willing to accept that Machiavelli is more devious in his statements tend to focus more on the fox side of the Machiavellian prince’s dual nature at the expense of the lion.¹⁰⁴ The prince knows privately that conventional morality is groundless and harmful but strives to appear acceptable to the many in order to avoid a reputation that can become harmful.

¹⁰⁴ See Timothy J. Lukes “Lionizing Machiavelli” in *The American Political Science Review* 95 (2001) in contrast to Wayne A. Rebhorn’s *Foxes and Lions: Machiavelli’s Confidence Men*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, (1988).

However, when we turn to Chapters XVI to XIX of *The Prince* where Machiavelli offers a detailed comparison of some of his contrasting qualities; the teaching for the potential prince we find here conflicts with the idea that Machiavelli is providing an argument solely for adapting to the necessities of the situation or being overly concerned with engendering a reputation that clashes with conventional morality. Instead, Machiavelli is articulating a type of princely character that can best be described as severe.

We first see this Chapter XVI where Machiavelli provides a more detailed discussion of liberality and parsimony. He writes that while the many are correct in praising liberality, a prince that actually engages in liberality finds himself in a difficult position. For practicing liberality requires keeping up a lavish display, which eventually will lead the prince into debt, forcing him to place taxes on his subjects, who will in turn learn to hate him. In the end by practicing liberality you find yourself cultivating a reputation for meanness (P.XVI.63).

Far better therefore to act as a miser right from the beginning. This way when you do engage in select acts of liberality the people will love you and in a strange twist the prince will find themselves having a reputation for a kind of liberality in which they are able to defend themselves and undertake campaigns while not burdening the people with taxes. As examples Machiavelli offers Pope Julius II and Louis XII of France; Julius may have used liberality to gain the papacy but once on the Throne of St. Peter he quickly became a miser while Louis was able to embark on campaigns in Italy without burdening his subjects because he had practiced parsimony earlier in his reign. “Therefore so as not to have to rob his subjects to be able to defend himself, not to become poor and contemptible, nor to be forced to become rapacious, a prince should esteem it little to incur a name for meanness, because this is one of the vices which enable him to rule (P.XVI.64).”

Machiavelli also has an answer for the classic counter example, the rise of Julius Caesar; whose liberality and generosity is celebrated by ancient authors despite what they may think of his political actions.¹⁰⁵ The Florentine counters that while Caesar and those who followed his model may have attained empire with liberality, if he had remained alive and not tempered his lavish generosity he would have been ruined and even his liberality was based on his ability not to give what was his own but what belonged to others; the Gauls and other peoples he defeated. While it was necessary for him to engage in a kind of liberality for his soldiers in order to persuade them to follow him, once in power Caesar would have been forced to become like Julius II or he would have become contemptible.

Machiavelli concludes that nothing consumes as much as liberality. Either it leads you to become poor and therefore contemptible or forces you to become rapacious and hated by the people. Since being hated and contemptible are the two things a prince should guard against and the cause of which is liberality; he teaches that there is wisdom in maintaining a name for meanness, which engenders infamy but not hatred (P.XVI.65). The impression we are left with then is that rather than knowing when to be liberal or parsimonious depending on the circumstances Machiavelli instead teaches that meanness is a virtue while liberality is the vice. Only a specific kind of liberality should be practiced (giving what is not yours) and even then only under certain circumstances. The people may not like a miser, but they will still respect him. While the road which liberality travels on ends in ruin.

The trend of Machiavelli undermining his earlier statement that the prince must learn to be good and bad in this unique fashion continues in the next chapter in his comparison of cruelty and mercy. He begins in a similar fashion as he did in his discussion of the previous qualities by

¹⁰⁵ See Sallust's *War with Cataline* and the biographies of Caesar provided by Suetonius and Plutarch for examples of this.

writing that each prince should desire to be held merciful and not cruel; yet he quickly adds that while Cesare Borgia was held to be cruel he was still able to restore the Romagna, unite it and reduced it to peace. The Florentine people on the other hand in their attempt to be merciful and avoid being named cruel allowed the city of Pistoia to be destroyed (PXVII.65). Borgia therefore in a certain sense proves to be more merciful than the Florentines. Because Borgia had a reputation for cruelty the people of the Romagna stayed quiet and peaceful due to their fear of him. The Florentines meanwhile through their indulgent of their subjects were continuously forced to be cruel. By not fearing to garner a reputation for cruelty and his immediate use of violence Borgia ultimately proved in a perverse way to be the more merciful one because with a few examples he was able to cow his subjects to the point that further cruelty was no longer necessary. His reputation for cruelty is more merciful than the Florentines actual attempts at mercy.

The comparison between the benefits of practicing cruelty rather than mercy lead to Machiavelli's infamous claim that it is better for a prince to be feared instead of being loved. One of course desires to be both but as the Florentine memorably puts it; since it is difficult to put the two together, there is far more safety being feared rather than loved. Arguing that:

Men are ungrateful, fickle, pretenders and dissemblers, evaders of danger, eager fir gain. While you do them good, they are yours, offering you their blood, property, lives, and children, as I said above, when the need for them is far away; but, when it is close to you, they revolt. And that prince who has founded himself entirely on their words, stripped of other preparation, is ruined... And men have less hesitation to offend one who makes himself loved than one who makes himself feared; for love is held by a chain of obligation, which, because men are wicked, is broken at every opportunity for their utility, but fear is held by a dread of punishment that never forsakes you (P.XVII.66).

Machiavelli continues this theme of cruelty being preferable to the practice of mercy or chastity by turning to his favourite comparison in both *The Prince* and the *Discourses*; the careers of Scipio Africanus and Hannibal. One of Hannibal's most admirable qualities is that despite

leading an army of mixed nationalities into a foreign land, he never faced any dissension from his men, whether in good fortune or bad. This was due, according to Machiavelli, to Hannibal's inhuman cruelty, which in combination with his other virtues, made him venerable and terrible in the view of his soldiers. So important was this "inhuman cruelty" that without it, Hannibal's other virtues would not have been enough. As proof of this, despite what may have been construed as Machiavelli's praise in Chapter XIV of Scipio's magnanimity, he now informs us that the revolt of the Roman army in Spain under Scipio was due to his excessive mercy and his reputation for glory was only protected by sound orders of the Roman Senate (P.XVII.68). Once again, the lesson that we are to draw from this appears to be that instead of learning to adapt between mercy and cruelty, the Machiavellian prince should err on the side of cruelty rather than mercy.

After concluding that miserliness and cruelty are better than liberality and mercy, it comes as no surprise to discover that upon comparing honesty and astuteness Machiavelli advocates in Chapter XVIII that despite the general praise reserved for a prince who keeps faith and lives honestly; experience (and the Machiavellian study of history) ultimately proves that those princes who succeed are those who take little account of honesty and therefore overtake those who rely on loyalty. Pope Alexander VI being the obvious example of a ruler who while constantly professing faith was successful in his enterprises because of his ability to deceive men (P.XVIII.70). Alexander's ability to deceive derived from his mastering the Machiavellian teaching on being able to change between the natures of the lion and the fox. A prince cannot simply be a lion because a lion cannot recognize snares while a fox cannot defend itself against wolves. He argues that a prince who only follows the way of the lion does not understand the lesson and fails while those like Alexander who follow the way of the fox know how to be a

great pretenders and dissemblers and therefore are able to take advantage of those willing to be deceived (P.XVIII.69-70). In short, the honourable, honest prince who rules and fights wars as a gentleman will find himself ruined while the prince willing to break faith and deceive comes out ahead.

The heroes of this series of chapters in *The Prince* therefore rather than choosing between qualities depending on the moment; prove to be consistently deceitful, cruel, miserly and irreligious. As the praise of Hannibal, Cesare Borgia, and Alexander VI demonstrates, the Machiavellian prince in the end avoids the practice of magnanimity at all times. While anyone who practices the traditional virtues such as Scipio are criticized for doing so.

We have seen on deeper examination that Machiavelli does not in the end teach his students the importance of switching between the various qualities depending upon the context, but instead consistently teaches his readers to choose the quality that has been traditionally viewed as a vice. The lesson derived from *The Prince* therefore is not that the prince should choose between liberality and miserliness or cruelty and mercy depending on the circumstances; but that the prince should *always* be cruel, a breaker of faith, a miser, and be feared rather than loved. Their only concern regarding the traditional virtues celebrated by Aristotle and Cicero is that the many *see* them as embodying conventional morality, therefore not developing a reputation for criminality. Even the concern for appearing as possessing the traditional virtues is not paramount for Machiavelli, as he encourages his readers to not fear gaining a reputation for miserliness and demands a decisive break from the teaching of the ancients in persuading future princes that they should prefer to be feared by their subjects rather than loved. In the long-term Machiavelli seeks to go even farther than Moses and Cyrus -who according to the Florentine hid

their severity under the cloak of conventional morality- in writing the effectual truth and encouraging princes to not fear cultivating a reputation for hardness.

The Machiavellian preference for cruelty however should not be interpreted as an endorsement for thuggery or petty despotism. While it is better for a prince to be feared by the people rather than loved; that fear should never fall into hatred or contempt. The first step in this regard is to respect your subject's property and women. For by being rapacious in this the prince is certain to earn the people's hatred (P.XIX.72). The people will respect and fear a ruler who has a reputation for hardness and cruelty when crossed but they will not tolerate a tyrant who takes and takes. The Machiavellian prince is not to be found in modern day Turkmenistan or Zimbabwe. The other way a prince can fall into disfavour is to become contemptible. A prince can do this by garnering a reputation for being effeminate, pusillanimous, and irresolute. If the people and soldiers begin to think that the prince is a weakling, his reign will be short-lived.

To further demonstrate his argument, Machiavelli offers an analysis of the reigns of the Roman emperors from Marcus Aurelius to Maximinus; the rulers of the empire are particularly useful because not only did they have to keep the people and the great satisfied, the emperors also had to deal with the soldiers. This was incredibly difficult because while the people preferred a peaceable emperor and quiet times while the soldiers desired a ruler who was cruel and rapacious and therefore willing to indulge them in their own rapacious ways. Therefore most of the emperors found themselves presiding over short reigns. In particular, Pertinax and Alexander being humane and kind became contemptible in the eyes of the soldiers who quickly ruined them. In contrast Commodus, Antoninus Caracalla, and Maximinus were very cruel and attempted to satisfy the soldiers but they too came to a bad end. Of all the emperors that

Machiavelli discusses, only two prove to be successful; Marcus Aurelius (who Machiavelli calls the philosopher) who was humane and Septimius Severus who was cruel (P.XIX.75-82).

How did these men avoid garnering hatred and contempt where the others failed? Marcus Aurelius was able to rule over the empire and die honourably because he succeeded to the throne by hereditary right and not owing his rise to the people or the soldiers and backed up by tradition along with his venerable virtues was able to be secure (P.XIX.77). The key here though is not the wisdom, justice, or humanity of Aurelius that allowed him to rule. After all, Alexander never sentenced a man to death without a trial during his reign and Pertinax attempted to restore a standard of decency to the army that Aurelius himself had maintained. No, the reason Marcus the philosopher was able to die in his bed was because he had inherited a principality with good orders in place. If the orders were good the prince will be secure. Aurelius owed his reign to chance.

Severus on the other hand did not have the benefit of hereditary right or virtuous orders. He ascended to the Roman Principate through his own virtue. As Machiavelli puts it, “he was always able to rule happily because his virtues made him so admirable in the sight of the soldiers and the people that the latter remained somehow astonished and stupefied, the former were reverent and satisfied” (P.XIX.78). Of course, Severus’ virtue is of a particularly Machiavellian nature. Using the nature of the fox he was able to mask his desire for the throne; first by claiming his return to Italy with his army was merely to avenge the death of Pertinax and then after being named emperor by the Senate he played his rivals Pescennius Niger and Albinus against each other. Making a temporary alliance with Albinus while he crushed Niger and when this was done he turned on Albinus leaving him supreme.

Once he became the undisputed emperor Severus did not shy away from maintaining a reputation for cruelty. His reputation shielded him from being hated and while he was certainly severe, he never fell into depravity in the way his son Antoninus Caracalla did; putting many people in Rome and Alexandria to death (P.XIX.79). The cruelty or to be blunt, criminality of Severus is therefore of a particular quality. His severity was combined with virtues, something that other Roman emperors who were simply criminal were not able to accomplish. His ability to satisfy the soldiers and astonish the people in an echo of Machiavelli's description of the actions of Cesare Borgia suggests that Severus struck upon a winning formula. The practicing of severity and virtue proves to win fear and respect which are far more reliable than love.

The conclusion that *The Prince* ultimately points to Septimius Severus as the true exemplar of the new prince can be a troubling thought; particularly joined with our conclusion that Machiavelli encourages any future prince to practicing the virtues associated with severity rather than the ones celebrated by classical writers. The character of the Machiavellian Prince can be described as one who is hard, ruthless, self-sufficient, and self-reliant. He is not Xenophon's Cyrus or Aristotle's Great Souled man. However, as always with Machiavelli, we cannot totally rely upon *The Prince* to examine his teaching. We must also consider the *Discourses* as well.

Despite its reputation for being more in line with classical political thought, the Machiavellian preference for severity found in *The Prince* is repeated in the *Discourses*. In a series of chapters in Book III of the *Discourses*, Machiavelli re-iterates this teaching in the same fashion as he did in Chapters XV to XVIII of *The Prince*; by first suggesting that magnanimity and severity are both equally useful virtues for a captain-prince to possess, before slowly revealing to the reader that severity should always be preferred when one is a citizen of a

republic. Machiavelli begins his discussion in D.III.20 where he informs us of Camillus' victory over the Falisci. During the siege a schoolmaster brought a group of noble boys out to the Roman lines claiming that the city would surrender to get them back. Camillus responded by binding the schoolmaster's hands behind him and giving the children rods to beat him led the group back into the city. This act of humanity was so appreciated by the Falisci that they decided to turn the city over to the Romans. Machiavelli concludes that the example of Camillus proves that a humane act sometimes can sometimes have a greater effect in men's spirits than a ferocious or violent act (D.III.20.1).

The truth of this maxim is provided even more weight by the example of Scipio in Spain during the war against Carthage. The Florentine repeats his description of Scipio's humanity from *The Prince* stating that his chastity –returning the wife of a local ruler back to her husband– brought the entire province over to him., and contributed far more to his reputation than his actual generalship. This is, according to Machiavelli, because the qualities of humanity, chastity, and generosity are what the people often desire to see in great men and is therefore often celebrated by writers. The best example of this again for Machiavelli is Xenophon. Writing “Xenophon toils very much to demonstrate how many honours, how many victories, how much good fame being humane and affable brought to Cyrus, and not giving any example of himself either as proud, cruel, or as lustful, or as having any other vice that stains the life of men” (D.III.20.1).

It is unsurprising therefore after reading a chapter like this that so many of Machiavelli's readers draw the erroneous conclusion that the *Discourses* is a continuation of the classical tradition. However, once we turn to the next chapter we find something else entirely. As he did in *The Prince* after examining the career of Scipio he turns to Hannibal, who he writes, entered

Italy with all the modes contrary to those of Scipio; “with cruelty, violence, robbery, and every type of faithlessness” produced the same effect that Scipio had in Spain (D.III.21.1). The cruelty of Hannibal proved to be just as effective as the magnanimity of Scipio in convincing cities to rebel against their rulers and follow them.

Machiavelli stops to ask why the ways of Scipio and Hannibal, despite being so different, could lead to the same results. He suggests there could be several reasons. First, because men often desire new things no matter what their current condition is, the door is open to anyone who puts themselves at the head of an innovation. Finally, according to Machiavelli men are motivated by two primary things; love or fear. Therefore Scipio was able to convince the provinces of Spain to follow him after he gained their love, while Hannibal prompted the revolt of the cities of Italy due to their fear of him (D.III.21.2).

The initial suggestion here is –just as we saw in *The Prince*- that magnanimity and severity are both qualities that can be useful in helping the potential prince achieve his ends. As Machiavelli himself puts it: “it is of little import to a captain whichever of these ways he walks in, provided that he is a virtuous man and that the virtue makes him reputed among men” (D.III.21.3). Meanwhile both the attempt to instill fear or love can lead a prince to ruin; as the pursuit of love can make a prince despicable and the pursuit of fear can cause a prince to be hated. Scipio and Hannibal themselves experienced this problem. As Scipio’s desire to be loved led to his men and some of his friends revolting against him in Spain. As for Hannibal, Machiavelli hypothesizes that due to the fear he inspired some cities that potentially could have joined him against the Romans chose not to do so (D.III.21.4). It is possible therefore for a prince to ruin themselves in attempting to instill either fear or love, becoming either hated or despicable; luckily the virtue of Scipio and Hannibal was so great that they did not encounter

these problems in a way that permanently ruined them. This leads Machiavelli to conclude the chapter by stating that the mode a captain proceeds therefore is not important so long as they possess enough virtue.

However, upon closer examination of Machiavelli's comparison of Scipio and Hannibal we find that this is not the case. The criticism of Scipio's desire to be loved is reinforced with the example of his men's revolt. Machiavelli's critique of Hannibal however is hypothetical. Perhaps if he had not instilled so much fear more cities would have joined him against the Romans. On the other hand, perhaps they would not have. What is clear is that Machiavelli finds an actual fault with Scipio and lodges only a hypothetical critique against Hannibal. Suggesting that while it is possible that choosing fear over love may have its drawbacks; we can say with certainty that choosing love always leads to problems.

Continuing his analysis of magnanimity and severity; Machiavelli moves to a comparison of Manlius Torquatus and Valerius Corvinus in Chapter XXII. Both men were prominent in Rome at the same time and they both were celebrated for their virtue but their mode in dealing with their soldiers differed. Manlius commanded his soldiers with every kind of severity while Valerius dealt with them in every humane mode. In gaining the soldiers' obedience Manlius killed his son while Valerius never offended anyone (D.III.22.1). Despite these differences, both men were able to produce the same effect.

Are both modes and captains therefore equally worthy of emulation? At the end of the chapter we discover that the answer is no, or at least if one is living under a republic one should choose the severity of Manlius over the humanity of Valerius. How does Machiavelli reach this conclusion if he had earlier claimed that despite their differences both men had achieved similar effects? He begins by arguing that if one wished to be obeyed one must know how to command,

and if one wants to command strong things one needs to be strong and not command with mildness. The practice of mildness or humanity do not necessarily lead to ruin for a captain as the example of Valerius shows. However, according to Machiavelli practicing humanity can only work if the customs and orders present in a republic and among the soldiers are still strong. The first point in Manlius' favour therefore is that where a captain such as Valerius relies on custom already being in place among his soldiers; i.e. chance or fortune, the virtue of Manlius was enough to create virtue among his men.

Machiavelli's preference for the mode of Hannibal and Manlius comes out even more into the open when the Florentine stops to compare his teaching on the matter to that of other writers. While according to Machiavelli there are writers who praise both Manlius and Valerius; those who write about princes overwhelmingly favour the latter. In particular, Machiavelli reminds us again that it is Xenophon in his praise of the humanity of Cyrus echoes what Livy says about Valerius. After giving further description of the actions that demonstrate Manlius' severity and Valerius' humanity, Machiavelli writes (no doubt with a smile) that it is difficult to make a judgement. The Florentine concludes that while the way of Valerius is beneficial for a captain who aspires to be a prince, because his mercy and affability will encourage his army to become partisan in his favour; the severity of Manlius is to be encouraged in a republic because his mode is less dangerous due to it being wholly in favour of the public. The captain who follows Manlius (like Marcus Cato) will be respected but not loved. Therefore he will never develop a personal following among citizens or soldiers, be viewed as favouring one class over another, having private ambition, and finally because he will not have these traits political opponents will not seek to move against him (D.III.23).

Machiavelli does not mention him by name here, but the case of Julius Caesar immediately springs to mind. A man who certainly followed the way of Valerius in the practice of mercy and affability but cultivated a personal following that became a faction, forced the aristocrats and Pompey to move against him and plunged the republic into civil war. A man like Manlius on the other hand, a man who put to death his own son, could never be suspected of placing his private ambition over that of the common good. Marcus Cato may not have been an enjoyable dinner guest but everyone knew he was incorruptible.

The lesson from the *Discourses* proves not to differ in any important points from what we saw in *The Prince*. Indeed, Machiavelli's conclusion that a republic requires severity but allowing that writers such as Xenophon are correct in claiming that a prince can be magnanimous proves to be one of his better jokes; because in the book dedicated to the education of the prince Machiavelli rejects magnanimity as well. Both Septimius Severus, the model of the new prince and Manlius Torquatus the model republican citizen stand as a rejection of classical political science and its humanist successor. The classical gentleman-ruler is far too reliant on fortune and the mistaken belief that men are good. In contrast to the teaching of Aristotle and Cicero the Florentine simply has to point to the case of Scipio whose practice of the virtues almost proved to be his undoing or Julius Caesar whose conduct led to faction and civil strife. Severus and Manlius on the other hand despite their hardness and cruelty were able to either rule successfully by keeping the humours in the city happy during corrupt times or lead their city successfully by instilling virtue in their soldiers and fellow citizens.

Therefore it is misleading to say that Machiavelli's teaching on the importance of following the dictates of necessity means learning when to be good and when to be bad. For

Machiavelli, when the choice is between magnanimity or severity the choice is always severity for it is the only way to prepare the prince to face the reality of a world ruled by *fortuna*.

The Art of War

If the crowning virtue of the Machiavelli's Captain-Prince is severity, then it certainly should come as no surprise that his new statesman is not oriented by the same activity as the classical gentleman-ruler. As we saw in Chapter I, while the Aristotelian or Ciceronian gentleman involves himself in political life, he is primarily directed by the life of contemplation. This is most clearly symbolized in Cicero's presentation of Scipio Africanus the Younger who at the beginning of *res publica* is more interested in discussing the recent eclipse of the sun and other matters of natural philosophy, only reluctantly being drawn into a discussion on the question of the Best Regime and concludes the dialogue with the account of his dream of eternity far above the humdrum of everyday Roman political life.

Machiavelli, we discovered, has little time for this. The attempt to avoid the trials and tribulations of political life is an impossible task and leaves who ever attempts to do so just as open to the ravages of *fortuna* as the person who remains in the fray. Scipio Africanus after all was murdered by his political enemies. Therefore the greatest art for Machiavelli's captain-prince is not oratory or another of the *passive* arts celebrated by Aristotle, Cicero, or Castiglione. In their place he returns to war, or as Fabrizio says in the *Art of War*; the deeds done in the sun rather than the shade. War will be the art of his prince because war never transcends the horizon of the city.

This however not an argument for a return to the warrior ethos celebrated by the Homeric Greeks (Nietzsche's blond beasts). As I argued above regarding Machiavelli's case for severity, this not a claim for benefits of thuggery or a celebration of violence. Machiavelli's heroes

certainly are capable of wielding the sword; they are closer to cunning Odysseus than macho Achilles. Like severity, the art of war is to be guided by Machiavellian prudence and becomes one of the defining features of his model captain-prince.

Machiavelli presents his case for war being the most important art for the prince to master most thoroughly in Chapters XII through XIV of *The Prince*. As Machiavelli puts it in another of his famous lines; “the principal foundations that all states have, new ones as well as old or mixed, are good laws and good arms. And because there cannot be good laws were there are not good arms, and where there are good arms there must be good laws, I shall leave out reasoning on laws and shall speak of arms” (P.XII.48). In other words the prince should not dedicate too much time on developing an expertise in jurisprudence when the art of war is more than sufficient.

Arms or knowledge of them is therefore of paramount importance. The question thus becomes what kind of arms? For Machiavelli there are one’s own, auxiliary (belonging to another), mercenary, and mixed. As we by now expect, he recommends that the prince uses their own arms for mercenary and auxiliary are useless and dangerous. He argues that:

if one keeps his state founded on mercenary and auxiliary arms, one will never be firm or secure; for they are disunited, ambitious, without discipline, unfaithful; bold among friends, among enemies cowardly; no fear of God, no faith with men; ruin is postponed only as long as attack is postponed; and in peace you are despoiled by them, in war by the enemy (P.XII.48)

It is the very use of these arms by his contemporaries that has led Italy into its present state of humiliation. Auxiliary arms by their very definition scream untrustworthy. They owe their loyalty to someone else, not to you. The prince who uses auxiliary arms therefore is the tool of another. They may allow you to use their soldiers to defeat your enemies if it is in their interest to see this come about, but once the task is completed who is to say it will not now be in their

interest to use those soldiers against you? In Chapter XIII Machiavelli provides as examples Pope Julius II whose obsession with seizing Ferrara made forced him to turn to Spanish auxiliaries, giving Ferdinand of Spain the toehold in Italy he desired; and the Florentines due to their lack of arms brought the French in 1500 to help them seize Pisa, exposing them to danger; and finally the Emperor John of Constantinople who in order to fight his enemies invited the Turks into Greece, after which they refused to leave (P.XIII.54-55). As Machiavelli puts it; “let him, then, who wants to be unable to win make use of these arms, as they are more dangerous mercenary arms” (P.XIII.55).

Mercenaries meanwhile, despite what Machiavelli said in the above are not necessarily bad soldiers. It is just usually in their interest to be. “Mercenary captains are either excellent men of arms or they are not; if they are you cannot trust them because they always aspire to greatness... but if the captain is not virtuous, he ruins you in the ordinary way” (P.XII.49). Francesco Sforza after all began as a mercenary in the employ of Milan and ended his career as Duke of the city after the Milan’s Venetian enemies gave him a better offer to betray them; his father meanwhile did the same to Queen Giovanna of Naples forcing her to throw herself at the mercy of the King of Aragon. As for those virtuous mercenaries such John Hawkwood (or as Machiavelli calls him Giovanni Acuto) who do not turn on their masters, he argues that they were never given the opportunity (P.XII.51). As for mercenaries who are more bark than bite, no elaboration on why they cannot be trusted is necessary.

It should come as little surprise then that when Charles and his French army crossed the Alps and descended into Italy in 1494 on their way to Naples, the mercenary arms of Italy’s rulers did not to stop them and in Machiavelli’s words, Charles was able to seize Italy with chalk. If the weaknesses of mercenary and auxiliary arms are so dangerous, why have the princes

of Italy continued to rely on them? As I argued in Chapter I, Machiavelli traces the origin of the use of mercenaries and the subjection of Italy at the doorstep of the Church and its humanist allies. To repeat Machiavelli's historical diagnosis, as soon as Italy began to resist the Holy Roman Empire the Pope was able to gain influence in temporal affairs. Because priests are contemplative rather than active they have no knowledge of arms they turned to mercenaries. The rulers of Italy's cities meanwhile thanks to the humanist focus on literary studies similarly have little military acumen and are also driven to bring in outsiders. It is because of this that "Italy has been overrun by Charles, taken as booty by Louis, violated by Ferdinand, and insulted by the Swiss" (P.XII.53).

In contrast to the Church and the humanist educated princes Machiavelli offers the examples of Cesare Borgia and Hiero of Syracuse. Borgia entered Romagna with French auxiliaries with whom he was able to seize several towns. Yet with this accomplished he concluded he could no longer trust his French allies and turned to the mercenary arms of the Orsini and Vitelli families. However, he quickly concluded that these arms were likely to be dangerous and unfaithful and finally turned to his own arms, finding troops who were loyal to him alone. Machiavelli concludes by assuring his readers that Borgia's reputation was never in higher esteem when he was the owner of his own arms (P.XIII.55). Hiero meanwhile upon being made head of the Syracusan army immediately realized the mercenaries hired by Syracuse could not be trusted and because he could not let them go instead cut them all to pieces and then went to war with his own arms (P.XIII.55-56). The Florentine drives his point home by concluding this section with an amusing reimaging of the story of David and Goliath. In Machiavelli's version when David offered to fight Goliath, Saul suggested David borrow his arms in the battle

in order to give him courage. David however refused, announcing that he would instead would meet the Philistine with his sling and his knife (P.XIII.56).¹⁰⁶

Machiavelli finishes his critique of the use of arms not of your own with the following:

I conclude, thus, that without its own arms no principality is secure; indeed it is wholly obliged to fortune since it does not have the virtue to defend itself in adversity. And it has always been the opinion and judgement of wise men “that nothing is so infirm and unstable as fame for power not sustained by one’s own force (P.XIII.57).

Chapters XII and XIII therefore serve as the first part of Machiavelli’s argument for the centrality of the art of war to the prince’s education. As he repeated points out in these chapters, Italy has been ruined by the abandoning of the martial virtues and along with other republics and principalities that relied on the arms of others. While those captain-princes, both ancient and modern, who have used their own arms have proven successful. With the importance of the art of war now clear, the Florentine’s task is now to sketch out how his pupils can achieve excellence in the art. Therefore Chapter XIV: *What a Prince Should do Regarding the Military* acts as an introduction to this education by opening this series of chapters.

He opens the Chapter by quickly going directly to the heart of the matter. Writing “a prince should have no other object, nor any other thought, nor take anything else as his art but that that of war and its orders and discipline; for that is the only art which is of concern to one who commands (P.XIV.58)”. The art of war is crucial for a prince who does not wish to garner contempt among his subjects (an echo of what we saw in Machiavelli’s argument for severity). Francesco Sforza was able to usurp the ruler-ship of Milan because he was armed while his sons due to their shunning of the hardships of arms were returned to private individuals. Therefore a prince who is unarmed cannot be respected by his servants or his soldiers (P.XIV.58).

¹⁰⁶ Why NM decides to change the story to include a knife in addition to a sling in David’s arsenal is difficult to say. Perhaps he wishes to make David appear more violent than he is in the biblical version. Or it is simply a Machiavellian joke. See I Samuel 17: 38-40, 50-51.

In order to avoid this danger a prince should never lift his thoughts from the exercise of war and in times of peace focus his thoughts on the art even more. Physically, Machiavelli's potential prince should always be out hunting and exposing his body to hardships.¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile, he should "learn the nature of sites, and recognize how mountains rise, how valleys open up, how plains lie, and understand the nature of rivers and marshes-and in this invest in the greatest care". He continues that "this knowledge is useful in two modes. First one learns to know one's own country, and one can better understand its defense; then through the knowledge and experience of those sites, one can comprehend with ease every other site that it may be necessary to explore" (P.XIV.59).¹⁰⁸

To show why this is an important component of the art of war Machiavelli provides the example of Philopoemen the prince of the Achaeans. Philopoemen (as Machiavelli recommends) thought of nothing but war. When on campaign with friends he would often stop at particular sites and ask them what they would do if an enemy held a certain position and whether they or their enemy would have the advantage. By considering geography and topography in this light Philopoemen was able to keep his and friend's minds sharp and focused on warfare.

The study of sites in a prince's country acts as the bridge between purely physical activity of making his body hard on the one hand and the exercise of the mind on the other. For even though the captain-prince has the spirit of a warrior; he still possesses intellectual virtues as well. The mode for cultivating the mind of the Machiavellian prince is far different from the

¹⁰⁷ In this as in many other matters, the closest writer; ancient or modern to Machiavelli is Xenophon. The author of the *Anabasis* similarly argues for gentlemen to cultivate themselves through hunting and horseback riding. See Xenophon's discourse on hunting in comparison to these passages in Machiavelli. For a more modern example, I suspect Machiavelli would have found much to admire in Theodore Roosevelt.

¹⁰⁸ Machiavelli's discussion of topography is of particular interest. No-where in his discussion of its importance does he suggest that knowledge of topography and geography good for its own sake. The study of geography therefore is not a form of leisure, but a practical activity useful for the prince's ends. Even in this seemingly small detail of a prince's education in the art of war Machiavelli is able to demonstrate his departure from the ancient gentleman's orientation around contemplation.

recommendations provided by humanists such as Castiglione. Rather than studying oratory, poetry, or ethics Machiavelli tells his pupils to read histories and consider in them the actions of great men, seeing how they conduct themselves in wars, and examine the causes of their victories and losses. Finally they should find one of the great men of history to follow and imitate. As Alexander sought to emulate Achilles, Caesar essayed to match the greatness of Alexander and Scipio modeled himself on Xenophon's Cyrus the Great (P.XIV.60).

The exercise of the mind therefore is dedicated to honing the prince in the art of war just as much as the physical side of the education is. By keeping the mind focused on warfare and how great rulers of the past were able to avoid pratfalls and find success the Machiavellian prince will perpetually be on the metaphorical edge. By cultivating such a state the prince will always be prepared for changes in *fortuna* and will avoid falling into the character of corruption that the princes of Italy educated by the humanists allowed themselves to fall into. The study of the art of war ensures that the prince is always concerned with necessity and therefore will be unlikely to follow a Socratic philosopher in a misguided attempt to leave the Cave. As Machiavelli puts it: "a wise prince should observe these modes, and never remain idle in peaceful times but with his industry make capital of them in order to profit from them in adversities, so when fortune changes it will find him ready to exist" (P.XIV.60).

The Model Captain-Prince

Machiavelli's *Life of Castruccio Castracani* can be puzzling to readers if at all read, as it is usually counted among the Florentine's "minor" political writings. Readers are perplexed by the praise given to the 14th century tyrant of Lucca who humiliated the Florentines; that Machiavelli changes Castracani's birth and other facets of his life, including ascribing over thirty sayings to Castracani that in actuality are derived from other sources; mostly from Diogenes

Laërtrius' *Lives of Philosophers*; and finally, after exhorting his readers to conquer fortune through their virtue in *The Prince*, Machiavelli's concludes his short biography by reporting that fortune ultimately defeated the virtuous Castruccio by striking him down with an illness at the moment of his greatest triumph.

After our examination of the Machiavellian study of history, we are no longer surprised by examples Machiavellian "editing". However, what are we to make of a Florentine patriot who appears to believe that fortune can be conquered writing a work on a sworn enemy of Florence whose life appears to reveal the indomitable nature of fortune? In answering these questions I intend to show that *The Life of Castruccio Castracani* compliments the teaching of *The Prince* by showing the Machiavellian statesman (in particular, a *new prince*) in action and the Castruccio Castracani we are presented with therefore is Machiavelli's exemplar Captain-Prince.

Machiavelli opens the *Life* by informing his young friends Zanobi and Luigi that he chose to write to them of the Lucchese prince because his life follows the path of many other great men of the past. In his studies he has found that the great men of the world have possessed a mixture of virtue and good Fortune. He writes that one of the common traits they share is that many have been of humble origins, and they were exposed to wild beasts or claimed to be the son of a god. Machiavelli argues the reason for this is that Fortune wishes to show the world that she makes men great by first showing herself at a time when prudence can have no share (II, 548).¹⁰⁹ Castruccio in his life showed a striking example of the mixture of ability and of Fortune and Machiavelli chooses to address this recollection to his friends; who more than other men delight

¹⁰⁹ References to Machiavelli's *Life of Castruccio Castracani* are by Volume and page number in *The Life of Castruccio Castracani* in *Machiavelli: Chief Works and Others* Volume II, translated by Alan Gilbert, Durham: Duke University Press (1965).

in noble acts. Castruccio therefore can serve as a model for those who have been formed by the Machiavellian *paideia*.

In all ways, Castruccio follows the precepts laid down by the Florentine. As a child Castruccio is found in a vineyard belonging to a priest and his sister who take the child in and raise him as their own. This is a change from the historical Castruccio who was not an orphan. By having Castruccio discovered by a woman among the vines Machiavelli is attempting to link him with other great princes like Moses and Romulus; who were also abandoned, found, and thanks to fortune were able to rise to glory. The priest, Messer Antonio Castracani meanwhile hoped that the foundling would follow in his footsteps and become a priest and sought to teach him in his vocation. But Castruccio had nothing of the priestly character and at the age of fourteen and no longer afraid of the priest put aside the books of the Church and began to busy himself with weapons; taking delight only in the arts of war. When he did take an interest in books, it was only in histories of great men who had conquered in war (II, 535). By doing this Castruccio follows the advice of Chapter XIV of *The Prince* to the letter. Rather than becoming soft like the princes of Italy derided by Fabrizio in the *Art of War* or Castiglione's Perfect Courtier; Castruccio hardened his body through exercise, took up the practice of arms and warfare and though Machiavelli does not elaborate, perhaps in his reading of history he found a figure such as Cyrus to model himself after. Thus from the very beginning Castruccio proves to have the proper disposition in favouring action over idleness.

The boy's ability is noticed by the Lucchese lord Francesco Guingi, a prominent member of the Ghibellines (supporters of the Emperor) and a man who was also devoted to war. After asking the young man whether he would rather become a man of war or a priest, he convinces Messer Antonio (who realized he had lost the battle for the boy's heart) to allow him raise

Castruccio instead. Guingi therefore took Castruccio into his household where he quickly came to possess the habits of a true gentleman; an excellent rider, superior in contests of strength, modest, respectful, and gracious (542-43).¹¹⁰ He soon became beloved of the entire city of Lucca. Upon reaching adulthood he begins to campaign for Lucca and the Ghibelline faction throughout Tuscany and his valour becomes celebrated. So pleased with him, his patron Guingi on his death asks Castruccio to protect his household and act as the guardian to his son Paglio.

Castruccio's actions on behalf of the Ghibellines though make him the enemy of the Guelfs in Lucca and he is forced into a power struggle which he quickly wins and takes advantage of to make himself prince of the city. Once in power, Castruccio is "Machiavellian" to the letter. He ruthlessly puts down his enemies; both those within the city and without. A leading Lucchese family is put to death for conspiring against him (including the innocent members), a foreign enemy is fooled into meeting under truce and is killed, and any of the great within the city who could aspire to the principedom were stripped of their property, driven into exile and if they were caught, executed (II, 552). In these actions Castruccio once again follows the advice Machiavelli offers to Lorenzo. The path he takes in the elimination of his rivals reads as an imitation of acts of Cesare Borgia, and the Romans in *The Prince*. In his response to the conspiracy against him, he follows Borgia's method in dealing with those who conspired against him. He pretended, forgiveness, mercy, and friendship and when he had the perpetrators in hand he acted decisively and put them to death.

¹¹⁰ While Machiavelli informs us that Castruccio took on the habits of a true gentleman we should not assume that this means that he *truly* became gracious, merciful, respectful, etc. in the mold of the classical gentleman. As we shall see, Castruccio proves to be incredibly ruthless during his rule of Lucca much to the surprise and chagrin of his rivals. It would be more accurate to say that Castruccio took on the *appearance* of a true gentleman while not being bound by anything more than necessity. It is almost as if Castruccio read Chapters XV-XIX of *The Prince*.

In his actions against his potential rivals meanwhile he follows Machiavelli's maxim to commit all the necessary crimes at a stroke, killing those he can catch, driving the others into exile, and seizing all of their property. His elimination of the great among the few ensures that he would be secure from internal threats to his rule, as Machiavelli tells potential princes in teaching them to rely on the many rather than the few. Even in the small detail of building a fortress within the city to safeguard his regime Castruccio takes a lesson from Machiavelli's teaching on liberality and builds it using wealth he confiscated from one of his defeated rivals rather than burdening the people of Lucca with a tax.

With his position as ruler of Lucca secure; Castruccio moves to expand his empire in Tuscany and aid the Emperor against his rivals. Thanks to his deference and faithfulness the Emperor makes Castruccio his deputy in Tuscany, in effect making him the leader of the Ghibellines in northern Italy. Later, he comes to the assistance of the Emperor's deputy, Henry, when Rome rebels against the German authorities. So grateful is Henry with Castruccio's help in securing Rome that he made Castruccio a Roman Senator, upon which Castruccio dons a toga and revels among the Romans. In these acts, Machiavelli clearly places Castruccio on the side of the Empire, and therefore an opponent of the political power of the Pope.

Meanwhile, the Florentines wary of Castruccio's growing power went to war with him. Castruccio defeats the Florentines in two separate conflicts, the latter victory is so complete the Lucchese army begins to march on Florence itself; pushing the Florentines to the edge of total defeat. More interesting than his constant defeating of the Florentines is his method of doing so. Castruccio regularly uses tactics that could have been drawn from *The Art of War* or the strategies of Hannibal or other ancient commanders reported in the *Discourses*. He generally relies on his infantry to win battles in contrast to the Florentines' overuse of cavalry; he takes

advantage of the terrain, demonstrating knowledge of sites; and he regularly employs ambushes in order to trap his enemies. Castruccio therefore is a practitioner of Machiavelli's art of war in that he imitates the strong ancients against the weak modern Florentines.

It is at this moment though, writes Machiavelli, that Fortune decided to intervene. After the final battle with the Florentines Castruccio is struck down with a fever and dies after handing the principedom of Lucca over to Paglio Guingi, the son of his old patron, just as he had promised. However, despite his successes, once he is dead his great achievements begin to unravel. Paglio Guingi proves not to be up to the task of following Castruccio or even his natural father. Castruccio himself admits to Paglio on his deathbed that the empire he created is unstable and will be difficult to maintain, lamenting that despite his successes perhaps it would have been better to have left a smaller and more manageable state to his heir. First Paglio loses Castruccio's Tuscan empire and within a few generations the Guingi family loses control of Lucca itself.

In building a lasting principality therefore Castruccio proves to be a failure. Yet Machiavelli still presents his Castruccio (in contrast to the historical petty tyrant) to his young friends as a prince truly worthy of admiration and emulation. At the conclusion of the *Life* Machiavelli tells us that when living Castruccio was inferior neither to Philip of Macedon nor Scipio and if his native country had been either of theirs instead of Lucca he would have surpassed them. As Theodore Sumberg argues, Machiavelli's comparison of Castruccio with Scipio and Philip is the Florentine making the case that the moderns do not always need to be weak compared to the strong ancients.¹¹¹ Even though he lived during a time of political corruption, Castruccio still proved virtuous enough to be compared to the greatest of ancients.

¹¹¹ Theodore Sumberg, "Machiavelli's Castruccio Castracani," *Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy* 16 (1988), 285-93.

Therefore, even more than the example of ancient heroes, Machiavelli's *Life of Castruccio Castracani* is an attempt to provide his readers with an example of a great captain-prince in order to persuade the young that ancient virtue can have a new birth. Machiavelli's young friends Zanobi and Luigi are moderns, and if their fellow modern Castruccio could be counted among the greatest of men then perhaps they can too.

The example of Castruccio Castracani therefore is proof to Machiavelli's contention that imitation of the ancients is possible, and that the sun, the moon, and the elements have not changed their motion. Therefore in Machiavelli's biography we do not encounter "the historical" Castruccio but instead Machiavelli's exemplar New Prince who could have stepped straight from the pages of *The Prince*. Castruccio is the perfect Machiavellian. He prefers the martial life over the contemplation of the priest, upon becoming ruler follows the advice Machiavelli gives to establish oneself as a new prince, and sought to win by fraud rather than force when possible. While cultivating the gentlemanly arts, he does so purely as means to an end and not as goods in themselves. He follows the examples of Hannibal or Manlius more than Scipio or Valerius. More subtly, his support of the Ghibellines against the Guelfs makes him an opponent of the Papacy¹¹² and his military tactics echo the discussion of ambushes in the penultimate chapter of *The Discourses*. Finally, the catalogue of his witty sayings when traced to their sources reveals a thoroughly Machiavellian moral taste.¹¹³

Why then at the conclusion of *The Life* does Machiavelli put so much emphasis on the idea of the power of *Fortuna* to trump *virtù*? As gifted as Castruccio was he could not choose a

¹¹² Some may note the unusual choice of an enemy of Florence to be made into a Machiavellian hero. This seeming impartiality camouflages the fact that the Ghibelline Castruccio is the enemy of the Guelf led Florence.

¹¹³ For an in-depth examination of Castruccio's sayings and their illumination of Machiavelli's outlook see Strauss "Machiavelli and Classical Literature."

more opportune time to die or leave orders in place to ensure what he had built could endure his own lifetime. Fortune's ability to bring down the works of man appears therefore to be absolute.

This though cannot be the lesson that Machiavelli wishes to impart to us. While it is true that the Florentine regularly reminds his readers of the power of fortune and the inevitability of decay, he is just as regularly insists that orders *can* be introduced into a republic or kingdom that will outlast the life of their orderer. Castruccio's failure then is not a lesson in the malignity of fortune but a reminder that it must be taken into account and prepared for. As Machiavelli argues in Ch. XXV of *The Prince*, dams and dikes can be put in place to lessen the impact or even contain the raging river *fortuna*. As great of a prince as he was, by ruling a principality Castruccio could not guarantee his successors would prove as virtuous as himself. While drawing our attention to the life of a great prince and encouraging us to imitate him; *The Life of Castruccio Castracani* also illuminates the central problem facing principalities and therefore hints as to why republics prove to be better soil for cultivating virtue.

Conclusion

We may summarize Machiavelli's attempt to replace the classical gentleman with his new captain-prince as follows. After being trained in the Machiavellian *paideia* his pupils have been liberated from what Machiavelli considers to be an "imagined" or sanitized version of history put forward by the ancients and humanists and instead have come to accept the "effectual truth". Now they no longer see the ancients as presented in Plutarch's *Lives* but rather warrior-statesmen; hardhearted, self-aggrandizing, glory seekers who are driven to dominate. They have been convinced that cultivating the virtues celebrated by Aristotle will lead them to ruin and are now prepared to choose cruelty over mercy, prefer to be hated rather than loved, and aim at severity over magnanimity.

The effect of such an education is sketched out for us in Machiavelli's reimagining of the rise of Castruccio Castracani and provides us with a clear picture as to the type of ruling class the Florentine is seeking to cultivate to stem the rot cultivated by the present religion and education. An Italy ruled by princes following the path of a Castruccio Castracani or the heroes of the Roman Republic; princes who are educated to be severe, versed in the art of war, and secure in the knowledge ends trump means; would be able to reverse the humiliation of Italy at the hands of the northern barbarians, reign in the prince of Rome, and perhaps act as a bulwark for the West against Oriental Despotism represented by Ottoman Turkey.

There is one problem however. As I argued in my discussion of Machiavelli's retelling of the reign of Castruccio Castracani in Lucca, cultivation of a virtuous prince or even a class of virtuous princes is not a solution to Machiavelli's dilemma. Or at least it is only part of the solution. Even virtuous princes, as demonstrated by Castruccio have an unfortunate tendency to die and can often leave their principalities in the hands of unworthy successors. To begin a new birth of politics Machiavelli needs for than a captain, he requires regime change.

Chapter III The Perfect Republic: Machiavelli's New Rome

“And because there cannot be good laws where there are not good arms, and where there are good arms there must be good laws, I shall leave out reasoning on laws and shall speak of arms”
-The Prince

Introduction

I ended the previous chapter's examination of Machiavelli's warrior-statesman *par excellence*, Castruccio Castracani with the conclusion that while the captain-prince is an important component of the Machiavellian project, the ultimate failure of Castruccio points to the need for the ordering of lasting institutions that endure beyond the life of any individual prince. In this we find yet another example of how the Florentine contrasts with his admirer, Nietzsche, who while speaking with great passion on the need for the emergence of *die grosse politik*, has little to say on the shape of the regime of the coming superman. Machiavelli other the hand, while fascinated with the individual achievements of Great Men, has as his primary concern the founding of a regime that not only serves as the stage for princes and captains to pursue glory but also acts for the “common benefit of everyone.”

The question of course becomes what does Machiavelli mean by the “common benefit”? Does he understand this upon classical republican lines as Pocock suggests; is he a populist democrat as John McCormick insists, or is he perhaps a proto-liberal?¹¹⁴ As always, it is best to allow the Florentine to speak for himself. Machiavelli's presentation of the question facing republics and principalities, tells us what the aim of his regime, and politics should be. That

¹¹⁴ Pocock's *Machiavellian Moment*, McCormick's *Machiavellian Democracy*, and Rahe's, *Republics Ancient and Modern: New Modes and Orders* along with Sullivan's, *Machiavelli, Hobbes, and the Formation of a Liberal Republicanism in England* present the case for the Machiavellian regime as classical republican, democratic, and proto-liberal respectively. All of these approaches have their merit but fall short because they do not give enough emphasis on the pursuit of glory; though Pocock comes the closest.

question is simply, conquer or be conquered, and the answer is be the conqueror. He condemns republics and principalities that stay “quiet” and reject expansion because he argues that they will inevitably be taken over by another expanding power. The Machiavellian regime, like his captain-prince is oriented by the goal of cultivating martial virtue, which is the foundation every regime must rest upon if it wishes to avoid falling victim to fortune and achieving glory. It is this yet again that separates Machiavelli from those who came before and those who come after him.

If the aim of the Machiavellian regime were to cultivate virtue in the manner of Aristotle’s *Politics* for example, then expansion and military acumen would not be the central concern. While Aristotle’s best regime certainly is concerned with preserving its freedom; by being devoted to the cultivation of leisurely contemplation, and ruled by what Machiavelli would call idle gentlemen, it becomes a republic that is concerned with staying quiet in its little corner of the world. While this would be the ideal to Aristotle and other classical republicans, for Machiavelli this is corruption. Therefore he rejects the ends of the classical republic.¹¹⁵

Nor can Machiavelli be presented as a populist democrat, no matter how much one sands down the edges. While scholars like McCormack are correct in the sense that he has no time for the aristocratic republics celebrated by classical and humanistic political science, this should not be mistaken for an argument for a proto-participatory democracy. Such an argument can be found in Rousseau’s *Social Contract* but not the *Discourses*. The author of *The Prince* is despite his criticisms of aristocrats and gentlemen rulers deeply sceptical of the ability of common

¹¹⁵ Despite his debt to Skinner and Pocock; Mikael Hörnqvist in his illuminating *Machiavelli and Empire* reminds us that NM’s consistent praise of imperialism signals a departure from classical and Renaissance humanism. See Hörnqvist, *Machiavelli and Empire*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

citizens to govern themselves and at the risk of being brusque, it is clear despite his intention of looking after their good as well, Machiavelli does not find the many particularly interesting.¹¹⁶

As for the argument that beneath the rhetoric concerning glory, war, and empire, the logic of Machiavelli's argument points towards a regime that moves beyond these goals and is far more concerned with security and well-being; the fact remains that if such a logic exists it is well (perhaps too well) hidden beneath exhortations to glory and empire. Machiavelli certainly severs the link classical political science had established between glory and a transcendental good, making his conception of glory closer to what could be called reputation or recognition, as my argument in the Chapter II made clear. However, the aim of Machiavellian political science is a new birth of politics after its subjection at the hands of philosophy; not to in turn make it follow the dictates of economics as the liberalism of Hobbes and Locke with its aim of commodious living seeks to bring about.¹¹⁷

My argument in this chapter will begin therefore with a clarification of the end of the Machiavellian regime that will serve as the home and platform for his captain-princes. In contrast to the aristocratic leisure of the classics, the democracy of Rousseau, and the comfort of the liberals, Machiavelli's regime is dedicated to toward the pursuit of goals of greatness or glory on the one hand and freedom on the other. All republics and principalities are judged by their

¹¹⁶ For an excellent critique of the trend among scholars interpreting Machiavelli's thought as prodemocracy see Ryan Balot and Stephen Trochimchuk's "The Many and the Few: On Machiavelli's Democratic Moment" in the *Review of Politics* 74 (2012), 559-588. Balot and Trochimchuk make the case that McCormack and others involved in this enterprise run the risk of anachronism and fails to treat Machiavelli and others with all their complexity. In my view a similar argument can be made for those strive to link Machiavelli with later liberal modern thinkers.

¹¹⁷ Suggestions to interpret Machiavelli in this way can be found throughout Straussian literature on the Florentine. In particular see Pangle's *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 62-64 Clifford Orwin's "Machiavelli's Un-Christian Charity," *The American Political Science Review* 72 (1978), 1217-1228 and hints within Paul Rahe's *Republics Ancient and Modern*. For the problem with this overly esoteric approach to reading Machiavelli see Patrick Colby's *Machiavelli's Romans*, 2-12.

ability to reach the supreme summit of greatness while maintaining a free way of life. Indeed, without a free way of life, a regime will destroy itself and never acquire lasting glory.

One could counter that the Best Regimes of Plato and Aristotle are also oriented by the goal of being “great” and “free”. However, Machiavelli understands these ideals not in relation to a standard of transcendental good or justice, but practical, political ends. Freedom is understood as security and satisfies the many desires not to be dominated and to be left alone to enjoy their property. The glory (which Machiavelli is really concerned with), which is the aim of the prince and others making up the great, meanwhile is oriented by the Machiavellian conception of *virtù*; which as we saw in the previous chapter is directed by action rather than contemplation. Glory therefore is primarily martial glory, the fame won on the battlefield. Greatness for the regime therefore becomes its ability to preserve its freedom internally from the avarice of the great and externally from the ambitions of foes while undertaking campaigns of expansion in order to reach the summit of power. To achieve this end, a regime must be provided with the proper modes and orders that can keep virtue alive within the city.

Upon investigating the proper modes and orders, we are immediately presented with a dilemma. Does Machiavelli favour republics or principalities? Which of these traditional regimes is better structured to have the new modes and orders grafted on to? If we turn to the texts for an answer we of course are greeted with the problem faced by all readers of Machiavelli. The Florentine wrote a book on how to rule principalities, and another devoted to the study of ancient Rome which Machiavelli argued was the republic *par excellence*. Even with this division, he does not hesitate to speak of republics in *The Prince* or offer advice to princes in the *Discourses*. Does this imply therefore that Machiavelli is neutral in the debate between partisans of the two regimes and simply offers objective counsel to both? Or does his discussion of republics and

principalities in both works that he claims “present everything he knows” reveal a unity to his thought and suggest he favours one regime over the other?

To answer this question I will undertake an examination of the virtues of principalities and republics in order to conclude which regime Machiavelli ultimately favours. Upon close consideration it is clear that while the Florentine sees much to admire in principalities, he views republics as more reliable and in the long run more congenial to the mode of politics he wishes to initiate. For while two weak princes in a row can ruin a principality; a republic proves to be a better breeding ground for potential Machiavellian princes. This though opens up another question. Since not all republics are created equal, what type of republic?

My next step therefore will be to consider the different forms of republics Machiavelli discusses in the *Discourses* (along with other texts); whether they be the chaotic popular regime of Athens, the small aristocratic republics of Sparta and Venice, or the expansionist Romans. Machiavelli of course decides in favour of the Roman Republic; but why does he do so? The examination of the institutions, mores, and other elements of the political architecture undertaken by Machiavelli in the *Discourses* uncovers a regime that has war as its principal aim. The Rome of Machiavelli is not that of Cicero who used the ancestral Rome as a template of the best regime, or that of Virgil, who in the *Aeneid* presents Rome as the standard bearer of civilization. His Rome (like that of Montesquieu) represents the best in martial valour and imperial conquest.

Where other authors condemn the Roman Republic because of its internal disunity due to the conflict between the plebs and the patricians and attempt to pass over or excuse the office of the dictatorship; Machiavelli argues that these are the very institutions that were the source of Rome’s success. The internal institutions of the regime create a cauldron of conflict between the few and the many which the princes of the republic harness and point outside the republic;

leading to expansion and imperialism. Therefore Machiavelli concludes the prince's only concern should be with arms and the study of warfare; for a republic must expand or be extinguished. The aim of Machiavelli's New Rome, like that of his interpretation of ancient Rome is imperial republicanism. Not the empire of the Caesars, but that of the austere imperialism that went out to conquer to world and experienced its finest hour after its defeat at the hands of Hannibal at Cannae. The difference between the old Rome and the new is that while the Romans founded a "perfect" republic through accident, Machiavelli's experience in modern and study of ancient things will make possible the founding the "perfect" regime from the beginning.

Finally, the question of "perfection" leads us to consider Machiavelli and the possibility of founding a "perpetual republic." Does Machiavelli adhere to the classical cycle of regimes and admit that even his New Rome will eventually decay into disorder or does he instead claim that Fortune can be conquered so that his regime can live on in perpetuity? While there are times throughout his writings that Machiavelli suggests or implies that the cycle of *fortuna* can be overcome and that a republic can return to its beginnings; the overarching lesson remains that all sects, regimes, civilizations have a lifespan that eventually comes to an end. Order will necessarily follow disorder. While the claim that political decay is a natural occurrence would be viewed as an obstacle to overcome for later modern believers in progress, for Machiavelli corruption lays the ground for renewal and the founding of new modes and orders, and allows for new acts of virtue that otherwise would never occur.

Freedom, Glory and the Cultivation of Greatness:

Machiavelli's stated intention is to write for the common good of everyone; noble and common alike; he hopes to give the people what they want, and therefore ensuring that the

regime can achieve greatness through acts of virtue. Thus, private interest cannot be allowed to overwhelm the structure of a principality or a republic if ruin and corruption is to be avoided. To begin with, he must first quite rightly ask, what is it that everyone desires? The answer to this question though is at the same time easy and difficult to answer. In both *The Prince* and the *Discourses* Machiavelli argues that every city is divided between two factions, or humours. On the one hand we have the great or the few, and on the other we find the people or the many. This class distinction is not original to Machiavelli's political science of course. Aristotle and other ancients make a similar division in their political writings. What is unique to Machiavelli is the motivations he ascribes to the two groups. For Aristotle both the few and the many desire political power. His regime typology reflects this by classifying regimes as aristocracies, oligarchies, polities, and democracies. There is no question of one or the other not wanting to rule, the only question whether a regime ruled by the few or many will govern in the interest of everyone as in a aristocracy or polity; rule in their own interest as in an oligarchy or democracy or perhaps bring both the groups together into a mixed regime.

Machiavelli though does not have these distinctions. For him (as we will see below), there are only principalities or republics, and even the rulers of republics are constantly referred to as "princes". This is because according to Machiavelli the few and the many do not want the same thing; they do not both wish to hold political power. As he describes it in the *Discourses*; the great seek to dominate, the many only wish not to be dominated (D.I.5.1). Or put another way, while the few seek to participate in politics, the many have a natural inclination to stay out of the arena and only take an interest when they fear they are being encroached upon. It is partially due to this difference of orientation that in *The Prince* Machiavelli recommends to the would-be ruler should be his foundation on the people rather than the great. While the few are

driven by ambition and desire to become princes themselves, the people according to Machiavelli are satisfied so long as you protect them against the avarice of the great, and never be a usurper of property and the women of his subjects. As he cynically notes, “men forget the death of a father more quickly the loss of a patrimony (P.XVII.67).” The few however cannot be relied upon because their ambition can never truly be satisfied (much like the prince) and can only be checked. For Machiavelli then, for a regime to be truly successful it must find a way to at the very least give an outlet to the great’s desire to dominate and the people’s wish to be left alone.

To say that the few seek to dominate and the many wish not to be dominated leaves a great deal unsaid. Precisely how does the desire to dominate manifest itself among the self-described nobles? What are the people doing when they are left alone? After our study of Machiavellian history, the virtues of severity, and the art of war in Chapter II; we can say for Machiavelli, the great primarily desire glory. Castruccio Castracani honed his body and mind to become a great practitioner of the art of war, allowing him to win glory for himself, thus opening the door to his assuming the ruler-ship of Lucca. Therefore like their model Castruccio, the great desire glory because it is what allows them to acquire the domination they crave or at least the recognition or status they believe they deserve. As Machiavelli explains in D.I.30, a prince or a republic is in danger when it sends a captain out to battle their enemies and wins glory for himself. Upon his victory if the captain believes that his prince or the republic is ungrateful for his accomplishment his likely remedy will be to turn his victorious troops back against his prince or fatherland. Only the Romans according to Machiavelli, were able to find a mode that allowed the great among their citizens win glory while not falling victim to the vice of ingratitude (D.I.30.2).

Machiavelli is far less clear on what he sees the people doing while the patricians are out winning glory for themselves. Enjoying their property is fairly vague. I would suggest that Machiavelli is vague on the desires of the many because he does not find them particularly interesting. The Florentine is certainly willing to argue in the people's favour against what we could call the snobbish pretensions of aristocratic gentlemen, but it does not follow that he therefore esteems the many or their desires. The best Machiavelli offers us is that the people desire freedom, a state that they will jealously guard. He thinks that a regime should respect the wishes of the people and allow them their freedom to enjoy their possession in peace, but beyond that, anyone who "deserves to be princes" should not overly concern themselves with the petty ambitions of the people when there are greater matters at stake.

It is worth briefly pausing here to remark on the way Machiavelli understands freedom and glory. This is because as the above has shown he does not necessarily understand them in the same way we would. The people's desire for freedom as I discussed above is not understood in some ideal sense. There is no talk of natural rights and the pursuit of happiness in the Machiavellian corpus. The many as described by the Florentine simply want to be left alone in their private lives. They want to be able to enjoy their property during the day, and go to sleep safe at night without having marauding soldiers pillaging their homes or rapacious aristocrats over-taxing or enslaving them. The few meanwhile are not seeking glory for the sake of morality. Their desires do not require an allegoric ladder of erotic ascent to illuminate. They crave to be honoured, to have status, to be given recognition.

These two aims, freedom and glory, once given a Machiavellian makeover they longer exist (as Machiavelli would say) in an imaginary principality we seek to emulate but are instead practical questions. The people want property and to be left alone, the great desire recognition of

their greatness. Thus from the very beginning Machiavelli ensures that the question of the best regime never leaves the horizon of the city and the shape of his regime does not have to come into accord or attempt to adhere to a paradigm laid up in the stars. Therefore what Machiavelli is willing to consider a legitimate regime sits at a far lesser threshold than what Aristotle considers legitimate.

On this basis, one can also be forgiven for assuming that finding a satisfying balance between the different humours is easier for Machiavelli than it is for Aristotle to find a way to construct a regime that gratifies two groups desiring power. Yet we are quickly disabused of the notion in both *The Prince* and the *Discourses*. In particular, Machiavelli uses many chapters throughout the *Discourses* to discuss how difficult it was for the Romans to find a way to satiate both the great and the people without bringing the Republic down. Upon second thought this should not come as a surprise. Machiavelli has spent much effort in educating us in the truth that human beings are bad, they are driven by avarice and jealousy and their desires are always coming into conflict.

As for the aims of the two humours, the inevitable discord between them follows a certain logic. If the people wish to be able to enjoy their property this requires a fair amount of peace and stability. Yet, the ambitions of the few and their need for glory means that wars must be fought to demonstrate their greatness. If the ambitions of the few become too great the people may become suspicious that they seek to undermine their freedom and may turn to one prince to protect them; or the few in turn fearing the people will tire of their excesses may prop up one of their own as prince to check the people. In either case, the soil for the cultivation of virtue disappears.

An even greater problem arises if as in the Roman Empire, a third humour, the soldiers is allowed to take form. As Machiavelli describes it in Chapter XVIII of *The Prince*, Roman emperors were often driven to ruin by their inability to manage the desires of their soldiers and the people. The soldiers being rapacious in nature were never content when an emperor attempted to satisfy the people and would instead remove the unfortunate ruler and replace him with someone who was more willing to give licence to their desires for plunder and slaughter (P.XIX.76-77). Founding a regime that finds a way to serve the common good is no easy task.

It is here in the pursuit of a mode to balance the two aims of freedom and glory that the greatest counter to claim that there is a democratic element to Machiavelli's thought emerges, and we see that glory is greater than freedom. Some may argue that Machiavelli's insistence on placing the guard of freedom in the hands of the people (which I will detail in more depth later) and his claim in D.I.38 that if the ambitions of the nobles are not checked they will lead a city in servitude and corruption suggests that freedom for the people is the Florentine's primary concern. However, this is to ignore Machiavelli's stated core goal; the founding of regime that allows the rebirth of politics and therefore of the virtue of the ancients. This virtue is that of the heroes of the ancient world; the Philips of Macedon, the Hannibals, or a Cincinnatus. The virtue that these men demonstrated must be given a new life. The many though are incapable of such feats. If a balance is to be struck greater weight therefore must be given to the pursuit of glory because this is the aim of politics. The freedom of the people is only the aim of the regime in so much that without their freedom the many will not allow the great to pursue glory. On the other hand, if given their private sphere the people can assist the great in the pursuit of glory for the city.

It is important to pause here to consider the claim that Machiavelli does not really think the few are interested in glory and that the many desire freedom. Perhaps underneath the surface there is instead a desire for power or possessions that drives both the great and the people. We are forced to consider this possibility due in part to Machiavelli's discussion of Rome's downfall in D.I.37 on the creation of Rome's agrarian law. The Florentine writes that:

Whenever engaging in combat through necessity is taken from men they engage in combat through ambition, which is powerful in human breasts that it never abandons them at whatever rank they rise to. The cause is that nature has created men so that are to desire everything and are unable to attain everything... From this arises the variability of their fortune; for since some men desire to have more, and some fear to lose what has been acquired, they come to enmities and war, from which arises the ruin of one province and the exaltation of another (D.I.37.1).

Machiavelli goes on to recount that even after the Roman plebs secured themselves in their freedom against the patricians with the creation of the tribunes, they began to wish to share in the honours and belongings that the nobles possessed. The patricians had no interest in sharing with the plebeians but before the introduction of the Agrarian Law by the Gracchi, the patricians partially held off the plebs by giving them a share in honours but not in property. Their property, Machiavelli writes, was defended with obstinacy. Thus leading Machiavelli to conclude the chapter by claiming that men esteem property more than honours (D.I.37.3).

These arguments could just have easily been penned by Thomas Hobbes as the author of *The Prince*. The interesting question that is raised is whether the previous distinction between the few and many breaks down here. Is it true that the people desire freedom and security while the great seek glory and domination or is the truth far closer to Hobbes' power after power, is there a liberal core underneath the martial exterior?

I maintain that the argument put forth by Machiavelli here does not undermine the previous distinction nor does it change the ends that his preferred regime is oriented by. The

proto-liberalism is the easiest to dispense with. Even if we were willing to allow that Machiavelli agrees with Hobbes that there is no real distinction among human beings; Machiavelli's politics are still directed towards ends that cannot be reconciled with that of the liberal enlightenment. Regarding the question of what the plebs and patricians and Romans desired, Machiavelli's argument is more nuanced than it may initially appear. The plebs according to Machiavelli only became interested in acquiring the honours the patricians after they left a state of necessity. It was only when they had everything they wanted that they turned their gaze on possessions they had not initially considered. The change entered in force once Rome entered a period of corruption. Nor should we forget that even after Rome entered its period of corruption Machiavelli still insists on calling the plebs and patricians the two humours.

This may appear to be skirting the issue; but I would argue that this is crucial for understanding Machiavelli's argument. The differences between the great and the people holds at the beginnings, but breaks down once a city enters a state of corruption. If the many have all the freedom they require they look for material goods while the few once there is no more glory to win do the same. Machiavelli views this as an inevitable development, as for him, everything decays. Nor does this mean that freedom and glory should cease to be the goals of the city. In attempting to provide a platform for winning glory for the nobles and guaranteeing freedom for the plebs a regime creates the possibility for virtue. Eventually this pursuit will lead to corruption but this corruption will provide the grounds for renewal under new orders.

Machiavelli's goal therefore becomes to find a regime that allows an outlet for the few so that they can win the glory they seek and checking them against overturning the orders of the regime due to ingratitude and the desire for domination. While at the same time ensuring that the

many feel they have the freedom to go about their private lives without becoming suspicious that the great are intending to take away that freedom.

This means that a successful regime must find a way to serve as a platform for the practice of great acts of virtue that at the same time will not be its undoing. As Machiavelli puts it in D.I.28, a successful regime must find a way to avoid the failure of an Athens. The city had the possibility for greatness but after the tyranny of Pisistratus which proved unable to satisfy the two humours and was subjected to wave after wave of upheaval and tyranny. “Hence arose the exiles and deaths of so many excellent men; hence the order of ostracism and every other violence that was done against its aristocrats in various times by that city (D.I.28.1).” His regime will seek to avoid this fate while working for the common benefit of everyone.

If a regime is able to find a way for the people to have their security and the great receive their recognition, then the stage is set for it to achieve greatness, which Machiavelli considers to be the ultimate measure of a regime’s success. By greatness, the Florentine has something very specific in mind. Namely, he considers a regime great if it is able to become an empire, and maintain its own freedom against its rivals. Thus, while Aristotle and other classical writers focus on the internal institutions of a regime and rarely speak of foreign policy, external affairs take precedence for Machiavelli and greatness is measured by how successful a regime is in expanding and in conducting itself in war (D.II.2-4, 6).

Machiavelli’s argument for basing the achievement of greatness on this criteria is simple. Because there is no transcendental order to come into alignment with, as with Machiavelli’s captain-prince the aim is to gain a form of immortality through memorable deeds. Therefore, just as the captain-prince, despite any morally questionable acts he undertakes will be remembered far more than the virtuous grammar school teacher who stays at home, so a regime that creates an

empire that stands the test of time through prudence and means both fair and foul will be celebrated more than a quiet just city that stays in its corner of the world. Most likely, that quiet city will be either be forgotten, remembered only as one of the foes the empire overcame on its path to greatness or succumb to the desire for empire itself but lacking the institutions, collapse upon itself. Thus, only a particular regime, with certain modes and orders will be able to satisfy the two humours and allow the princes who rule the regime to drive it toward greatness.

Republics or Principalities?

The next important step in exploring the nature of the regime Machiavelli seeks to found is to discover what form it will take. The difficulty all interpreters of Machiavelli face when seeking to answer this question is that the Florentine wrote a book on the ancient Roman Republic and another on principalities and in both declared that he had included “everything he knows.” Machiavelli further muddies the waters by discussing the republican Romans in *The Prince* and kingdoms and principalities in the *Discourses*; not to mention Machiavelli’s habit of referring to rulers of republics and principalities alike as “princes.”

What then is the preferred form of the Machiavellian regime (if there is one) and how can we decipher Machiavelli’s teaching on the matter? First, I argue that Machiavelli does take a side in the differences between his two regime types. He is no proto-social scientist offering objective advice. For scholars such as Hans Baron, Pocock and Skinner the clear answer is that Machiavelli prefers republics.¹¹⁸ While I agree that Machiavelli prefers republics, the manner in which they reach this conclusion is not without its flaws, particularly that of Baron.¹¹⁹ Rather

¹¹⁸ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*; Skinner, *Foundations of Modern Political Thought*; Baron, “Machiavelli the Republican Citizen and Author of the Prince.” In *In Search of Florentine Civic Humanism*, vol. 2. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

¹¹⁹ Baron’s determination to demonstrate Machiavelli’s humanist credentials forces him to adopt a developmental approach to Machiavelli’s thought that allows him to discard *The Prince*. See Barons’ “Machiavelli the Republican Citizen and Author of *The Prince*.” In *In Search of Florentine Civic Humanism*, vol. 2. Princeton: Princeton University Press (1988).

than treating the differences between *The Prince* and the *Discourses* as a change in intellectual context, the Florentine's personal circumstances, or Machiavelli's "development" as a thinker; my treatment of Machiavelli's discussion of principalities and republics follows the argument that *the Prince* and the *Discourses* reside in the same moral universe. To understand why Machiavelli chooses one over the other we must listen to what Machiavelli himself has to say. Therefore our first step must be to consider the comparisons Machiavelli offers between principalities and republics and based on what we discovered in the previous chapter; which regime best offers a foundation for Machiavellian virtue. Machiavelli's praise for both republics and principalities suggests that at least in principal virtue can be found in both regimes. His advice on how to establish a kingdom to replace a republic also indicates the possibility.

If we turn to specific regimes that Machiavelli singles out we find that the Florentine generally balances republics with kingdoms and principalities. In antiquity while clearly the republican Romans receive the most praise; Machiavelli also extols Romulus and the early kings along with some of the emperors (D.I.31, I.20, I.26; P.XVIII). Joining them are Sparta, the Macedonian Kingdom, Syracusan tyrants, and the Hebrew's King David. For modern regimes, those singled out for praised by Machiavelli are the Republic of Venice, the free Swiss and German cities, the kingdoms of France and Spain, Mameluke Egypt, and the Ottoman Empire (P.IV, XIII; D.I.5).

Despite the differences between these regimes; ancient, modern; republic, principality; they all share several important characteristics. Some like Sparta, the Swiss, the Germans, and Venice are quiet regimes that tend to avoid expansion but fiercely defend their liberty. Others like the Ottomans, Macedon, and above all Rome are expansionary imperial powers. All of them though avoid corruption by maintaining differing degrees of austerity among their citizens and

encouraging the martial virtues while sustaining specific institutions that lay the foundations for Machiavelli's preferred modes.

If both types of regimes offer the possibility for Machiavellian virtue, the question therefore becomes which regime is more likely to offer the possibility. To answer this I will consider two issues. First I will consider the nature of what Machiavelli calls virtuous succession; how to ensure that a republic or principality is ruled by a succession of virtuous rulers. Second, by reviewing the different steps needed to found a republic or a kingdom I will show how these differences point to why republics are better for cultivating virtue than principalities.

In D.I.19 Machiavelli turns to discussing how a principality or kingdom can be ruined if it is plagued by a succession of weak rulers. This is particularly dangerous because he writes that it only takes two weak princes in a row to bring about corruption. To prove his point Machiavelli turns to the early kings of Rome. As the first king, Romulus was strong and warlike and his virtue so ordered Rome and cowed its enemies that the pacific Numa who succeeded him was able to enjoy the fruits of peace. However when Tullus followed Numa he returned to the ferociousness of Romulus and then Ancus who had desired to follow the way of Numa learned that his enemies despised him and seeking to maintain Rome he returned to the virtue of Romulus (D.I.19.3).

Machiavelli notes a similar pattern among the ancient Hebrews and the modern Ottomans. For the Turks, Bajazet as a lover of peace like Numa was able to enjoy the aftermath of the success of his father Mahomet. However, Machiavelli writes, "if his son Selim, the present lord, had been like his father and not his grandfather, that kingdom would be ruined; but one sees that he is about to surpass the glory of his grandfather D.I.19.2)." The Ottomans therefore have

been able to follow the successful example of the Romans by having a strong prince follow a weak.

The Hebrews on the other hand were not successful in following this manner of succession. Machiavelli provides King David with the highest praise as a ruler who was very excellent in arms, learning, and judgment and for successfully conquering his neighbours. The great virtue of David allowed for the opportunity for his son Solomon to preserve the kingdom with the art of peace rather than war. Rehoboam following Solomon though lost most of the kingdom of his predecessors because “he was not like his grandfather in virtue nor like his father in fortune (D.I.19.2).” The Hebrews therefore unlike the Romans and the Ottomans were ruined by the succession of two weak princes.

With these examples Machiavelli comes to an important conclusion.

From this all princes who hold a state may find an example. For he who is like Numa will hold it or not hold it as the times or fortune turn under him, but he who is like Romulus, and like him comes armed with prudence and with arms, will hold it in every mode unless it is taken from him by an obstinate and excessive force (D.I.19.4).

The difficulty with princes who wish to rule with the arts of peace is that they are forced to rely on fortune for their success and therefore are weak. Those who follow Romulus meanwhile because they are armed are freer from fortune because of their own virtue.

The difficulty faced by weak princes therefore is the same difficulty that principalities face as a whole. In order for them to succeed they require a succession of strong princes or the very least a strong prince to follow a weak in order to maintain it. In other words, principalities rely excessively on fortune. The Ottomans were fortunate because Selim followed his grandfather rather than his father and the Romans were fortunate that they had a prince like Ancus who was wise enough to realize the art of peace was not what the spirit of the times commanded and turned to the arts of war. The Hebrews on the other hand were not fortunate in

their rulers. Therefore anyone who lives under a prince bears the danger of being ruined under a malevolent or weak ruler.

When we turn to the following chapter Machiavelli informs us that the Romans were able to escape the potential ruin they faced as a principality by expelling the kings and becoming a republic. With the consuls replacing the kings at the head of the republic Rome was ensured of a continuous virtuous succession because the consuls came to power “not by inheritance or by deception or by violent ambition but by free votes, and were always most excellent men (D.I.20.1).” Therefore since the Romans had been fortunate under their kings and gave freedom to their virtue under the republic they were able to come to greatness. The example of the Romans should be followed by all republics. Since according to Machiavelli the Macedonians were able to acquire the world thanks to the succession of two virtuous princes (Philip and Alexander), a republic should do more since it is capable of an infinite succession of virtuous princes (D.I.20.1).

While coming to power through fraud and ambition are not usually methods that Machiavelli criticizes; the interesting part of the passage is his claim that the consuls were always the most excellent men. How were the Romans able to ensure that their leaders were always virtuous? How is the process of selecting consuls for the republic less reliant on fortune than having a succession of virtuous princes for a principality? While Machiavelli neglects to elaborate in this chapter as to why this is true, he provides a hint by concluding the chapter by stating that virtuous succession can always be found in well-ordered republics. While this answers the question of why this succession eventually failed in Rome (once it became corrupt its leaders were no longer virtuous), it fails to tell us why a republic can have a virtuous

succession if it's well ordered and a principality cannot. Why is it so difficult for principalities to be well ordered and have virtuous rulers?

To discover why Machiavelli does not think it is likely for a principality to be well ordered and guarantee virtuous rulers we must move deeper into the *Discourses* to Machiavelli's discussion of the problem of ingratitude in republics and principalities. The subject of I.29 is whether a prince or a people are more likely to be ungrateful. Machiavelli writes that the ingratitude of a prince or a people towards a victorious captain stems from either avarice or suspicion. The refusal to reward a victorious captain due to avarice is never warranted according to Machiavelli and the offending prince earns "eternal infamy." If ingratitude has its roots in suspicion however ingratitude can be warranted (D.I.29.1).

If a captain virtuously acquires an empire for his master, and in doing so covers himself with glory, and rewards his soldiers with riches earning their personal loyalty; the prince may feel threatened by his servant.

Because the nature of man is ambitious and suspicious and does not know a limit to any fortune it may have, it is impossible for the suspicion suddenly arising in the prince after the victory of his captain not to be increased by that same one because of some mode or term of his used insolently. So the prince cannot but think of securing himself against him; and to do this, he thinks either of having him killed or of taking away the reputation that he has gained for himself in his army or in his peoples, and with all industry shows that the victory arose not through the virtue of that one but through fortune, or through the cowardice of the enemies, or through the prudence of the other heads that had been with him in such a struggle (D.I.29.1).

Similarly, a people too can be moved to suspect a captain and become ungrateful. They can offend the citizens they should reward and suspect those they should have confidence in. Like princes though, a people too are sometimes warranted in being suspicious. A free city for Machiavelli has two ends; to acquire and to maintain itself free. If a captain earns so much glory that the people begin to fear that the captain poses a threat to their liberty they have merit to

move against him. Machiavelli offers Scipio has an example of a captain who earned so much glory through his defeat of Hannibal that he was feared by the magistrates, and following Cato Priscus he argues no city can call itself free if there's a citizen whom the magistrates fear (D.I.29.3).

Due to avarice and suspicion both principalities and republics can become dangerous for individuals of great virtue. A prince fears he will be replaced and a people fears they will lose their freedom. However, Machiavelli concludes the chapter by stating that while a prince can be ungrateful through avarice and suspicion, a people will only be ungrateful through suspicion and even then a people will be less likely to become suspicious than a prince (D.I.29.3) A Scipio may eventually loom so large that a people will move against him but a prince would turn against him much sooner and could potentially become ungrateful solely through greed.

The reason why a people is less likely than a prince to become suspicious is answered in the following chapter where Machiavelli discusses different modes that a prince or a people can undertake to avoid the vice of ingratitude. For a prince there are very few options. Echoing Chapter VI of *The Prince* he writes that the best way for a prince to avoid this vice is to go on campaign himself and not delegate expeditions to captains. In this way he follows the manner of the Ottoman sultans and the early Roman emperors and if he wins then glory is his alone. Beyond this Machiavelli claims he knows no other precepts for a prince, though he does take the time to advise a captain who cannot avoid the bite of ingratitude how to establish himself as a new prince (D.I.30.1).

A republic on the other hand since it cannot follow the example of the prince and personally lead a campaign and therefore must send out a citizen on expeditions. Machiavelli consequently advises republics to follow the example of the Roman republic which so long as it

was not corrupted was able to avoid the vice of ingratitude. The Romans were able to do so because of the modes of government the Romans had. Machiavelli writes that “since the whole city –both the nobles and the ignobles- was put to work in war, so many virtuous men emerged in every age, decorated from various victories that they checked each other and the people did not need to fear anyone of them, since they were very many they guarded one another (D.I.30.2).” He continues that with this in mind the outstanding citizens treaded lightly with their ambitions and if they were to come to the dictatorship they received greater glory the sooner they gave it up. Therefore since the people did not have reason to become suspicious, they avoided the vice of ingratitude.

The lesson we derive from Machiavelli’s discourse on ingratitude reiterates what we discovered previously on virtuous succession. While republics can institute modes in order to ensure virtuous succession and the avoidance of ingratitude; principalities remain overly reliant on fortune and are more likely to have weak rulers and suppress virtue.

As a final example of this lesson I turn to D.I.58, where Machiavelli opposes the view of Livy and other writers on whether a prince or a multitude is wiser. The Florentine reports Livy as saying that nothing is more vain and inconstant than the multitude, but Machiavelli counters by arguing that all men, even princes are guilty of the defect that Livy and other classical writers accuse the many of. “For everyone who is not regulated by laws would make the same errors as the unshackled multitude. (D.I.58.2).” This claim, that everyone requires laws in order to be good, is the other side of his oft repeated argument that men are not good and a realistic politics should begin from the position that human beings are all together. Because there are no moral distinction between a prince and the many they are both as likely to be corrupted and make mistakes.

In taking issue with Livy and the other writers Machiavelli once again demonstrates his break from Aristotelian political science, which despite its emphasis on the rule of law and republicanism leads to the suggestion that the best regime would be the rule of one extraordinary individual.¹²⁰ Machiavelli's response to this ideal conception of rule is to counter with historical examples of the good rulers of Egypt, Sparta and France were regulated by laws and princes such as Alexander the Great and Herod proved to be just as chaotic in their passions as the Roman multitude (D.I.58.2)

In the following paragraph Machiavelli takes his critique of Livy's position a step further. While to this point he has defended the multitude by claiming an unregulated prince is as vice ridden as an unbridled multitude, now he claims that if both are unregulated a prince will be found worse than the people and even if both are regulated the people are still to be preferred. For the difference between the two is not as Aristotle would have it about their diverse natures, but which has a greater respect for the laws.

The people for Machiavelli show more prudence, stability and judgment and generally can choose the right course of action when it is presented to them. A prince meanwhile has more passions than the people and errs more in choosing magistrates and officials than a people because a corrupt man can more easily persuade a prince. While certainly not ignoring the achievements that princes are capable of, in the long run the people are the better bet. "If princes are superior to peoples in ordering laws, forming civil lives, and ordering new statutes and orders, peoples are so much superior in maintaining things ordered that without doubt they attain the glory of those who order them (D.I.58.3)."

¹²⁰ Consider Aristotle, *The Politics*, Bk.3. 1288a1-32.

Machiavelli summarizes his case for the case of the people smartly in his conclusion. He states that:

The states of princes have lasted very long, the states of republics have lasted very long, both have had need of being regulated by the laws. For a prince who can do what he wishes is crazy; a people that can do what it wishes is not wise. If, thus, one is reasoning about a prince obligated to the laws and about a people fettered by them, more virtue will always be seen in the people than in the prince; if one reasons about both as unshackled, fewer errors will be seen in the people than in the prince-and those lesser and having greater remedies. For a licentious and tumultuous people can be spoken to by a good man, and it can easily be turned to the good way; there is no one who can speak to a wicked prince, nor is there any remedy but steel (D.I.58.4).

Once again we find the Florentine's repeated claim that a prince is a greater danger to a well order regime than a people. A corrupted people, due to its overriding desire to be left alone is more trustworthy than a prince who will seek to dominate, and a people can be reasoned with or stirred in the right direction while a wicked prince requires a coup.

We should not conclude from this however that Machiavelli's preference for republics over principalities is rooted in a moral position on the goodness of self-government and public deliberation. By placing together the various comparisons between the two regimes Machiavelli makes the picture that emerges that while both republics and principalities are capable of cultivating martial virtue and achieving glory; a republic is more likely do so. As we have seen regarding the important step of ensuring virtuous succession a republic can institute by law while a principality relies on chance. In supporting the emergence of virtuous individuals a republic can be ordered by certain modes such as the Romans were to avoid the vice of ingratitude while a prince who does not campaign himself will always come to suspect or become envious of his captain. Meanwhile a government of the people is easier for a wise individual to order while directing a prince while always relies on having a prince who as Machiavelli puts it in *The Prince* has a brain that either understands by itself or discerns what others understand

(P.XXII.92). Principalities therefore are ruled by men while republics after the initial founding can for long periods of time be governed by laws. If, as we saw in the previous chapter, Machiavelli wishes to teach princes to rely on their own virtue rather than fortune; it should not follow that Machiavelli would seek to encourage the founding of a regime that relies so heavily on chance.

The exception to Machiavelli's rule on principalities is France. While other principalities rely on the fortunate occurrence of wise princes, France according to Machiavelli is sustained by its ancient orders. In particular its Parlement is able to act as a check on the king and helps the kingdom from falling into corruption (D.I.19.2, III.1.5). Machiavelli's description of the French orders though echo his description of republican Sparta, perhaps suggesting that the best ordered principalities are ones that approach a "mixed constitution."

In any case, it is clear that for Machiavelli a republic is more fertile ground for his new modes and orders than a principality. As a final allusion to this, Machiavelli pauses in D.I.55 to consider the elements needed for founding either a republic or a principality. We are told that the orderer of a republic needs to eliminate any existing gentlemen while one seeking to found a principality needs to create them. For where there is equality a principality cannot be made and where there is none a republic cannot be made (D.I.55.5). While this may appear as another instance of Machiavelli playing the objective advisor for anyone, he goes on to claim

That those are called gentlemen who live idly in abundance from the returns of their possessions without having any care either for cultivation or for other necessary trouble in living... From this it arises that in these provinces no republic or political way of life has ever emerged, for such kinds of men are all together hostile to every civilization (D.I.55.4).

These "idle" gentlemen are of course the very same type that as we saw in Chapter I, Machiavelli hopes to replace. Thus, the very requirement needed for founding principalities stands opposed

to Machiavelli's new civic education. Therefore, we can safely conclude that despite Machiavelli's clear admiration for princes such as Philip and Alexander the Great, David, select Roman emperors and the Ottoman sultans; and his inclination to advise anyone who will listen, the regime that Machiavelli prefers is a republic.

Republics or free cities however come in many different forms, and even if we conclude beforehand that Machiavelli chooses Rome over the other models we are still left with more questions than answers. Why does Machiavelli insist all calling the rulers of republics princes? How can republics avoid falling into corruption and most of all how can he ensure that his new Rome will institute by design what ancient Rome did by accident?

Ancient and Modern Alternatives: Sparta and Venice

Now that the question of principalities versus republics has been considered, we must turn to the nature of the ideal republic itself. As we noted above, while it is clear that Machiavelli builds his model regime on the foundation of the historical Rome found in the pages of Livy; as we did with the previous section's emphasis on why republics over principalities we now need to examine in closer detail why Machiavelli chooses Rome over other republics. What is it about the Roman republic's institutions that Machiavelli thinks make it worthy of emulation despite the fact that as he acknowledges, the republic endured for a shorter time than other regimes such as Sparta. The example of Sparta reminds us of the fact that Machiavelli also praises republics such as Sparta and Venice, the Swiss confederacy, and the autonomous German cities of the Holy Roman Empire (P.XIII.50-51). Why do these regimes despite their advantages fall short of Rome? In the case of Sparta and Venice this question is of particular interest because of the consensus of classical political science that Sparta was the exemplary regime and the opinion of

Machiavelli's contemporaries such as Guicciardini that Venice was the preferred model for a republic.

Our immediate impression therefore is that in choosing Rome Machiavelli implicitly criticises the political science of his day and that of the classics. However, the Florentine is not in complete disagreement with classical political philosophy. Like the ancients he finds little to admire in the Athenian regime. In comparing the efforts of Solon to Lycurgus in founding modes and orders he argues that the Lacedemonian is far superior. While Lycurgus' orders lasted for eight hundred years and kept Sparta free; Machiavelli points out that Solon saw the abandonment of the laws he instituted at Athens within his own lifetime and witnessed the return of the tyranny of Peisistratus (D.I.2.6).

Machiavelli also argues, echoing Plato and a host of other classical authors that the Athenian regime was too disorderly, the people were always ungrateful to leading citizens and too easily influenced by demagogues. The Athens we find in the pages of Machiavelli's *Discourses* appears to be the same one we find being criticized in the writings of classical authors. In contrast to the scourge of tyrants; the austere and martial Spartans; we have the corrupt and decadent Athenians who are repeatedly easy prey for would be tyrants. Despite his sympathy for the people's desire to enjoy their property Machiavelli shares the classical antipathy for hedonism; particularly when it affects the political sphere as his criticism of the "corruption" of his Italy attests to.

Sparta meanwhile in contrast to its great rival, avoided this form of corruption and lived in freedom for eight hundred years. According to Machiavelli, the Spartans achieved this freedom by maintaining the orders of its legislator, Lycurgus. These orders included strong social cohesion, equality of possessions, a system of checks and balances, and good laws that

regulated both rulers and the ruled. Social cohesion was achieved by not allowing foreigners to become citizens which ensured that the population remained small and manageable and without the presence of outsiders to bring new ideas the original laws of Lycurgus remained in repute. The equality of condition (which in effect was an equality of poverty) prevented the plebs from becoming jealous of the ruling class because the great were few and kept distant from the plebs and the nobles did not in turn seek to dominate the plebs because they were held in check by the kings who kept the plebs strong in order to strengthen their position vis à vis the nobles (D.I.6.2).

This careful balancing act was held in place because of Sparta's well regulated laws which checked the possibility of tumults within the city and therefore stopping the rivalries and divisions that beset Rome from taking root. With no internal divisions besetting them, the Spartans were able to maintain their liberty and remained devoted to their martial virtue. So great was their martial prowess that as Machiavelli points out; they did not even deign to build walls around their city, preferring (similarly to Machiavelli's criticism of fortresses) the virtue of their citizens.

If Machiavelli shares with the ancients a preference for austere martial virtue, why then does he reject their claim of Sparta being the ideal historical regime in favour of Rome? The orders of the Spartan regime appear to conform to methods that he himself praises. The founding of Sparta by a single legislator (Lycurgus) is more reminiscent of Machiavelli's own ambitions than the fortunate founding of Rome in several iterations. It is a regime so completely devoted the martial spirit that it ignores all other concerns. So much so that Thucydides wrote that in the future no would be able to tell a city once stood there. Despite these advantages though Sparta has one crucial defect that led to its downfall; it was not built for expansion.

Why did Sparta prove to be incapable of expanding and holding an empire? Machiavelli explains (never openly acknowledging the irony) that the internal cohesion that was Lacedaemon's great strength ultimately proves to be its weakness. While Sparta's lack of tumults between the plebs and nobles may have proved useful in keeping the Spartans united against external aggression from Athens (which had anything but internal cohesion) during the Peloponnesian War; once the walls of Athens were torn down and Sparta was thrust into the role of hegemon it proved incapable of maintaining its position. The foundation that Lycurgus had laid down; small population and the refusal to admit foreigners ensured that Sparta became stretched beyond its means. Sparta, as Machiavelli puts it, "after it had subjected almost all of Greece to itself, showed its weak foundation upon one slightest accident; for when other cities rebelled, following the rebellion of Thebes, caused by Pelopidas, that republic was altogether ruined (D.I.6.4)." The celebrated classical republic therefore proved not to be ordered well enough to successfully accomplish the ends of politics as laid out by Machiavelli. It succeeded in staying "quiet" for a time but failed to achieve the empire of a Rome.

When we turn to Machiavelli's analysis of the Most Serene Republic of Venice we find that the Venetians mostly have the same strengths and weaknesses that the Spartans had, and are praised just as highly as ancient Lacedaemon. Indeed, Venice is the only Italian power that Machiavelli singles out for high praise and goes as far as having his Fabrizio Colonna lament in *The Art of War* that "if the Venetians had used their own arms they could have made a new monarchy of the world (AW.I.178)." Where did the Venetians go wrong to come so close, but fall?

While the modes and orders of the Spartans were instituted from the beginning by Lycurgus, Venice followed Rome in its development in establishing institutions and laws and

problems arose. As with Athens, Venice was founded by people who fleeing the dangers of invasion and marauding enemies found a new site and during a long idleness in their location grew strong. As with Sparta, Venice possessed institutions that find a correlation with those of the Romans. With the Council of Ten founded in 1310 in response to a revolt and regularized in 1355, the republic reserved authority to a few citizens who in extraordinary times could decide matters of policy without consulting the entire body politic (D.I.34.3). The Council in its ability to act in such an extraordinary mode has a cousin in the Roman dictatorship as we shall see. Even with this ability though the Council did not pose a threat to the republic's freedom because all had to be in accord with a certain action and since it only was looked to in extraordinary times the real power remained with the Great Council and the doge.

The Venetian doge whose power also appears to approach that of a dictator is also praised by Machiavelli and defended against the notion that such a powerful figure could undermine liberty. He writes that as with the Spartan kings, guards were posted that made them unable to use their power badly (D.I.35.1). As for the Great Council, it was ordered in such a way to ensure that it too could not cause corruption. Because the Great Council distributed the honours and profits it was open to the possibility that at times through indignation or false persuasion successors to the magistrates of the city and the administration of the empire were not created. This disorder though was corrected by the creation of a law that declared that all magistracies could not be vacated unless successors had been made. Therefore according to Machiavelli the ability to stop public actions that could bring danger to the republic was taken away from the council just as the Romans had ensured that when in concord the Senate and the tribunes could overcome the obstinacy of the consuls (D.I.50.1). In short, like the Romans and

the Spartans the Venetians had legislated the proper modes and laws that could ensure that no faction in the republic could overwhelm another thus guaranteeing that it would stay free.

Venice is also able to overcome the difficulty that republics face from the presence of gentlemen. Though the city is ruled by gentlemen, which as we saw above, Machiavelli views as detrimental to establishing a free republic, the Florentine makes a special exception for the Venetian gentlemen claiming that they are not like the idle gentlemen found in the Romagna or the Kingdom of Naples. Rather than having land as the foundation of their wealth, Venetian gentlemen owe their rank to wealth derived from trade. Since their wealth is found in moveable things and not symbolized by the possession of a castle or large estate the title gentleman is only one of respect the many are not moved to envy (D.I.6.1).

Finally Venice, like Sparta is able to avoid the class conflict that was present in Rome and still be successful. Venice's method differs from Sparta in that it welcomed foreigners into the republic and not using the plebs in war ensuring that the plebs never were able to grow in strength and without the a strong plebeian class the impetus that drove Roman expansion never existed.

As Machiavelli points out however, even though Venice was instituted as a republic oriented toward maintaining itself it could not resist the siren call of empire even though it lacked the humours of the Romans. For many years though this did not prove to be detrimental for the Venetians as they were able to build a strong empire through their strength at sea. Since they used their own arms at sea they were successful but because they refused to engage their plebs in war. But when the city began to expand its holdings in Italy it was forced to turn to mercenaries and this, unsurprising as far as Machiavelli is concerned, led to its ruin (AW.I.180-82). Their reliance on mercenaries meant that the Venetians committed a second serious error,

choosing money over arms. Engaging mercenaries meant abandoning the martial virtue they had used so well. Their wealth proved to be enough to hold their possession in good times but when they entered a time of adversity they lost everything in contrast to the Romans who in times of adversity proved their virtue.

Because of their lack of virtuous arms they were unable to temporize with their enemies and were forced into a direct confrontation which, like the Spartans, exposed their weakness. As Machiavelli recapitulates their downfall, “having seized a great part of Italy-and the greater part not with war but with money and astuteness-when it had to put its forces to the proof, Venice lost everything in one day (D.I.6.4).”

In Machiavelli’s analysis, Venice’s loss of great power status was the inevitable result of their use of mercenaries and wealth to gain an empire; which was the consequence of their refusal to use the plebs in war because they did not want the internal class strife evident in Rome. The Venetian republic therefore worked at cross purposes. Like the Spartans, once the Venetians began to expand in a way their institutions were not ordered for they fell into ruin. The modern “quiet” republic like its ancient counterpart ends in failure.

In Machiavelli’s analysis of republics Sparta and Venice act as the ancient and modern alternatives to the Roman republic. Both are well ordered for regimes that seek “quiet” which as Machiavelli presents it (with some justification) is the goal of classical political science. Like Rome they both have checks in place that stopped them (for the most part) from falling into internal corruption. The problem with these republics, and therefore with the political science of the ancients and the humanists, is that when these republics attempted to expand they brought about their own ruin. Sparta become the hegemon of Greece after its defeat of Athens in the Peloponnesian War but quickly lost its position and was reduced first by Thebes and then by

Macedon. As for the modern republic Machiavelli writes that through its own virtue Venice was able to expand by sea but did not do so when it began to expand in Italy. Instead it relied on money and when the republic reached a period of adversity it lost everything.

The lesson would seem to be that they should have stayed quiet. Which Machiavelli suggests in D.I.6, if it were possible would be the true way of political life. After all this seems the approach of the Swiss and the Germans whom Machiavelli heaps praise on for their martial virtue and political liberty (P.X.43). This suggestion though is in actuality a rhetorical trap. As I noted in Chapter I, it is not possible for an individual or a *stato* to stay quiet for all human things are in motion. All republics (and principalities) are forced by the very nature of human things to expand and seek to dominate. Even republics like Venice and Sparta which were ordered to avoid these impulses could not resist the temptation.

As for the Swiss and the Germans, while they have been able to this point to resist temptation, either they will eventually give in to it or someone will come for them. In the case of the Germans Machiavelli explicitly says that if it wasn't for their fortunate circumstances someone would have come for them already. Indeed, within a hundred years of Machiavelli's death Germany would become a battlefield as French, Swedish, and others armies fought the Thirty Years War across the Holy Roman Empire.

Since history reveals the truth that the only real option is to expand, a republic must follow the example of the greatest expansionary republic, Rome. In doing so Machiavelli also proves that the classical political science of Aristotle, Cicero, and the humanists with its admiration of the Spartan and Venetian regimes is wrong. For as Machiavelli writes the Romans "deviated from the universal modes others so as to make easy for themselves the way to arrive at

a supreme greatness (D.II.6.1).” The question therefore becomes how were the Romans so successful?

The Perfect Republic

As I noted in the introduction, the Rome we encounter upon opening the *Discourses* is not one that would necessarily be familiar to the ancient Romans or their humanist admirers. No where do we find a counterpart to Virgil’s call to spare the defeated and break the proud in war. Instead we find a novel interpretation of republican Rome, one that is dedicated to pursuing Machiavellian virtue and glory. It is a regime that is plagued (or blessed) with vicious class conflict and never seems particularly interested in creating great works of culture or abiding by Ciceronian ideals of statecraft. Instead, the martial Romans, following Machiavelli’s maxim that it is better to conquer than to be conquered, created a world bestriding empire almost in a fit of absence mindedness. They did so through means both fair and foul, guided only by Machiavellian prudence. The Romans we find in the pages of Machiavelli’s *Discourses* are not the honourable Spartans praised by Xenophon or Pericles’ Athenians, yet Rome was capable of doing what those regimes could not. Therefore despite not adhering to what the classics would consider the usual modes of a successful regime, the Florentine consistently attempts to show why against the arguments of ancient political science Rome’s mode of austere imperialism works to create the perfect republic.

Machiavelli’s Rome is a special kind of republic. In D.I.2 he provides an edited version of Polybius’ cycle of regimes, which despite its deviations nevertheless concludes following Polybius that the mixed regime; one able to include elements of kingship, aristocracy, and popular government is the best (D.I.2.3-6). Achieving this is incredibly difficult for a republic. One of the most successful is Sparta, which thanks to its lawgiver Lycurgus was given a free and

virtuous way of life all at one stroke. Rome on the other hand did not have the benefit of a Lycurgus. As Machiavelli writes, the laws laid down by its founder Romulus while virtuous proved to be insufficient. Rome needed Numa and Brutus and others to introduce orders. It required fortune to be on its side. Due to its tumultuous nature Rome ended up with a regime that also possessed elements of kingship (the consuls), aristocracy (the Senate), and popular government (the tribunes) (D.I.2.7). Beyond being a mixed regime in the manner of Sparta, Machiavelli's Rome also proved to be able to avoid the mistakes that brought down Sparta, Venice, and are endemic to even the most successful principalities. In short, Rome was a perfect republic.

Machiavelli argues that Rome was able to succeed due to several key factors, some of them internal, other external; some thanks to the creation of particular institutions, others due to modes that shaped the spirit of the Romans. These were: the tumultuous nature of Rome, their use of religion (in contrast to present day Romans), placing the guard of freedom with the people, the creation of the tribunes and the disunion the office cultivated, their system of rewards and avoiding the vice of ingratitude, the office of the dictatorship, their austerity, and finally their way of waging war. All of these elements when brought together enabled Rome to become a world empire. What fascinates Machiavelli is that none of these offices and institutions were founded in a manner following Lycurgus or in the way recommended by the Socratics. The offices were created accidentally, without any overall plan in mind. The question for Machiavelli becomes whether the Romans' achievements were strictly through fortune or if virtue played a part. For if the Romans' greatness can also be traced to their virtue then it becomes possible for their regime to be reborn through the orders of a new founder.

The first element allowing for the success of the Roman Republic and making it free and glorious was its tumultuous nature, for the excellent institutions and modes the Romans created in their origin are a response to the tumults and an attempt to control them. By being constantly at each other's throats the two humours provided fertile ground for the cultivation of virtue. One of the most important causes of the tumultuous nature of the regime was the decision to place the guard of freedom in the hands of the people rather than the nobility. The Spartans and Venetians who avoided tumults did so by making the guard a prerogative of the nobility. Any discussion of the tumults that beset Rome therefore cannot be separated from an examination of how the Romans allowed the people to protect freedom. The Romans made the correct choice and ensured a free way of life and the possibility for imperial expansion. For if the guard of freedom is incorrectly placed, a free way of life will not last for long (D.I.4.1). As I noted in the previous sections, Machiavelli argues that to place the responsibility for ensuring freedom with the nobles is a mistake. Even well ruled aristocratic republics such as Sparta and Venice in the end proved to be unable to overcome this weakness.

As I argued in the previous section concerning Machiavelli's preference for republics over principalities; the Florentine believes that it is better to place the responsibility for freedom in the hands of those who have less appetite for usurping it. By virtue of being the humour that does not seek to dominate but instead desires to be not to be dominated the plebeians are far better caretakers; or at the very least if one seeks to found a republic that can expand into an empire the many are better than the few (D.I.4.1). Since we know that Machiavelli desires a republic that rules an empire, the answer must be the people.

Why does placing the guard of freedom in the hands of the people allow for the possibility of empire when giving it to the nobles does not? If we turn to D.I.6 where Machiavelli

tells us he will answer this question we find the answer made in contrast to the examples of Sparta and Venice. As discussed previously, these two republics were aimed at staying “quiet” and maintaining themselves, not on expansion. They did this through ensuring that the plebs were not used in war (Venice) or not opening themselves to foreigners (Sparta). The Spartans kept foreigners out because they would bring new ideas with them and this would threaten the stability of the laws. The Venetians kept their plebs out of wars so that they would not gain the power to challenge the political prerogatives of the gentlemen.

If these decisions contributed to a quiet regime then their opposites would be the foundation to an expansionist regime. Thus the Romans had their plebeians fight in their wars and allowed foreigners to enter their city. Thus the plebs were able to acquire political influence Vis à Vis the nobles and with the foreigners bringing in new ideas and customs the city became rife with tumults. This forced the Romans to become expansionist because the city was in a constant state of growth and to ensure the disunion between the plebs and patricians did not bring down the city they had to be focused on outside threats; the Latins, the Gauls, and Hannibal.

Placing the guard of freedom with the people therefore serves several uses in ensuring the founding of a perfect republic. If the people are given this role, they are able to secure themselves against the nobles and by doing so gain a degree of political power. No longer being able to direct their desire for domination against the plebs, the Roman patricians were forced to look outside their city. Also, once the plebs were given this power, it followed that they would become armed, making the Roman army far more numerous than its Venetian counterpart.

Because Machiavelli views the people as safer guardians of freedom than the patricians, it follows that he considers creation of the office of the tribunes as crucial for allowing the Romans to create the drive for external expansion. The Florentine begins his discussion of the

creation of the tribunes in D.I.3 by returning to one of his favourite themes, the importance of assuming all men are bad. It is due to this malignity of human nature that the tribunes became necessary in Rome. After the kings were driven out due to the hatred they had garnered, it appeared that the plebs and the patricians had become united. After all, the few and the many had worked together to drive out the Tarquins. During the crisis and shortly afterwards, the patricians had “put away that pride of theirs, had taken on a popular spirit, and were tolerable to anyone, however mean (D.I.3.2).”

Yet once the Tarquins were gone the enmity between the patricians and the plebeians returned. This is because the patricians never truly buried their pride or their contempt for the plebs. Their fear of the Tarquins had forced them to be kind to the people so that they would have their support against the Tarquins. Once the Romans had freed themselves from the rule of the kings, the Senate no longer needed the plebeians and they “began to spit out that poison against the plebs that they had held in their breasts, and they offended it in all the modes they could (D.I.3.2).” Once the patricians showed their true colours the plebeians saw the nobles for what they were and refused to become servile. Rome therefore descended into tumults.

At this point Rome could have become another Athens, a city where the people lived in constant suspicion of the great, and the nobles plotting against the many and each other; stopping greats such as an Alcibiades from achieving glory, and leading them in turn to betray their city. Instead of following Athens down this path, Rome instead created the office of the tribunes. This office, founded in order to provide security for the plebs against the machinations of the patricians, were ordered with so much eminence and reputation that the tribunes became the intermediaries between the plebs and the Senate; checking the insolence of the nobles and providing an outlet for the plebeians (D.I.3.2). Rather than seeking to eliminate or temper the

venomous relationship between the few and the many or simply allowing it to run its course, the Romans founded an institution that was able to channel the turmoil between the two humours into constructive means.

While it is true that the Romans stumbled on a way to channel the tumultuous nature of the relationship between its two humours, as Machiavelli points out, many writers would argue that if Rome was a perfect republic it would never have allowed the tumults to arise in the first place. A good regime according to classical political science should seek harmony among its classes in order to meet the requirements of the best regime. After all, they need only to point to Athens to demonstrate the effect tumults can have on a free city. The Florentine responds that these writers have not thought closely on the issue because it is thanks to these tumults that Rome owes its success. First, Machiavelli asks to see where the tumults inflicted lasting harm on the city. According to him, before Rome fell into corruption in the aftermath of the Agrarian Law “the tumults of Rome rarely engendered exile and very rarely blood. Neither can these tumults, therefore be judged harmful nor a republic divided that in so much time sent no more than eight or ten citizens into exile because of its differences, and killed very few of them, and condemned not many more to fines of money (D.I.4.1).” After all, as Machiavelli concludes, could one really describe a city as disordered that had so many examples of virtue? The tumultuous nature of Rome therefore should be praised because due to this the tribunes were created and they served as a guard for freedom allowing Rome to achieve greatness.

As I noted in the my discussion on freedom and glory, unlike the Athenians the Romans proved able to ensure that the regime was never brought down by ingratitude, and always found a way to reward glorious deeds undertaken by its citizens. The example of Horatius demonstrates for Machiavelli why the Romans struck the proper balance. Horatius had achieved greatness in

service of Rome through his conquest of the Curiatii, but he had also murdered his sister. The Romans placed him on trial for his life. This is not a case of the Romans being ungrateful toward Horatius but an example of their wisdom in not allowing demerits to be cancelled by merits. A well-ordered republic has rewards for good work and punishments for bad. A citizen therefore can expect to be rewarded for the good they do but they should also expect punishment for bad. The city stays free and glorious this way for when a citizen does outstanding work they gain reputation for glory but if they grow ambitious from this and attempt something audacious he will be stopped without consideration of the good he did, thus maintaining civility (D.I.24.1).

Machiavelli expands upon this system by describing particular examples of how the Romans found ways reward their citizens even though the city was poor; for even a small gift in recognition of a great service will be esteemed by the citizen in question and makes them feel appreciated. Horatius Coclus and Mucius Scaevola in recognition for their deeds were granted lands by the public.¹²¹ Manlius Capitolinus meanwhile was given a small measure of flour which was as much as the city could afford to give at the time. Yet when he was moved to take control of the city he was thrown from the Capitol which he had won much glory saving (D.I.24.2). Therefore the Romans established a system that could generally satisfy the nobles' desire for honour or recognition while ensuring that they were not forgiven when they became audacious and secured the freedom of the people.

Thus the Romans proved to be less ungrateful toward their citizens than the Athenians or any other republic were. This reason why the Romans were more resistant to the vice of ingratitude is because the people never became overly suspicious of their citizens in the way the

¹²¹ Mansfield and Tarcov point out that according to Livy a statue of Horatius was put up and he was given as much land as could be plowed in one day. NM could be slyly making a statement here or perhaps like Homer, even Machiavelli nods.

Athenians. This not necessarily because the Roman patricians were less ambitious than the notable citizens of Athens; Machiavelli after all takes great pleasure in recounting just how much avarice ruled the spirit of the patricians. Rather, because orders like their system of rewards and punishments helped ensure that while the Roman nobles could achieve glory, the people knew they were secure and not experiencing the heavy hand of servitude did not grow suspicious and never became as severe as other peoples, such as the Athenians became in dealing with citizens who achieved glory. Yet again, because the path to dominance and glory was contained within the city, Roman citizens who wished for glory had to turn outside the walls of the city in Rome's wars.

The office of the dictatorship, often seen as a tyrannical element embedded in the Roman constitution, was for Machiavelli yet another contributing factor to Rome's greatness. He begins Chapter 34 of the first book of the *Discourses* by noting that "some writer" has condemned the creation of the dictatorship, arguing that if for the institution being in place, Caesar would not have been able to hide his tyranny beneath a legitimate title.¹²² Machiavelli counters that the office of the dictatorship itself was not responsible for making Rome servile, the loss of a free way of life in the republic instead the authority taken by the citizens because of the length of the command. As Machiavelli astutely notes, if Caesar or Sulla wanted to become tyrants they would have found another office to subvert if the dictatorship was not available to them (D.I.34.1).

In an echo of our discussion of Machiavelli's critique of magnanimity in Chapter II; for a would-be Caesar to seize extraordinary power for himself, he must first have adherents, partisans, and wealth, which if a regime is ordered according to Machiavelli's precepts would be unlawful and therefore not possible. A well-ordered regime like the Roman Republic before the

¹²² As Mansfield and Tarcov point out, like most of NM's references to "writers" this one is unknown. Like the other references, "some writer" appears to be a stand in for classical political science as a whole.

onset of corruption does not have the soil for tyrants to be cultivated thanks to its austere virtue. The dictatorship therefore cannot be judged on how it was used once public orders had broken down. The question Machiavelli therefore asks is whether the dictatorship assisted the public good.

Dictators in Rome were appointed for a limited duration, not perpetually. Their role was to use their authority to decide by their selves what remedies were needed when the city faced urgent danger, to do everything without consultation, and to punish everyone without appeal. But their power did not extend to being able to alter the State itself. The dictator could not take away powers from the Senate or the people, undo old orders and make new ones (D.I.34.2). By operating within these limits the office of the dictator was not a threat to freedom and instead had as its purpose the safeguarding of the Republic.

And truly, among the other Roman orders, this is the one that deserves to be considered and numbered among those that were the cause of the greatness of so great an empire, for without such an order cities escape from extraordinary accidents with difficulty. Because the customary orders in republics have a slow motion (since no council and no magistrate can work anything by itself, but in many things one has need of another, and because it takes time to add these wills together), their remedies are very dangerous when they have to remedy a thing that time does not wait for. So republics should have a like mode among their orders... For when a like mode is lacking in a republic, it is necessary either that it be ruined by observing the orders or that it break them so as not to be ruined (D.I.34.3).

The dictatorship for Machiavelli is the order that ensured that Rome could manage and thrive despite whatever fortune threw at it. Where other regimes would have required extraordinary modes to save itself (breaking the constitution to save it), and therefore established a precedent for departing from the public orders; the Roman dictatorship existed within the law and the actions of the dictators did not encourage citizens to break the laws.

Far from being the first step towards tyranny, the office of the dictatorship provided the Romans with extraordinary powers within the law to meet any dangers facing the Republic.

Because the dictator did not have the authority to change the division of powers within the State, the dictator was primarily focused on external dangers to the republic. This leads us to turn from internal orders that made Rome great to the external.

The other mode that crosses the threshold between internal and external is the Romans use of religion; which not only helped shape their internal orders but contributed to their warlike foreign policy as well. Machiavelli of course, puts it best; writing that “whoever considers well the Roman histories sees how much religion served to command armies, to animate the plebs, to keep men good, to bring shame to the wicked.” According to Machiavelli, Numa’s introduction of religion into the city lies at the foundation of Rome’s happiness for it caused “good orders; good orders make good fortune; and from good fortune arose the happy successes of enterprises (D.I.11.1).”

Machiavelli’s argument that religion is the source of good orders and the disdain for divine cults is a sign of corruption is nothing remarkable for his contemporaries, for would it be for ancients such as Sallust or Tacitus. For that matter, Martin Luther and Savonarola’s critiques of the Vatican and the corruption in Rome follows a similar line of thought. What then is special about the Romans use of religion and how does Machiavelli make the distinction between the Roman religion and the “present religion”?

First, unlike the religion of the Romans, the Roman Church has contributed to corruption of its adherents through several ways. The first is the example of the court in Rome, which says one thing and does another. Its wicked behaviour leads in turn to the provinces to abandon the religion. The second is that the Italians are forced to make a choice between their fatherland and that of the Church, and because the Church’s interests and those of Italy’s republics and principalities are at odds. Italy has been kept divided due to the Church’s temporal power.

Machiavelli of course claims that the corruption of the present religion is due to the priests in Rome, not the orders of the religion itself. Therefore he claims that if the princes of the Church were to pick up their court and move to Switzerland, the Swiss who are currently the most virtuous would quickly become corrupted (D.I.12.2). One could come to the conclusion (as some have) that Machiavelli does not consider Christianity itself as corrupt, only the Church of Rome in its current form. This was certainly Savonarola and Luther's view as they sought a renewal of the Christian faith. The Florentine however as I have argued in previous chapters does not share this goal of renewal but to replace Christianity or inject paganism within it.

To see this, we need only turn to the praiseworthy elements of the Roman use of religion that Machiavelli discusses in the *Discourses*. In D.I.13¹²³, he provides an example of this use from shortly after the people had created tribunes with consular power and were mostly of plebeian origin, and the city had been beset with plague and famine; the nobles argued that the gods were angry that the empire had been mismanaged and that the only remedy was to elect nobles as tribunes. So terrified were the plebs of the gods wrath that they did as they were told. On another occasion during the siege of Veientes when the soldiers grew weary, the captains noticed that the waters of Lake Albanus had risen and found sources that claimed that Apollo had promised that when the lake flooded the city would fall. The soldiers were satisfied and stayed on at the siege leading to the fall of Veientes (D.I.13.1). The nobles therefore were able to use religion to control the passions of the plebs and direct them toward achieving glory for the city.

The Romans were also particularly adept in the use of auguries and how they chose to interpret them. When a Roman army took the field they would make use of the "chicken men". The chicken men would see whether the chickens would eat the food they put in front of them, if

¹²³ It should be pointed out that NM chooses the 13th Chapter to begin his discussion of how his Romans are superior to Christian Rome.

they eat it the auspices for the battle were good, if not bad. However, the Roman captains were not slaves to belief regarding the auspices and knew when to follow them or not prudently. The consul Papirius despite knowing that the chickens had not eaten and that the chief augury had lied to him, ordered his army forward but with the chicken men in the front rank and when their leader was killed the consul argued that the gods had purged the army of the corruption that now they would win. The soldiers accepted this and the Romans carried the day (D.I.14.2). In short, whereas under Christianity the prince is second to the priest, for the Romans the priestly class was subservient to the wishes of the captains and the interests of the city.¹²⁴

The final difference between the Roman's pagan religion and Christianity that Machiavelli offers as a contrast comes in D.I.15 in his recounting of the Samnites and their final defeat by the Romans. With their backs against the wall and with no other option the Samnites turned to religion. Among dead victims and flaming altars the leaders of the army were made to swear to never abandon the fight, and called upon the soldiers, one by one, surrounded by armed centurions to do as their commanders told them, never retreat, and kill anyone they saw fleeing. Those that were too terrified to make this oath were immediately put to death by the centurions surrounding them. The rest, made fearful of spectacle made the oath, dressed half in white with crests and feathers and went out to face the Romans (D.I.15.1).

The Samnites though, despite their preparations were defeated by the Romans on the field. As Machiavelli puts it, Roman virtue and the fear conceived of past defeats proved to be

¹²⁴ Much of my analysis of the incident with the "chicken men" and what follows owes much to Harvey Mansfield's commentary in his *New Modes and Orders* on the use of religion by the Romans, 69-79. Mansfield points out the connection between the example of the chicken men and the Samnites use of religion, particularly Machiavelli's description of the Samnites wearing *feathers* into battle while Livy makes no mention of this. For Mansfield, the Samnites are an example of the priests being in control of the use of religion while the chicken men incident is a case of the consul being in charge; 77-79. While in my view the Samnites' use of religion for Machiavelli is still superior to the present religion despite being less successful than the Romans, we are in agreement that the crucial point is the submission of religion to political prudence.

too much for the obstinacy religion had given them. One could conclude therefore the ferocity of the Samnites use of religion only served to be needlessly cruel to those who were too fearful to take the oath (something that later moderns will most certainly conclude); yet Machiavelli does not share this view. He concludes the chapter by stating that the Samnites had no other refuge and more importantly this shows how much confidence can be gained through religion well used (D.I.15.1).

While the Samnites and the Romans were able to use their religion to inspire ferocity on the battlefield in order to defend freedom, Machiavelli does not think the Christian religion can inspire the same passions. After all, as Machiavelli is wont to point out, free republics failed to arise under Christianity even after the fall of the Roman Empire. Christianity teaches us to render unto Caesar what are Caesar's and unto God things that are God's. In other words, a Christian priest would have told the leaders of the Samnites to surrender to the Romans (so long as they were both Christian) because they would still be free in the Christian sense under the Romans.

The Roman's use of religion therefore proved advantageous in several ways. The nobles were able to take advantage of the plebeians religious beliefs in order to strengthen the city, it allowed captains and leaders the latitude to follow its precepts or not as long as they acted prudently, and provided the means to cultivate ferocity in the defence of freedom. In short, religion for the Romans served the needs of the city and helped drive them toward empire.

All of these components helped Rome achieve greatness in what Machiavelli considers to be its defining virtue, its conduct in war. For it is through warfare that the Romans were able to demonstrate their virtue, reach a level of glory unmatched, and found a world empire; the logical endpoint of a foreign policy that dictates that the best way to secure the freedom of a city is for it to conquer the world. The tumults, the tribunes, the office of the dictatorship, their use of religion

and their mode of rewarding and punishing citizens served to make the Romans more proficient in warfare and expansion. Therefore while all of these elements were important aspects of the city's identity, Rome's overarching orientation was expansion through warfare; and the city's virtue in this is the most important reason why Machiavelli calls Rome the perfect republic. Indeed, how a regime arms itself and conducts itself in war is the most important criteria with which Machiavelli ranks principalities and republics. Those who fail to possess their own arms should be ashamed (D.I.21). How did the Romans achieve greatness through their conduct in war? First they followed the proper mode of expansion, second they showed wisdom in departing from the modes of other in their conduct in warfare, third they understood that money is not the sinews of war, and finally unlike Machiavelli's contemporaries, they have more reputation to infantry than cavalry.

According to Machiavelli there are three modes of expansion. These are the mode of the ancient Tuscans who created an empire through the formation of a league of several republics, in which none was above another in rank; the way of the Romans who also found partners but made sure that the leadership stayed in their hands; and third, the method of the Spartans and the Athenians who did not acquire allies but direct subjects. The Florentine views the third as useless, since the republics could not keep the empire they acquired and were ruined. The peoples they had subjected were used to living free and never accustomed themselves to service. Therefore once the opportunity presented itself they revolted. The Tuscans and their league were able to build an empire in Italy but failed to expand beyond it. This is because there was no leader and consensus among different seats had to be achieved (D.II.4.1-2).

The Romans on the other hand combined the first and third modes to find great success. They founded a partnership among the cities of Italy and for the most part lived equally under

the same laws. But since the Romans held the title of command their allies came to subjugate themselves through their own efforts because once they began to conquer outside of Italy, their new conquests considered their masters to be the Romans, not some league. Therefore by the end the cities of Italy found themselves trapped between the city of Rome and Rome's non-Italian subjects and when in desperation they turned on Rome they were crushed and became subjects. This according to Machiavelli, is through experience the best mode of expansion because through it the Romans achieved great power while empires such as the Athenian were overturned and leagues such as the Swiss or Tuscan have a definitive limit to their expansion. Only one offers the potential for world-empire and glory (D.II.4.1).

The Roman mode of waging war also shows how they demonstrated prudence in departing from the modes of others in order to achieve supreme greatness. In Machiavelli's account of the Roman rise to greatness through warfare they did so in the beginning by having wars that were both massive and short. They put large armies into the field and thanks to this were able to win victories quickly, after which they took some land from their enemies and sent out colonies to keep guard on the vanquished and strengthen Rome. Once wars grew in length they began to pay their soldiers a wage to maintain the soldiers' loyalty but also became less liberal in the distribution of booty from campaigns since the soldiers no longer required it and instead used the booty to enrich the public treasury. Therefore no citizen was able to grow wealthy from a war but the city itself did. Meanwhile, wars still were kept fairly short because the consuls only held their positions for a year and therefore wished to ensure that they won a triumph for themselves before their year was up. Therefore, while other princes and republics allowed themselves to become impoverished from fighting wars, the Romans became wealthier and their reach grew longer (D.II.6.2).

The Roman method of expansion and proceeding in war would have done them little benefit if they did not also properly understand the nature of war and military tactics. Regarding the nature of war, for Machiavelli the most important element that the Romans understood contrary to the opinion of the many, is that money is not the sinew war. In D.II.10 Machiavelli writes that too many princes have made the mistake that knowing their treasury is full, believe themselves secure. If this were true then Darius would have conquered Alexander, the Greeks the Romans, and Duke Charles the Swiss. Machiavelli reminds his readers of the encounter between Croesus, king of the Lydians and Solon the great Athenian lawgiver in the pages of Lucian. Croesus showed Solon his treasury but when asked whether he found him powerful, Solon replied that war was made with steel, not gold. Indeed, of all pairings mentioned by Machiavelli, he notes that the victor was the one who understood that good soldiers, not gold is the sinew of war (D.II.10.1).

Machiavelli therefore provides us with the following maxim: “gold is not sufficient to find good soldiers, but good soldiers are quite sufficient to find gold (D.II.10.2). The Romans understood this maxim the best.

For if the Romans had wished to make war more with money than with steel, all the treasure of the world would not have been enough, considering the great campaigns that they waged and the difficulties they had in them. But since they made their wars with steel, they never suffered a dearth of gold, for it was brought to them, even to their camps, by those who feared them (D.II.10.2).

The Romans therefore were more concerned with cultivating virtue among their soldiers, and thanks to this they were able to wage campaigns that took them throughout the ancient world. Their wealthy opponents, Carthage, Macedon, and the rest of Greek East found themselves routed in the face of the austere, but skilled Roman armies.

By concerning themselves more with the virtue of their arms rather how great their treasury was, the Romans were able to form sound military orders, specifically, unlike Machiavelli's contemporaries.¹²⁵ While ancient and modern writers praise the virtue of the austere Spartan hoplites, Machiavelli shows that the Romans surpassed the Spartans in the conduct of war due to their modes and orders and accomplished what all regimes should aspire to.

The Romans therefore with no overall plan managed to create the perfect republic. The city's tumultuous nature led to the creation of the tribunes and the placing of the guard of freedom in the hand of the people. While the fews' desire for dominance was checked in this matter, the Romans still had orders in place to reward acts of glory undertaken on behalf of the republic and until its period of decline was able to guard against any of the great turning on the city by assuring that the city did not act ungrateful towards them. Unlike Machiavelli's Christian contemporaries, Rome found a way to use religion to buttress the interests of the city and instead of taming them made the Romans more ferocious in war. In foreign policy the Romans followed the true mode of expansion, in war they conducted themselves in contrast to the universal mode of others; making them short and massive and learning how to make themselves rich from the spoils. Finally the office of the dictatorship offered a mode for the Romans to allow for an individual to act on behalf of the republic during extraordinary danger within the established laws. The result of these orders was the establishment of a world empire.

¹²⁵ Harvey Mansfield makes the argument that the series of Chapters found in D.II dealing with infantry, cavalry, and artillery are actually a discussion of Machiavelli's rhetoric against classical and Christian political science and signal the founding of modernity. Particularly, infantry becomes a metaphor for earthly glory, cavalry is a stand in for religion and is rhetoric. See Mansfield's *New Modes and Orders*, 232-247. While this is one of the most fascinating interpretations of Machiavelli's thought (as we should expect from Mansfield), it too easily leads one to discount the importance of *practical* military affairs to Machiavelli. Thus making it easier to fold him into liberal modernity. As Patrick Colby notes, it is unlikely the author of the *Art of War* only had a metaphorical interest in military matters, see Colby's *Machiavelli's Romans*, 312. Whether or not there is an esoteric teaching present here, we should begin by taking the argument at face value.

All of these orders were introduced at different times during different situations. This could lead one to conclude while the Romans were able to succeed, this success owed more to fortune than to virtue. According to Machiavelli, it is the opinion of Plutarch and Livy that the Romans owed their rise more to fortune than to virtue. Even Machiavelli is forced to admit the Romans were fortunate that during their rise they never faced two wars at the same time; that their enemies only came at them one at a time. If two of their rivals had possessed the wisdom to work together Rome would have stayed along the Tiber (D.II.1.1).

Machiavelli insists though, that if we look back at these wars we must admit that the Romans success comes not solely from good fortune. He argues that “whoever considers well the order of these wars and the mode of their proceeding will see inside them a very great virtue and prudence mixed with fortune. Therefore, whoever may examine the cause of such fortune will easily recover it (D.II.1.2).” Any prince or people who are able to proceed as the Romans did with the same virtue will come to the same success or fortune. In this, Machiavelli repeats his claim regarding new princes in Chapter VI of *The Prince* that great founders are able to create their own fortune. The Romans were able to take advantage of fortune only because of their great virtue. A weaker city could have had the same beginning but would not have been able to take advantage. A virtuous city, like a virtuous founder, can introduce form to any matter.

Machiavelli is so insistent on this matter because belief that the Romans owed their rise to fortune rather than virtue means that the ancient Romans cannot be imitated. By demonstrating that virtue was more crucial than fortune, Machiavelli is making the case that the perfect regime founded by the Romans can be given a new birth. Even better, where the Romans stumbled upon their modes and orders, after reading the *Discourses* a new prince will be able to

found a perfect republic from the beginning. In short, Machiavelli's new Rome due to its perfect beginning, will be able to surpass in glory even the ancients.

Decline of the Perpetual Republic

The final question I will briefly consider is whether Machiavelli intends his perfect regime to be "perpetual" and overcome the classical cycle of regimes or whether he envisions that his new Rome, despite its perfect founding, will succumb to decline no matter how many dykes and dams are put in place to withstand *fortuna*. Machiavelli hints at the possibility of a republic becoming perpetual in the opening chapter of Bk. III of the *Discourses*. He writes that it is possible for a republic or a sect to renew itself by returning to their beginnings in order to restore their health. In particular, an extraordinary act of violence such as Brutus' execution of his sons, due to its shocking nature is able to bring everyone back with the laws (D.III.1.3). Sects meanwhile (like Christianity), can be renewed through the acts of individuals such as St. Francis or St. Dominick, who by virtue of their personal conduct were able to renew Christianity and convince the people to accept the transgressions of the prelates (D.III.1.4). In D.III.22 meanwhile, in the midst of his comparison of Manlius Torquatus and Valerius Corvinus, he argues that "if a republic were so happy that it often had one who with his example might renew the laws, and not only restrain it from running to ruin but pull it back, it would be perpetual (D.III.22.3)."

These passages seem to indicate that a properly ordered republic, one that allowed one individual (perhaps the dictator) the latitude to renew or reform its laws could become perpetual. We can link these chapters in the *Discourses* to similar arguments in *The Prince*, particularly Chapter XXV in which Machiavelli suggest to his pupils that a truly virtuous prince can strike down and conquer *fortuna*. Is Machiavelli therefore suggesting that his teaching will accomplish

what Plato thought impossible or the achievement Hobbes claimed for himself? A perpetual regime that brings an end the cycle of regimes.

However, there are several reasons to conclude that this is not something that Machiavelli believes is possible or desirable. Regarding the possibility, he writes in D.III.17.1 that “Because one cannot give a certain remedy for such disorders that arise in republics, it follows that it is impossible to order a perpetual republic, because its ruin is caused through a thousand unexpected ways.” Even Rome, the most successful regime of all found itself succumbing to decay. In Machiavelli’s recounting of the consequences of the Gracchi’s introduction of the Agrarian Law and tracing Rome’s downfall to the problems arising from it; the Florentine informs us that the conflict between the few and the many would have eventually brought down Rome. Rome’s great success was to hold off the decay through its orders and achieve glory in time allotted to (D.I.37.3).

Even supposing that Machiavelli’s new Rome, armed with the knowledge of what happened to the first, has the prudence to avoid the equivalent of the Agrarian Law, there is still as Machiavelli points out, a thousand more ways to bring it down. Finally, despite the rhetoric of *The Prince*, Machiavelli constantly returns to the argument that all sects, orders, and civilizations have a natural life cycle; they either die through political decay or are destroyed by reoccurring natural cataclysms (D.II.5, D.III.1). Machiavelli is not a modern in the sense that Bacon, Descartes or Hobbes are. While he exhorts his readers to war against *fortuna* he does not believe a final victory is possible. Man cannot conquer nature.

Even if it were possible to found a perpetual regime, I do not believe that Machiavelli would desire to do so. As I have argued to this point, the Florentine’s aim to usher in a new birth of politics because he believes human flourishing only occurs when virtuous deeds are required.

If human beings were to leave the realm of necessity for the realm of freedom, the pursuit of glory, and politics would come to an end. This would mean that the world would no longer require founders of new modes and orders, not another Moses or a Romulus. Hobbes' dream therefore is Machiavelli's nightmare. His new Rome may be a perfect republic, but its inevitable decline also ensures that future founders of new modes and orders will be able to found other virtuous sects and civilizations; and this is the greatest of human accomplishments.

Conclusion

Machiavelli's study of the regime (like his study of ruler-ship) therefore is directed toward practical matters. He does not ask the question of which regime best adheres to a trans-political standard of virtue because as we have seen, for the Florentine, virtue exists for the sake of politics not the other way around. By limiting political science from going beyond the walls of the city and pointing it toward "effectual" matters he abandons the idea of a city in speech which all others must be compared to. Since Machiavelli's regime therefore serves no trans-political purpose in contrast to Aristotle's polity devoted to leisurely contemplation for example, or Cicero and Virgil's Rome undertaking a mission of civilization in the world; the question becomes how can the regime best serve the ends desired by its citizens and subjects?

Since the plebs want prosperous security (enjoyment of their property) and the great want glory (reputation) Machiavelli sets out to find the best political order to achieve these goals. A regime that is able to satisfy the two humours, is in turn capable of achieving greatness through the creation of empire. Republics therefore are to be preferred over principalities in the end because they are more likely to allow the flourishing of *virtù* required to gain liberty and empire. Sparta and Venice may avoid domination by foreigners but the great don't have many opportunities for glory and the prosperity of the plebs is limited. Because of this they won't able

to resist the urge to expand and will fall. A *stato* like Athens meanwhile is so corrupt internally that it finds it impossible to hold on to its gains.

Unlike its rivals, Rome was able to find a way to balance its tumults; to channel the desires of the nobles and the plebs into a world bestriding empire through founding the proper modes and orders in response to necessity. The historical Rome, or Livy's Rome was founded we could say in a state of absent mindedness. The foundation laid down by Romulus had to be improved upon by Numa, Brutus and others. Despite its greatness, Rome's best innovations were founded through accident, it relied on fortune. Machiavelli's new Rome in contrast will be superior to the old because it will be planned from the beginning and its' excellence will derive far more from virtue and prudence than fortune, ensuring it will avoid decline far longer than previously possible. When the new Rome does fall into decay it will provide the soil in which the renewal of virtue will grow.

Chapter IV The Founder-Prophet: The New Peak

“And it should be considered that nothing is more difficult to handle, more doubtful of success, nor more difficult to manage, than to put oneself at the head of introducing new orders”
-The Prince Ch. VI

Introduction

Looming over the Machiavellian corpus, and therefore the Florentine’s political project, is the instigator of new modes and orders, the founder prophet, the new Prince. While we have examined the contours of the civic education the Florentine has prepared for his potential warrior-statesmen, the nature of Machiavelli’s perfect republican regime; neither the former nor the latter solves the central problem Machiavelli faces; how to introduce his new modes and orders in a time of corruption. While the education laid out for the captain-princes is sufficient for forming future rulers and the new Rome will provide a sufficient stage for them to be cultivated and pursue glory, they alone cannot overcome the corruption Machiavelli sees infecting his fatherland and the West as a whole.

The princes and captains previous described do not possess the *virtù* required for such a transformative act. In the *Discourses* he reminds his readers that at the end of Rome’s republican era “the authority of and severity of Brutus, together with all the eastern legions, were not enough to hold it so disposed as to wish to maintain that freedom that he, in likeness to the first Brutus had restored to it (D.I.17.I).” Since the level of decay has reached a point that no one believes that ancient political practice can be imitated, it is exceedingly unlikely the new Rome, who’s founding requires such an imitation will be founded. Machiavelli therefore needs a “New Prince”, a prophet who can introduce a new way of life.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ The importance of the New Prince, Founder, or Armed Prophet in Machiavelli’s is well recognized by commentators such as Pocock, Strauss, Mansfield, and Voegelin. Even though the literature is extensive any

If a prince or captain of Brutus' level were by chance to emerge in a corrupt city; like Castruccio they would serve as a bastion of *virtù* for the time Fortune gave them but they would be unable to work lasting change. What is worse, we cannot even count on such figures to emerge for we can only truly rely on the emergence of Machiavelli's captains if our republic or kingdom is already properly ordered. The problem of founding or reforming a corrupt city emerges as the greatest obstacle facing Machiavelli, even greater than the charm humanistic learning exerts over the young.

Yet, because the problem of founding new modes and orders or transforming a corrupt city is the greatest challenge, whoever proves to possess the virtue required to bring about such a feat will surely be honoured for all time, to become second only to the gods themselves. For classical political philosophy, the closest human beings could come to the divine was a life dedicated to the contemplation of the eternal order, as presented by Diotima's Ladder in Plato's *Symposium* or Scipio's Dream in Cicero's *res publica*. While not achieving a personal form of immortality, through the contemplation of the eternal, the philosopher is able to experience the permanent for a brief period of time, *a la* the Chariot of Eros in Plato's *Phaedrus*. This experience, is far greater than anything a political life can aspire to, as Diotima via Socrates makes clear.

Political glory for the ancients, as well as the Christians is ephemeral, for Machiavelli however, the belief in an eternal order is a case of self-delusion at best and a corrupting influence at worst. The accomplishments of those who choose the *vita activa* over the *vita contemplative* therefore have real significance. It is not Plato or Aristotle whom we should seek to emulate, but

discourse on Machiavelli must make an account of this theme. Beyond this, NM's emphasis on this extraordinary act and individual helps us draw a distinction between NM and his successors. Finally, in my estimation the importance of the founder-prophet as a more *active* peak of human achievement in place of the *contemplative* Platonic philosopher or Christian priest is often overlooked.

Alcibiades and Philip of Macedon. Machiavelli therefore seeks to persuade the young that the founder of new modes orders stands at the peak of human striving. By removing the philosopher-priest at the summit with the founder prophet he can ensure a new birth of politics.

In order to convince and prepare his readers for the importance of the founder prophet, Machiavelli must first demonstrate the incredible difficulty of introducing renewal in a time of corruption and second, why only a special type of individual is capable of such an enterprise.

Machiavelli begins his discussion on the obstacles facing any attempts at reviving virtue in a corrupt regime in Chapters XVI to XVIII in the first book of the *Discourses*. He concludes that the solution to his dilemma of how to bring about a reform of corrupt matter requires extraordinary action which, Machiavelli suggests, other writers would consider tyrannical. The quandary is that only a “good” man is deserving of being such an orderer but the needed action calls for what many would consider terrible deeds. Machiavelli must convince his reader that taking on this burden is necessary for a new birth. That only a special individual (similar, but greater in scope than the captain-prince of Chapter II) is capable of being bad in order to create something good. To prove this he once again relies on his reading of history; the examples provided by the great founders; Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, and Theseus. These Princes were able to introduce new orders and found civilizations by their own virtue with only the opportunity given to them by fortune, or made fortune give them the opportunity. Machiavelli is banking on the greatest spirits among the honour seekers wishing to join those ranks. Where the captain-prince served as the replacement for the classical gentleman, and the new Rome stands in place of the best regime of ancient political science; the founder prophet ousts the philosopher or priest as the peak of human striving. To reform Italy, Machiavelli’s fatherland requires a similar figure. Such a person perhaps is Machiavelli himself.

The problem with this however is his claim that where armed prophets such as Moses and Cyrus succeed, unarmed prophets failed. Machiavelli out of power, no longer has arms. Is he the exception to the rule, does the Florentine possess arms that are somehow hidden from view? Machiavelli's example of an unarmed prophet who failed is the fire and brimstone spewing Florentine priest, Savonarola. Who despite his persuasiveness, eventually failed in his campaign against the corruption of Florence and the Church and was put to death. His failure, according to Machiavelli, was his lack of arms. However, as Leo Strauss has pointed out, he is silent regarding the success of the most famous unarmed prophet, Jesus of Nazareth. The Galilean never raised an army or carried a sword, yet his followers were able to convince the Romans whose ancestors had put him to death like a common criminal to worship him, to follow his modes and orders. For Strauss, Machiavelli sees himself following the example of Jesus, not Moses. He will found new modes and orders through the means of his enemy, rhetoric or propaganda. Machiavelli's war will be a war of books.¹²⁷

There is a problem with this interpretation of the Florentine's vision of the founder prophet. If Machiavelli imagines himself as an unarmed prophet, how are we to reconcile this with his consistent arguments that individuals and regimes that allow themselves to be unarmed are not only unlikely to succeed, but lack virtue? An unarmed prince or republic is not to be admired or emulated. If this is the case, why would an unarmed prophet be any different and why would Machiavelli wish to be one? How can Machiavelli wish to wage war with books when as his Fabrizio tells us, the princes of Italy attempted such a feat and were ruined? In the end, Machiavelli is quite serious when he states that armed prophets succeed where the unarmed fail.

¹²⁷ Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, 173.

The success of Jesus, was a due to chance. It was not planned or executed with virtue but was carried through thanks to the whims of *fortuna*.

Machiavelli though, as I have demonstrated, seeks to limit the influence of fortune as much as possible and instead relying on one's own arms. His lack of arms following his removal in 1512 is why he was forced to turn to writing, and working through his young friends like Cosimo Rucellai to engender new modes and orders. Yet, he never lost sight of the fact that this represented counting on someone else's virtue for his success. This is why was so concerned with returning to a position of political influence in Florence, no matter who his political masters were. Only an armed prophet can guarantee their own success.

The Problem of Founding

As I argued in my conclusion to Chapter II, one of the final aims of Machiavelli's biography of Castruccio Castracani is to make clear the difficulty any would-be innovator faces when attempting to introduce new modes and orders. Castruccio did everything a good Machiavellian should, but the empire he built quickly fell apart after his death due to the weakness of his own heir. Founding new laws for a city in the manner of a Lycurgus is arduous enough, Castruccio's failure exposes the even more formidable challenge facing one who seeks to reform a corrupt city. No matter how difficult the challenge, this is the task that Machiavelli sets himself and his readers. If Italy is to be saved, this problem must be overcome.

The most in-depth exploration of this problem by Machiavelli is found in a trinity of chapters in the first book of the *Discourses*. Here he lays out the predicament and points to a difficult but possible solution. The issue is first raised in D.I.16, where Machiavelli discourses on the problem of why, when a people used to living under a prince by some accident becomes free is only able to maintain itself with difficulty. He writes (no doubt surprisingly to democratic

admirers of Machiavelli) that the people are like a brute animal that has been domesticated by the prison of the principedom. Once loose in the wild it is unsure and quickly becomes prey to the next predatory prince to come along. From this Machiavelli concludes that a people finds itself in this difficulty whenever the matter has become corrupt, and when corruption enters a people thoroughly they cannot live free, not for a short time or at all (D.I.16.2). Therefore for the time being he will only reason about those peoples for whom the good still outweighs the spoiled.

Another serious difficulty a state faces when it becomes free is that it creates partisan enemies rather than partisan friends. All of those who prospered under the previous regime are discontented and are moved to take up the tyranny again in order that they may live as they used to. While those who enjoy the newly acquired free way of life feel no obligation to those who gave it to them. Machiavelli's example of this is the sons of Junius Brutus. After Brutus drove the Tarquins from Rome and introduced liberty, his sons wished to carry on with their excessive lives, and Brutus was forced to execute them to preserve the recently won liberty (D.I.16.4). Therefore the enemies of the new order must be eliminated so that the new way may be preserved. In writing this Machiavelli no doubt had in mind the end of Sorderini's popular republic that was brought down by Bernardo Rucellai and his aristocratic circle that had prospered during the Medici era and worked to bring the family back to Florence. Perhaps if Sorderini had eliminated the opposition instead of trying to win them over with patience he would have held on to his position.

The opposition of the great to the new regime is a serious difficulty but Machiavelli is very confident that he has a solution to the problem, as we saw with Brutus and I will examine in more detail below. The far more serious problem is what to do if the good in a people is outweighed by the spoiled and one finds oneself in a corrupt city. As he states in his conclusion

to the chapter, the actions of Brutus were able to right the ship because the corruption had not entered the Roman people yet. Had it done so “neither in Rome nor elsewhere does one find sound remedies for maintaining it... (D.I.17.1).” Earlier the Florentine had sought to avoid this problem but since it is the dilemma he himself faces in Florence and Italy he has no choice but turn to it without guidance from Rome.

The problem of Chapter XVII is that if corruption is allowed to fester for too long it makes it impossible to reform the matter. So while Brutus was able to save Rome after the kings, no one was able to perform a similar function after the Julian-Claudian line was eliminated. This corruption dated at least as far back as the rise of the disorder introduced by the Gracchi and accelerated by the parties of Sulla and Marius. As I noted previously, not even the virtue of Marcus Brutus was enough to revive the republican orders after the assassination of Julius Caesar. Thus Machiavelli revises his earlier endorsement of tumults. Tumults do not hurt where the matter is not corrupt, but where it is not even well ordered laws can hold back the tide as the example of Rome seems to prove.

However, despite the historical precedent he offers us a tentative solution.

Well-ordered laws do not help unless indeed they have been put into motion by one individual with an extreme force ensures their observance so that the matter becomes good. I do not know whether this has ever occurred or whether it is possible; for it is seen as a said above that if a city that has fallen into decline through corruption of matter ever happens to rise, it happens through the virtue of one man who is alive then, not through the collectivity that sustains good orders (D.I.17.2).

While we have a potential solution, we also have a problem. Machiavelli offers us the possibility of an extraordinary individual who through extreme force can transform corrupt matter into good. The dilemma though as he points out is that he does not know whether this is possible. Such a transformation relies on an individual not a collective. Even great individuals, whether it be Castruccio Castracani or Machiavelli’s other example of Epaminondas of Thebes, a virtuous

prince is not enough. While they were able to bring order to their cities while they lived, once they died their fatherlands returned to disorder. The Florentine concludes that there cannot be one man who has such a long life to have the time to bring good to a city that has been corrupted for a long time. Even with two such figures in a row the city would still be ruined (D.I.17.3). The only way to cure the corruption would be to do so in a way that would risk many dangers and much blood. But, he finishes, few know how to use such extraordinary modes. The chapter ends therefore with a potential solution to the problem of founding but a new quandary regarding means.

As the last chapter in Machiavelli's grouping, D.I.18 presents us with the way to the solution. In the opening paragraph he repeats the problem of D.I.17, how to order a corrupt city. To see whether it's possible to reform such a city he intends to undertake what modern social science could call a thought experiment, and asks us to imagine the most corrupt city imaginable. The disorder in this city is so great that good laws are unable to do any good. We are asked to consider this because the laws are built out of orders that were laid down at the beginning of the city when the matter was good. Now that corruption has set in, the order itself has become corrupt. Machiavelli therefore suggests that when reasoning about a corrupt city one must not return to the original but introduce new orders.

Rome found itself in such a position. While at the beginning its orders were good the laws had a positive effect. Thus the laws concerning the choosing of the magistrates and consuls were good at the beginning because while the consulate was only given to those who asked for it, only those who deserved it asked. Once the corruption set in, the undeserving would seek the consulate and because the orders remained the same they were able to achieve it furthering the disorder in the republic (D.I.18.3). Thus Machiavelli concludes, it would have been better for

Rome to have made new orders and new laws for one should order different orders and modes of life depending on the subject (D.I.18.4).

After making this claim he repeats his assertion from the previous chapters that this ordering is a difficult thing to do because it must be done either at a stroke or by little by little before they are recognized by everyone; and as he has already pointed out both of these options are almost impossible.

For if one wishes to renew them little by little, the cause of it must be someone prudent who sees this inconvenience from very far away and when it arises. It is a very easy thing for not one of these men ever to emerge in a city, and if indeed one does emerge, that he never be able to persuade anyone else of what he himself understands. For men used to living in one mode do not wish to vary it, and so much the more when they do not look the evil in its face but have to have it shown to them by conjecture. As to innovating these orders at a stroke, when everyone knows that they are not good, I say that the uselessness, which is easily recognized is difficult to correct. For to do this, it is not enough to use ordinary terms, since the ordinary modes are bad, but it is necessary to go to the extraordinary, such as violence and arms, and before everything else become prince of that city, able to dispose of it in one's own mode (D.I.18.4).

Before we continue on to the Florentine's conclusion; there several issues here to consider.

Machiavelli describes two options in the above, renewing little by little or by a stroke. The question therefore is what does the situation in Italy call for? Machiavelli sees the corruption but no one else does. It would seem then that the situation calls for option one. However, once he convinces his readers of what he understands what happens? We are only ever told what action to take if we seek to introduce new orders at a stroke; become prince of the republic. The implicit suggestion appears to be that what first presents itself as two options is in fact only one.

Machiavelli himself is the prudent individual who little by little convinces his pupils that new orders are needed (indeed in D.I.55.4 almost as an aside he writes that Tuscany, due to its lack of gentlemen and general equality that it would be easy to introduce a civil way of life there if a prudent man with knowledge of ancient civilizations were to emerge there). Once convinced of

this they will in turn seek to become rulers of their cities to introduce the new order perhaps camouflaging their full intention by following the advice of D.I.25 and retain the shadow of the republic's ancient modes.

The high difficulty of the task of founding or reforming a corrupt city has now been laid before Machiavelli's students. However, as these passages in the *Discourses* make clear, it is not an impossible task. Some individual, a person of incredible virtue, could have the reserves of spirit required to introduce new modes and orders. A young man -who perhaps as Thomas Hobbes would say- inspired by stories of the great men of history and longing to be counted among them, will be driven by their lust for glory to go down the path offered by Machiavelli. For to do so would place him among the ranks of the greatest of men.

Convincing the young that the glory won from founding new modes and orders is second to none is only the first part of Machiavelli's program of replacing the philosopher-priest with his founder prophet. The Florentine's timocratic readers may be convinced that the glory they desire is to be achieved in founding new modes and orders, but are they prepared to do what it takes to achieve this glory? Machiavelli therefore not only has to convince his readers that new orders are needed because of the present corruption and that curing this cancer will win them glory; but that they need to undertake extraordinary action to purge the disease. But will his best pupils be convinced of the necessity of new orders be willing to go the extreme?

Because the reordering of the city for a political way of life presupposes a good man, and becoming prince of the republic by violence presupposes a bad man, one will find that it very rarely happens that someone good wishes to become prince by bad ways, even though his end be good, and that someone wicked, having become prince, wishes to work well, and that it will ever occur to his mind to use well the authority that he has acquired badly (D.I.18.4).

The dilemma of convincing a good man to undertake bad ways for a good end (or a bad man to have a good end) is the next difficulty Machiavelli must overcome. To do so he must convince

his readers that extraordinary modes are the only way. Even if “these modes are very cruel, and enemies to every way of life, not only Christian but human (D.I.26.1).”

Extraordinary Modes

It quickly becomes clear that by extraordinary modes Machiavelli has in mind are dangerous acts that are sure to leave a high body count and have the streets running with blood. His discussion of the effectual truth and the orientation it provides for his statesmen offers some preparation for his exposition on extraordinary modes. As I argued in Chapter II, Machiavelli’s education insists on its practitioners to be willing reject the traditional view of virtuous action and instead focus the reputation derived from glorious ends. However, it is one thing though to become ruthless in the manner of Hannibal in order to win glory on the battlefield and another to develop the severity and daring needed to be a founder. Machiavelli provides us with two examples of potential founders who proved not to have the daring to follow through. From the *Discourses*; Giovampagolo Baglioni, the tyrant of Perugia and in the *Florentine Histories* the man Machiavelli calls Niccolo di Lorenzo but history remembers as Cola di Rienzo.¹²⁸

At first reading this two men could not appear to be any more different. Baglioni is called a tyrant, a parricide, and accused of carrying on an incestuous relationship with his sister. Niccolo di Lorenzo meanwhile, upon attempting to restore the Roman Republic is praised for his reputation for virtue and justice. Both however, when given the opportunity to gain immortal glory failed to follow through. Baglioni was given to opportunity to kill Pope Julius II and his entourage when the impetuous pontiff came to Perugia to remove him. Instead, to the surprise of the prudent men present (Machiavelli himself), Baglioni quietly surrendered himself to the Pope. Baglioni, Machiavelli concludes; “did not dare, when he had just the opportunity for it- to

¹²⁸ As Harvey Mansfield notes, it is unlikely to be a coincidence that Niccolo Machiavelli chooses to refer to Cola di Rienzo, “Niccolo.”

engage in an enterprise in which everyone would have admired his spirit and that would have left an eternal memory of himself... (D.I.27.2).”¹²⁹ He did not dare to be wicked enough and turned the coward.

Similarly, when Niccolo di’ Lorenzo had begun to revive the old Republic; driving out the senators and awakening the Italians to their old virtue and glory, he soon had a loss of nerve and fled the city. Quickly, he was attempting to integrate himself with the Holy Roman Emperor who sent him to the Pope and Niccolo son found himself becoming the tool of the pontiff and was later killed (FH.I.31.43). Faced with what would have to be done in order to complete his enterprise this new Romulus was just as unwilling to go the full extent as Baglioni was.

Speaking of Baglioni, but also applying to his counterpart in the *Histories*, Machiavelli writes that the tyrant of Perugia like other men did not know how to be honourably wicked or perfectly good but instead fell back on a middle way. This “middle way” and men’s adherence to it is a serious obstacle to their acceptance of the necessity of extraordinary modes. This mode is reminiscent of classical moderation and the Golden Mean. Potential founders will never be able to work up the nerve to undertake extraordinary modes if they still think they should or can rely on a middle way. Machiavelli must first therefore undermine all hope in the success of the path of moderation.

To a certain extent the Florentine has already done this as I showed in the examination of his *paideia*. But while in his instruction of ordinary rulers he is able to appear apologetic about the necessity to do what the many what view as wicked acts, for the potential founder Machiavelli can spare no such facade. This difference can be discerned by a comparison of the rhetoric found in the *Discourses* and the *Prince*. In the *Discourses* he informs his students that

¹²⁹ Could anyone claim after a passage such as this that Machiavelli does not truly desire to see the end of the Roman Church?

good men will have to accept the need to do questionable deeds. As we witnessed in our discussion of the problem of founding new orders in a corrupt city Machiavelli delicately leads his pupils to the conclusion that extraordinary modes are required. *The Prince* on the other hand is incredibly blunt on what the New Prince must do to found a new principality; commit violence with no apology.

Machiavelli's discussion of extraordinary modes in *the Discourses* moves from implicit in the early chapters of Book I to bluntly devoting large portions of Book III to necessity of the actions of a single captain to introduce new modes. The first major discussion takes place in Chapter IX of Book I. Here Machiavelli discourses on the need to be alone when founding a new order. The Florentine begins the chapter by offering an apology for the actions of Romulus. He writes that some may think that he has moved too quickly in his study of Rome without mentioning its orderers. This though opens up the criticism that as the founder of the city, Romulus is a bad example because he killed his brother and then allowed the murder his co-ruler Titus Tatius. Machiavelli counters that Romulus can only be considered a bad example if one does not consider why he was induced to commit these homicides.

This should be taken as a general rule: that it never or rarely happens that any republic or kingdom is ordered well from the beginning or reformed altogether anew outside its old orders unless it is ordered by one individual. Indeed it is necessary that one alone give mode and that any such ordering depend on his mind. So a prudent orderer of a republic, who has the intent to wish to help not himself but the common good, not for his own succession but for the common fatherland, should contrive to have authority alone; nor will a wise understanding ever reprove anyone for any extraordinary action that he uses to order a kingdom or constitute a republic (D.I.9.1).¹³⁰

¹³⁰ It is here NM gives his infamous ends justify the means argument. Stating if the effect is good then it excuses the deed.

Romulus did not seek to order Rome for his own ambition because he made the Senate his partners in the actual ruling of the city. Only when it came to requirements of founding did he need to be alone thus justifying his fratricide.

Machiavelli continues that other historical examples bear his contention out. Moses, Lycurgus, and Solon were able to form laws for the common good because they alone possessed authority to do so. The last example provided for us is that of Cleomenes of Sparta. First, before the reign of Cleomenes, King Agis desired to return Sparta to the virtuous orders laid down by Lycurgus, because he believed that his city had lost much of its ancient virtue. However, before he could return Lacedaemon to its first beginnings the Spartan ephors had him executed as a man seeking a tyranny. When Cleomenes became king he too had the same desire after reading the records he had found of Agis. Realizing the “few” would oppose him, he found the opportunity to have the ephors and anyone else who might oppose him killed and then once he knew he was secure, he renewed the laws of Lycurgus. The only reason that Cleomenes did not acquire the reputation of Lycurgus himself was that his actions coincided with the rise of Macedon and due to the weakness of his fellow Greeks he was overcome (D.I.9.4).

The point made by Machiavelli is that all founders need to be alone and in order to do so they will have to eliminate the ambitious few that stand in their way as Cleomenes and Romulus did. Nor should we forget Moses, who as Machiavelli earlier told us needed to “kill infinite men, who moved by nothing other than envy, were opposed to his plans (D.III.30.1).”

The Florentine knows that his praise of fratricide and assassination will come as a shock (not to mention his account of Moses), but his contention on the need to be alone and the method of doing so once introduced in Chapter IX is returned to again and again. This is first done by his instruction to eliminate the gentlemen whom, he writes, will always stand as an obstacle to a free

way of life. The gentlemen are those who live in idle abundance and have no care for cultivation or other necessary trouble for living and are hostile “to every civilization”. The kingdom of Naples, Rome, the Romagna, and Lombardy are full of these gentlemen and this is why no republic has ever emerged in these provinces since the fall of the Roman Empire. The conclusion to be drawn from this is in order to found a republic where there are very many of them you must eliminate all of them (D.I.56.4).

These occasional instructions on the need to be alone are completed in Book III with its devotion to the subject of the founder-captain. The qualities of Machiavelli’s founder we have discussed above; particular his repeated advice to kill the sons of Brutus and any other partisans of the old regime. Beyond this Machiavelli extends his earlier instructions in the advantages of using fraud over force, the need to vary with the times to always have good fortune, and other important virtues of a successful captain. The figure that emerges from this account shows himself to be the true ruler of the republic, even from beyond the grave.

Even if his readers are convinced of the necessity of the deeds that Machiavelli advises though, and it should not be denied that he makes a powerful argument, it does not necessarily follow that a reader will be up to the challenge. A good example of this is the case of Junius Brutus himself. Machiavelli’s student may be convinced of the need to eliminate the gentlemen to introduce the new order and kill anyone afterwards that would seek to return to the old way; but Brutus goes even farther. Not only does allow the death of his sons, he presides over their trial and their executions (D.III.3.1). How many of Machiavelli’s readers would be willing to go so far as execute their own kin? Or even contemplate such an act? This problem is raised in D.I.26 where the Florentine writes that a new prince must make everything anew in a city or province recently taken by him. David was such a prince. Machiavelli claims that David filled the hungry

with good things and sent the rich away empty. Another is Philip of Macedon who brought his kingdom to great heights by moving men from province to province like a herdsman moves his cattle. The Florentine admits that “these modes are very cruel and enemies to every way of life, not only Christian but human; and any man whatever should flee them and wish to live in private rather than as king with so much ruin to men (D.I.26.1).” However, as we have already seen the lesson of the *Discourses* points to no other way. By making this claim in a chapter devoted to the phenomena of the New Prince, Machiavelli forces us to consider his work dedicated to such an individual. Therefore to shed more light on the need for extraordinary modes we must turn to *the Prince*.

While the *Discourses* moves slowly in its reveal, its princely counterpart, like it does in so many ways introduces the problem right away. Already by Chapter III of *The Prince* we are given our first taste of what Machiavelli has in mind when he asks us to consider what actions would be necessary for a prince to establish himself in a recently acquired principality. As to be expected, Machiavelli provides us with a modern example and an ancient. His modern, the French King Louis XII fails to take permanent hold of his Italian possessions while Machiavelli’s Romans are able to subdue Greece and Africa. Why the different outcomes? Louis XII, we learn, made several important mistakes. The greatest of his errors was instead of bringing down the great and helping the low, he offered support to the great, the Church. The Romans meanwhile whenever they entered a new province did so on the side of the weak against the strong; in aid of the Achaeans against Macedon and against Antiochus of Syria (P.III.12-13). Indeed, the Romans went so far as to strip Macedon of all of its possessions to the point where it ceased being a kingdom. This falls in line with the most telling piece of advice Machiavelli gives his prince at the beginning of the Chapter; to live comfortably in the newly acquired province the

new prince must eliminate the previous ruler's bloodline, so that there can never be a standard for your subject to rally around.

This advice reminds us of the injunction to kill the gentlemen we found in the *Discourses*. This train of thought is continued in Chapter IV where Machiavelli considers why the kingdom of Darius did not rise after the death of Alexander the Great. The Florentine argues that a principality takes two forms; either by one prince aided by ministers who owe their position to his favour or by a prince and barons who while owing allegiance to the prince still possess their own power base. In modern times the Ottoman Empire is an example of the first mode while France is the exemplar of the second. The Turk would be more difficult to conquer because there would be no malcontented lord to call you in and everyone would be loyal to the prince. But once the kingdom is conquered and the bloodline is eliminated you can rule secure as Alexander's successors did in Persia. France on the other hand while fairly easy to conquer is difficult to rule because while some of the barons may have welcomed your defeat of the king they will in turn be malcontented with your rule (P.IV.16-19).

So while the Macedonians experienced the first mode in their conquests Machiavelli now reveals that the Romans had to contend with the second mode because the West was full of different principalities and Rome had to endure a series of uprisings against their rule. The uprisings only ceased when the memory of them was removed from the inhabitants. Machiavelli does not discuss exactly how the memory was removed in Chapter IV. To learn this we must turn to Chapter V. Here he considers how cities that lived by their own laws before they were occupied should be administered. He provides us with two answers. First, one could follow the example of the Spartans who upon defeating the Athenians and the Thebans installed oligarchies in the cities. However, the Athenians and the Thebans quickly overthrew the new regimes and

the Spartans lost control (P.V.20-21). The Romans on the other hand in order to hold Capua, Carthage, and Numidia simply destroyed them and did not lose them. When they repeated the Spartan mode when they wished to hold Greece they did not succeed and were forced to destroy many cities and provinces. Machiavelli concludes therefore that unless the new prince goes to live in the new city it is far safer to destroy them and build them anew.

Taken together these three chapters argue that when acquiring and holding a new principality extraordinary modes are needed. One needs to hunt down and eliminate the ancient bloodline, destroy cities and expunge the memory of their old laws. Later in the *Prince* when discussing how Cesare Borgia took and held the Romagna Machiavelli recounts how the Duke had his own hatchet-man cut in half and left in the public square to “satisfy and stupefy” the common people. At another time Borgia manages to gather all his enemies together in one place and has them murdered. This advice echoes what we found in Chapter XVI of the *Discourses* and not surprisingly it fits the description of cruel and un-Christian. Machiavelli though by using history has shown that extraordinary modes are required for an extraordinary enterprise and no half measures will do.

Many no doubt will be left with a degree of uneasiness after reading these sections of *The Prince* and the *Discourses*. Perhaps even many of those who are attracted by Machiavelli’s promise of glory for those who found new modes and orders will, like Niccolo di Lorenzo and Giovampagolo Baglioni, be unwilling to commit to the truly extraordinary modes. Machiavelli though is counting on this, it is part of his rhetoric. As I argued in the above, if beginning a city anew or reforming a corrupt city is the highest form of glory, then it takes a special type of individual.¹³¹ What better way for Machiavelli to demonstrate just how special such an

¹³¹ Consider Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 191-92.

individual must be than to argue that many who travel down this road will fail in their enterprise, to claim that only a truly great man has the *virtù* to commit themselves to these extraordinary modes?

Not only does Machiavelli offer the unparalleled glory derived from the achievement of founding new modes and orders, he offers his pupils the prestige of a man who is greater than others because he is willing to do bad in order to do good (D.I.18.4). Such a prince is surely next to divine. Indeed, in Chapter VI of *The Prince* he describes the ability of the founder prophet as being able to “introduce form into matter” (P.VI.23). By offering the power of creation, perhaps instead of being next to divine, he is offering his students godhood himself.

If there are still reservations among his readers, Machiavelli has been willing to meet them half way. He has already taken upon himself the burden (and the glory), of bringing about the shift of moral orientation by arguing for the need of extraordinary modes in his own name. The future founder of new modes and orders need only follow Machiavelli onto the new moral continent that he has discovered. Or perhaps, not necessarily a new continent but one that the Florentine is willing to share for the “common benefit of everyone” whereas previous founders such as Moses and Romulus kept behind a veil. Our would-be founder only need to follow those his spirit compels him to emulate.

The final question Machiavelli puts before his readers is what mode taken by previous founders of new modes and orders offers the surest path of success. After examining the extraordinary modes Machiavelli believes are required for such an enterprise, along with everything else we have seen, that it is clear Machiavelli intends his founder prophets to be armed. However, the fact that some unarmed prophets have succeeded, despite Machiavelli’s

claims, must force us to pause and consider why Machiavelli is so insistent that the founder be armed.

Armed and Unarmed Prophets

My discussion in this chapter thus far has led us to see why for Machiavelli the armed founder-prophet represents the peak of human achievement due to the incredible difficulty of the task, and the exceptional nature of the individual to usher in the new modes and orders. Now it is time to turn to a consideration of how Machiavelli sees such an enterprise becoming a success and by extension, the viability of his own political project. Why must the founder prophet be armed, and does Machiavelli consider himself to be an armed or unarmed prophet?

The best place to begin investigating the founder is in Chapter VI of *The Prince*. It is here that Machiavelli instructs his pupils that if they wish to become a new prince in a new principality, they would be served best to imitate the greatest of founders; Cyrus, Romulus, Theseus, and Moses. It is also here in Chapter VI that Machiavelli gives his famous and curious pronouncement that where all armed prophets have prevailed, all unarmed have ended badly. To understand why the Florentine makes this argument, let us first begin with the beginning. According to the heading, the subject of the Chapter is of new principalities that are acquired through one's own arms and virtue. Later, we are told that the ability to hold onto a recently acquired principality depends on whether the acquirer is more, or less virtuous. Machiavelli then informs us that a private individual becomes a prince either through virtue or fortune and it seems to him that the individuals who uses virtue and relied less on fortune have maintained themselves more. Not surprisingly then, considering the heading and what we have just been told, Machiavelli will speak of those who acquired through their own virtue. Of those who have

become princes through their own virtue he provides the examples of Moses, and the others mentioned above.

As I noted in Chapter II, Machiavelli admits that it is not proper to reason about Moses as he was a mere instrument of God but he goes on to say that nonetheless Moses should be admired for what made him deserving of speaking with God. With this caveat thrown to the faithful, he quickly moves on to the next prince on his list, Cyrus. The founder of the Persian Empire like Romulus and Theseus will also be found admirable we are told, and if their orders and actions are considered they will appear no different than Moses himself (P.VI.22-23). Thus the man who saved the Hebrews from bondage has gone from the prophet of the Lord we know from *Exodus* to a classical founder of a principality in less than a paragraph.

Yet in doing so Machiavelli is not stripping away Moses' prophetic nature entirely and simply turning him into a conquering general (though there are hints of this as well). What we are actually seeing is the partial assimilation of Cyrus and the others into prophet-hood. The new prince brings with him a new table of values, new modes and orders. Like Moses; Cyrus, Romulus, and Theseus brought about a transformation of the matter they happened upon and founded new ways of life for their people. Such an enterprise is not for the faint of heart, as I argued in the above and as Machiavelli's models indicate. They were given nothing from fortune except the opportunity, which (echoing a scholastic formulation of God), which gave them the matter to introduce any form they pleased (P.VI.23).

This is the type of figure that Machiavelli fervently believes Italy requires. To fully appreciate this I will briefly jump ahead to Chapter XVI of the *Prince*, where the Florentine makes his famous patriotic call to arms to drive the barbarians from Italian soil. This chapter has long puzzled interpreters due to its departure from the previous coldblooded analysis in the first

twenty five chapters. However, placed alongside what we have already seen, the nature of Chapter XXVI and its connection to the founders of Chapter VI, meaning of the chapter reveals itself. In Chapter XXIV Machiavelli has already told us why the princes of Italy have lost their states; that they have failed to properly practice the art of war, and have grown soft and idle. In Chapter XXV in discussing the malignity of fortune we have been told that we do not need to despair, that *fortuna* can be grappled with if we plan for the times accordingly. Now In XXVI Machiavelli makes his final call to arms.

Florence and the other Italian republics and principalities are in a decayed state, their matter has become corrupt. They are set upon by foreign powers, whether it be France, Spain, the Germans or the Swiss and they are ultimately ruled over by effeminate leaders in the Church and princes who have been educated in leisurely studies. This situation resembles that which Machiavelli's heroes were met with. Moses found the Hebrews in servitude, therefore inclined to follow him. Romulus was not received in Alba and therefore went out and became the king of Rome; Cyrus came upon the Persians malcontent and ruled over by the soft and effeminate Medes; and Theseus was able to demonstrate his virtue because he arrived when the Athenians were dispersed. Machiavelli continues the comparison by telling Lorenzo that signs from God have been witnessed similar to those given to the Hebrews as they moved through the desert. The Italians only require a new Moses to lead them to the promise land.

When we return to Chapter VI, we should not be surprised to discover that such a transformation will be met with opposition.

For the introducer has all those who benefit from the old orders as enemies, and he has lukewarm defenders in all those who might benefit from new orders. This lukewarmness arises partly from fear of adversaries who have the law on their side and partly from the incredulity of men, who do not truly believe in new things unless they have come to have a firm experience of them. Consequently, whenever those who have the opportunity to attack, they do so that one is in peril along with them (P.VI.23).

Considering all the difficulties, all the enemies the introducer of new orders will face, they must ensure that as little as possible is left up to changes in *fortuna*, or reliance on others. If your own supporters are likely to be lukewarm, begging or prayer is not enough. This is why according to Machiavelli, those who depend on others never accomplish anything, while those who depend on their own virtue are rarely in peril.

From this it arises that all the armed prophets conquered and the unarmed ones were ruined. For, besides the things that have been said, the nature of peoples is variable; and it is easy to persuade them of something, but difficult to keep them in that persuasion. And thus things must be ordered in such a mode that when they no longer believe, one can make them believe by force. Moses, Cyrus, Theseus, and Romulus would not have been able to make their peoples observe their constitutions for long if they had been unarmed, as happened in our times to Brother Girolamo Savonarola. He was ruined in his new modes and orders as soon as the multitude began not to believe in them, and he had no mode for holding firm those who had believed nor for making unbelievers believe (P.VI.24).

Machiavelli does not claim that an armed prophet will be able to succeed with little effort. As I argued above, part of the appeal of being a founder-prophet is the incredible difficulty of success. What Machiavelli is arguing in this chapter is that a founder who relies on their own arms and virtue, while facing great dangers along the path, will upon succeeding find themselves in a secure position.

To further see why Machiavelli believes that an unarmed prophet is unlikely to prevail, we need only to turn to the following chapter, which deals with principalities that are acquired by someone else's arms and fortune. Here, Machiavelli argues that a prince who is able to come to power thanks to fortune, do so fairly easily (after all, fortune does most of the work), but once in power they find it difficult to remain in control (P.VII.25-26). This due, of course to their reliance on fortune. Which as we have seen for Machiavelli ranges from counting on the support

of others to depending on a coin to keep coming up heads. It could happen, but really, what are the odds?

To drive his point home, Machiavelli returns to one of his favourite examples, the career of Cesare Borgia. The Duke of Valentino acquired his state through his father, and despite all the skill he demonstrated in trying to hold and expand his dominion, he lost the state the same way he acquired it. While the core of the chapter deals with all the deeds Borgia undertook to strengthen his position, all of which Machiavelli heartily approves of, he concludes his account of the rise and fall of Duke Valentino by arguing his reliance on fortune was his undoing. First he failed to take into account what would happen if he was indisposed when his father inevitably died, and he trusted that the new Pope Julius II would let bygones be bygones (P.VII.33). Borgia had put his faith in the belief that others would never be as ruthless as himself and trusted that something as small as bad luck could never be his undoing.

If someone as virtuous as Cesare Borgia can be undone by fortune, and he after all was certainly armed, what chance does an individual who must rely on the power of their rhetoric have? Someone like Savonarola trusted too much in the power of persuasion (no doubt due to his Christian faith), in this he relied far too much on others. Unarmed prophets are far too likely to fail, while armed prophets can ensure their own success.

It is at this point that the argument made on behalf of unarmed prophets must be addressed. As Strauss and those who follow in his wake often point out, how can Machiavelli claim in Chapter VI of *The Prince* that the enterprises of unarmed prophets end in ruin when the most obvious of example of an unarmed prophet –Jesus Christ- proved to be a success. After all, is not Machiavelli attempting to overturn the orders set done by the Galilean? It seems unlikely that the Florentine would deem this necessary if Christ had been a failure. Speaking in the

tradition of Christ, if we turn back to the *Discourses* where Machiavelli speaks of those who were able to draw their sect or city's orders back to the beginning, we find the examples of St. Francis and St. Dominick. While Machiavelli's recommendation in this chapter is to use violence to draw a city back to its virtuous origins, the two Saints certainly did not resort to such means. Instead, they were able to rejuvenate Christianity in the eyes of the people through the poverty of their lives (D.III.1.3). These men were successful according to Machiavelli, and they too, can be considered to be unarmed prophets.

Finally, there is the case of Machiavelli himself. There is certainly more than enough evidence to suggest that the Florentine considers himself to be a founder of new modes orders. Anyone who has doubts regarding this needs only to turn to work of Harvey Mansfield to have their questions answered.¹³² Beyond this I point to the preface of the first book of the *Discourses*.¹³³ In these opening pages Machiavelli announces that he has taken an untrodden path, that he seeks a restoration of the virtue last demonstrated by the ancients (D.I.Pr.1). These certainly sound like the words of a man who views himself as the introducer of new modes and orders. Yet, as we and Machiavelli are well aware, situated in his political exile he lacks arms (nor even in his former position in the Florentine government could he truly be considered to possess his own arms). If he is not an armed prophet, then must he not be an unarmed founder? If this is true how can he hope to succeed if all unarmed prophets find ruin?

¹³² Mansfield, *New Modes and Orders*, and *Machiavelli's Virtue*, 1-52.

¹³³ I would be remiss to point out that there is some debate on whether the first paragraph of D.I.Preface belongs in the work. As Mansfield and Tarcov point out, it cannot be found in the first two editions of the *Discourses* but can be found in a finished form in NM's hand, the only surviving autograph copy of the *Discourses* but opinion to be divided on whether this is definitive. Consider Carlo Pincin, "La prefazione alla prima parte dei Discorsi," *Atti dell'Accademia delle Scienze di Torino* 94 (1959-60): II, 506-18, and "Le prefazione la dedicatoria dei Discorsi di Machiavelli," *Giornale storica della letteratura, italiana* 143 (1966): 72-83 with Harvey Mansfield Jr., *Machiavelli's New Modes and Orders* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 25n. As it is no doubt clear, I consider the first paragraph to be a part of the completed text.

It is upon reviewing these details that Strauss concludes that Machiavelli is an unarmed prophet, and like Christ he has discovered a way to ensure his posthumous success through means of rhetoric or propaganda.¹³⁴ Being an unarmed prophet, is therefore not necessarily a sign of automatic ruin. An unarmed founder can usher in new modes and orders as well as one who is armed. While I agree with Strauss that Machiavelli considers himself to be an unarmed, I do not think the Florentine is overly pleased with the situation. Nor do I think we need to revise what Machiavelli had previously told us about the dangers of proceeding without arms.¹³⁵

Let us first consider the case of Jesus of Nazareth. If we view his enterprise in Machiavellian terms, what modes allowed him to succeed? First, the Galilean without arms attempted to spread his new modes and orders among his fellow Jews and some of the Gentiles. Eventually he was put to death by the Roman authorities as a criminal. While he left some followers, he was effectively out of the picture. Therefore, in order for his enterprise to succeed he had to rely on others. His disciples needed to continue spreading the “Good News.” Most importantly, he needed the former persecutor of Christians, Saul, to become Paul, Christ’s most influential advocate. Even with men like Peter and Paul, Jesus finally needed someone in political authority, the future emperor Constantine to throw in with Christianity and have the good luck that Constantine’s successor, Julian the Philosopher, died before he was able to overturn what Constantine had done.¹³⁶ In short, the Galilean required a great many things to go

¹³⁴ Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, 173, 297.

¹³⁵ It is in this matter that I find it helpful to return to Pocock’s *Machiavellian Moment* in order to reorient ourselves. Part of the difficulty with Strauss’ thesis is that with his insistence on “spiritual warfare” and esoteric writing that his interpretation of Machiavelli tends to leave the earth behind and head for the clouds. Pocock’s discussion of the founder-legislator in the *Machiavellian Moment*, 187-194 has the advantage of being framed within the context of a discussion of other founders, particularly ones that NM himself speaks of. With Pocock reminding us that Machiavelli was not simply interested in winning a war for hearts and minds spanning centuries; but with real concrete political problems besetting Florence and Italy, our initial position that Machiavelli only wants armed founders holds up.

¹³⁶ I realize I am perhaps showing my cards here by calling Julian the philosopher and not the apostate.

his way, he needed heads to come up fifty time in a row; he put everything in the hands of *fortuna*.¹³⁷

At this point in my study, it is abundantly clear that Machiavelli wishes to minimize the role of fortune as much as possible. So while he may be willing to admit that the unmentioned Christ was successful in that his modes and orders were established, he owes this success to chance not to his own virtue. It may have happened once, but it is very unlikely to happen again.

This is why Machiavelli is so intent to return to a position of influence with the Florentine government. He is not willing to rely on fortune for his orders to succeed if he does not have to. If we turn to his writings, we can see that he acknowledges just how precarious his position is. In D.I.Pr., only a few lines after boldly announcing that he has returned from an untrodden path, Machiavelli informs us that “if poor talent, little experience of present things, and weak knowledge of ancient things make this attempt of mine defective and not much of utility, it will at least show the path to someone with more virtue, more discourse and judgement, will be able to fulfill this intention of mine... (D.I.Pr.)” This is not modesty on Machiavelli’s part. He has written these books containing everything he knows because he requires someone else to carry his project through. Machiavelli himself is reliant on fortune. Without any other choice, he will play the role of the unarmed prophet like the Galilean, but if he had his way he would follow the mode of Moses (or Mohammed). Christ was fortunate, but Machiavelli of all people does not believe this is enough to put ones success in the hands of others when the more virtuous option avails itself.

Looking back over the course of the history of modern political thought, we can say with justification that Machiavelli was correct. Since he had no arms of his own, he had to rely upon

¹³⁷ Unless of course, one wishes to believe that the Sun, Moon, and the Stars changed approximately 2000 years ago and chance had nothing to do with it. See P.VII for what Machiavelli thinks of this.

his friends or barring that, other would-be founders like Hobbes and Spinoza. These men however, failed to be as loyal to the vision of Machiavelli as Paul proved to be to the Galilean's.

Conclusion

To conclude, Machiavelli's founder prophet is to take the place of the Platonic philosopher or the Christian priest or saint as the pinnacle of human achievement. He does so by holding out the opportunity for glory that is to be had for those who are able to overcome the incredible difficulties facing one who seeks to restore virtue or health to corrupt matter. Whether this be obstacles such as partisans of previous modes and orders, lack of virtue among the people, poor institutions, or having the reserves of spirit required to become a prince who will do bad in order to create something good. The glorious reputation that awaits such a founder will echo through history, far outmatching any delusional satisfaction a philosopher achieves contemplating an imaginary principality.

The surest path to achieving this glory is to usher in new modes and orders with arms. For if one chooses the path of the unarmed, the likeliest outcome is that of a Savonarola, not the end achieved by Jesus of Nazareth. Instead, the would-be founder should follow in the path of Moses and Cyrus. These were men who with the force of their arms were able to found a sect and a civilization that adhered to their orders and whose glory many have wished to imitate. Machiavelli himself wishes that he could be a Moses or a Romulus but his lack of arms means that he will not be able to do so. Knowing he is unarmed he seeks out among the young those who crave glory and deserve to be princes and encourages to carry his project forward.

This, unfortunately, is to rely upon the arms of others rather than his own and perhaps explains why at times Machiavelli is uncertain as to whether his enterprise will find success.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Consider the preface to D.I. Machiavelli admits the difficulty of his enterprise but says he hopes someone will be able to pick up his burden and carry it to a successful conclusion. He does not say claim it is inevitable. By not being

He knows that he will be able to count upon a certain number of the young, those like him that love their fatherland more than their own souls and are moved by the glory of the ancients. What he is not certain of is whether these men who deserve to be princes will be enough to usher in his new birth of politics and *virtù* would have a place in the modern world. Unfortunately for Machiavelli, the proponents of the Enlightenment would prove even more hostile to the ambitions of the timocrats than he accused classical political science of ever being.

able to carry the enterprise to its conclusion himself, Machiavelli knows he leaves its success to chance, at least to some degree. After reading Machiavelli, we cannot but come to the conclusion that NM believes this is a problem. Contrast this to the confidence Hobbes speaks with regarding his project in Chapter XXXI of *Leviathan*.

Chapter V

The Eclipse of Politics: Modernity's Supersession of Machiavelli

"No man is so much exalted by any act of his as are those men who have with laws and with institutions remodeled republics and kingdoms; these are, after those who have been gods, the first to be praised."

-Machiavelli: A Discourse on Remodeling the Government of Florence

"It is useless to attack politics (la politique) directly by making men see how repugnant it is to morals, to reason, to justice. These types of discourse persuade the entire world and touch no one... I believe it is better to take a round-about route and to attempt to convey to the great ones a distaste for these passions by making them consider how little that is useful they draw from them. I discredit politics by making them see that those who have acquired the greatest reputation from it have abused the spirit of the people in a grand fashion."-Montesquieu: *De la Politique*

Introduction

My focus in the previous chapters was centred on the Machiavellian rebirth of politics, how Machiavelli understood his claim to be at once the founder of new modes and orders, and at the same time a reviver of ancient virtue. By its nature, this investigation has primarily considered Machiavelli's project; his arguments for his captain-prince, new Rome, and his founder-prophet, in contrast to the goals of classical and humanist political science articulated in Chapter I. This was necessary in order to establish the nature of the Machiavellian break with the classical tradition and show how the Florentine understood this break first and foremost as restoring politics and the pursuit of honour and glory to its paramount position after being made subservient to the goals of Athenian philosophy and Christianity.

The final step in examining the unique nature of Machiavelli's political project and his version of modernity, is to now turn to his relationship to modern political thought, the tradition that he is often argued to be the founder of. However, rather than arguing that modern political philosophers were followers of the Florentine and sought to carry out his work, I will instead show that despite their admiration for his stand against the classical and Christian traditions; Machiavellian politics posed a serious problem for modern thinkers, one that which they were as

eager to overcome as they were to replace the doctrines of their ancient and medieval predecessors. In contrast to Machiavelli's hope to revive the martial orders of ancient political practice, the moderns sought to conceive a new science of politics dedicated to the relief of man's estate. Rather than being the heir of Machiavelli's new modes and orders, liberal modernity was founded in opposition to Machiavellian modernity. If Machiavelli's intent was to remove the top rung of Diotima's Ladder, then the goal of Hobbes and the others proved to be the removal of the second.¹³⁹

As I argued, Machiavelli's dream for a new birth of politics in his native Florence and Italy's return to prominence failed to come to fruition. The young friends who he had dedicated his works and spent long hours in the *Orti Oricellari* reading his *Discourses* with either died young in the case of Cosimo Rucellai or were forced into exile like Zanobi and Luigi. Machiavelli himself died once again in disfavour with the political masters of his city, just as Hapsburg forces sacked Rome (including the Lutheran *Landsknecht*, who entered the city shouting "Papa Luther!") after the last Medici Pope's foolish opposition to Charles V.¹⁴⁰ If he was to be successful in the founding of his new modes and orders, like his decried unarmed prophets, he would have to rely on the capricious nature of Fortuna.

While on the one hand, before the century was finished, Machiavelli's name and reputation had become so associated with evil that in the wake of the Council of Trent the Catholic Church placed his works on the index; a growing following soon began to discuss

¹³⁹ This chapter will, I suspect be too brief for some, considering the number of thinkers present here. While I certainly wish I could spend more time on them and other thinkers for the sake of time and focus I am only considering this group of thinkers in their relation to Machiavelli's attempt to revive political spiritedness.

¹⁴⁰ Whether NM's disgust at the sack of the Eternal city by northern barbarians managed to outweigh his undoubted delight in the humiliation of the Church is an interesting question.

Machiavelli in a more positive light. Speaking in a way for those who would follow, Francis Bacon offered this praise for Machiavelli.

We are much beholden to Machiavelli and others, that write what men do, and not what they ought to do. For it is not possible to join serpentine wisdom with the columbine innocency, except men know exactly all the conditions of the serpent; his baseness and going upon his belly, his volubility and lubricity, his envy and sting, and the rest; that is, all forms and natures of evil. For without this, virtue lieth open and unfenced. Nay, an honest man can do no good upon those that are wicked, to reclaim them, without the help of the knowledge of evil.¹⁴¹

However, even taking this praise and admiration into account, it cannot be said that the modern political philosophers believed themselves to be in decisive agreement with Machiavelli; nor would the Florentine have acknowledged them as his heirs. This is not to deny the kinship between the author of *The Prince* and the initiators of the Enlightenment. In the claim that their mathematical science offers the possibility to “become the masters and possessors of nature”, the founders of modern philosophy echo Machiavelli’s famous description of fortune as a woman that must be struck down and mastered. It could appear then that the modern enterprise no less than the Machiavellian can be defined by daring; in contrast to the “noble resignation of the ancients”. Could it be then that that under the surface of the modern project’s *générosité* beats a Machiavellian lust for dominance? Perhaps. The crucial difference though is that while the moderns were just as audacious in their assault on the alliance of Ancient philosophy, Christian Theology and the aristocratic political order; they did so in order to create a world that would be free once and for all from the tumults and cruelty that in their view had pervaded the political realm up to their time. In contrast to Machiavelli, who sought to be a midwife to a new birth of politics; the moderns attempted to demote the political. In short, while Machiavellian politics

¹⁴¹ Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*; II.21.9.

have glory or greatness as their end; the political ends of modernity as the Enlightenment thinkers conceived them are humanitarian.¹⁴²

This chapter therefore will consider how the moderns revised the Machiavellian revolt against the Classical and Christian traditions and by eclipsing the Florentine founded a regime and a mode of politics opposed to the Machiavellian project. In particular, my concern will be with how the Enlightenment political philosophers sought to undercut and transform martial aristocrats into what Rousseau would later denounce as the bourgeoisie. I begin with four modern thinkers who in their separate ways helped introduce the ethos and the theoretical foundations of the commercial liberal regime that became the political goal of the Enlightenment project. First, Montaigne who through his *Essays* begins the undermining of the admiration for the warrior-prince and using himself sketches a portrait of the private man who is to become the new model for emulation. Montaigne's new man finds a home in the regime laid down by Hobbes and Locke who despite their differences sought to introduce a science of politics dedicated to comfortable well-being rather than soul-craft. Locke in particular continued Montaigne's project of instilling "humanity" in the gentlemanly class. Following these early founders of liberalism I will turn to Montesquieu, who worked to fully sketch out the "spirit of commerce." In particular I will focus on Montesquieu's arguments in favour of the commercial republic over to the ancient regime because it makes men more gentle and compassionate. This is especially interesting in the case of Montesquieu, because he was clearly impressed with the

¹⁴² Rahe, *Republics Ancient and Modern*, 267-315. One of the potential objections here is the more direct relation between Machiavelli and the English Republicans of the Interregnum Period, especially Harrington and his *Oceania*. Pocock in particular argues that Harrington is the linkage between Machiavelli and the American Founders. *The Machiavellian Moment*, 383-400. I would counter that Harrington, along with the other modern republicans, is still directing his regime toward commerce rather than war. Though Pocock is certainly correct in seeing Harrington as a close successor to Machiavelli, the very title, *Oceania*, suggests a seagoing commercial power rather than a land-based imperium. For the most detailed account of Machiavelli's relation to English republicanism see Rahe's *Against Throne and Altar*, especially in contrast to Pocock's *Machiavellian Moment*.

achievements of the martial Roman Republic yet still decided in favour of the emerging modern regime and his decision in favour of the moderation of the moderns over the grandeur of the ancients.

Finally I will conclude the chapter, and Machiavelli's fate within modernity, by recounting how the labours of these four, along with their other co-conspirators bore fruit in the founding of the American Republic (the commercial republic *par excellence*) and the triumph of the new politics over the old. In particular, how Publius of *The Federalist* believed the new science of politics that served as the foundation of the young republic decisively solved the political problem of tumults and upheavals. In the end, Machiavelli's attempt to usher in a rebirth of politics ultimately concludes with his successors attempt to ensure that the cycle of founding new modes and orders comes to an end.

Yet before closing the book on Machiavelli, we need to be reminded of the argument presented in a speech given by Abraham Lincoln at the Young Men's Lyceum in Springfield Illinois in 1838, entitled "On the Perpetuation of our Political Institutions." Lincoln argued that the American republic could not rest on the achievement of the Founding. Those who follow the way of the lion or the eagle; the Napoleons and the Caesars of the world, will not settle for wealth, a governorship or even the presidency. They crave a greater glory. In Lincoln's description of these glory-seekers, one cannot help but be reminded of the heroes of the Machiavellian corpus. Lincoln's reminder forces us to conclude that Machiavelli's modernity simply does not fit within the modern political project, and no matter how deeply Machiavellian audacity is buried beneath the pursuit of commodious living, as with the classical project, the timocratic soul will never truly be at home in the modern world. The commercial republic's victory is not final, and its achievement must be defended against, whether it be the Hobbesian

solution of crushing the vain-glorious or harnessing the energies of the politically spirited for the liberal regime.

The Eschewing of Glory

Michel de Montaigne's life and career in many ways is the mirror image of Machiavelli's. Like the Florentine, Montaigne lived in a time where his fatherland was undergoing turmoil. His political star rose quickly; he served as a counselor to royalty, undertook diplomatic missions, governed Bordeaux as Mayor and eventually became an advisor to the French King Henry IV. As his Tuscan predecessor before him, Montaigne witnessed the full depravity of the political realm and was similarly convinced of the futility of imaginary republics. Writing; "all those imaginary, artificial descriptions of a government prove ridiculous and unfit to put into practice."¹⁴³ However, when he retired to his estate and began writing and publishing his *Essays* the result was not a teaching imparting a method for aspiring princes to obtain power, or even an overt treatise on the improvement of government. Instead Montaigne offered his readers a portrait of himself, and recommended that they follow his example of turning inward rather than striving for political mastery.

While Machiavelli's response to the crisis of his time is to attempt to mold a new kind of warrior-statesman to rule a new form of regime; upon witnessing the excess of the martial spirit brought together with religious fanaticism which resulted in the horrors of the Wars of Religion, Montaigne strikes out on a new course.¹⁴⁴ He intends to instill moderation in his fellow readers,

¹⁴³ Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, translated by Donald M. Frame, (Stanford: Stanford University Press.1976), III.9. Montaigne could appear to some as the odd man out in a discussion of figures such as Hobbes, Locke, and Montesquieu. I maintain however that despite their differences, Montaigne provides an excellent opening example of how the moderns moved to purge political spiritedness.

¹⁴⁴ For the counterargument that the aim of Montaigne is the same as Machiavelli's; e.g. they both desire to found new modes and orders and become rulers of men's minds far into the future see David Lewis Schaeffer; *The Political Philosophy of Montaigne*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, (1990). Even if Montaigne shared the depth of Machiavelli's ambition his teaching cannot justifiably argued to be in league with the Florentine's. Schaeffer, like

and dampen their enthusiasm for glory. The lesson that the *Essays* seeks to impart to the martially inclined is that spiritedness cannot help but lead to cruelty and inhumanity and that therefore glory is not worth the price that it requires. By attempting to undermine the desire for glory and greatness and replace it with private desires such as friendship and good discussion Montaigne (and those who will follow him) break with both Machiavelli and the ancients. While he may not have a systematic political teaching, by publishing his *Essays* Montaigne fired the first shot against martial virtue and began laying the foundation for the education of the liberal citizen.

Montaigne's critique of the martial spirit is scattered throughout the three books of his *Essays*, making it difficult at times to find the pattern of the argument. The best place to begin therefore is the essay entitled *of the disadvantage of Greatness* where Montaigne provided his strongest denouncement of the pursuit of glory. As the title suggests, the essay's intention is to dissuade us of desiring to obtain positions of political power. Greatness (which Machiavelli had taught us was the highest reward for a prince's attainment of power), appears now to be something that we overvalue. Montaigne claims to have a distaste for mastery, both active and passive. Where Caesar said that he would rather be the first man in a village than second in Rome he instead comments that he would gladly be second or third man in Paris than be the first man in a provincial town. Montaigne writes that "it has never occurred to me to wish for empire or royalty, or for the eminence of those high and commanding fortunes", claiming that he "loves himself too well".¹⁴⁵ He claims that he finds little difficulty in being content with a mediocre

other Straussian scholars, sees Montaigne and Machiavelli sharing an adherence to what will become modern liberalism.

¹⁴⁵ III.7; 699.

measure of fortune, while the bearing of ills however is very hard. To eschew greatness is a virtue.

The rejection of virtue is not only based on the claim that the private life is enjoyable in its own right; Montaigne also argues that those who achieve greatness are miserable. Due to his position Alexander the Great never had anyone challenge him. Instead he was surrounded by flatterers who never tried to defeat him contests. Power cannot be enjoyed because you are alone.¹⁴⁶ Nor is the pursuit of glory or greatness that is so celebrated by men such as Machiavelli even possible. In II.16 *of Glory* Montaigne argues that glory belongs to God alone and there is nothing as remote from reason as for us to go in quest of it ourselves. To do so is an act of vanity as Montaigne claims Cicero and Pliny the Younger committed by publishing their letters for posterity.¹⁴⁷ While the man who published multiple editions of essays with himself as the subject no doubt wrote this criticism with at least a hint of irony; his point is that the Roman men of letters attempted through their own virtue to achieve a reputation that was out of their hands. While Machiavelli would certainly admit that fortune has a role to play in determining one's glory Montaigne goes in farther in claiming that glory is completely derived from fortune. Virtue has no say in the matter.¹⁴⁸

Speaking to those that seek out glory on the battlefield; Montaigne lightly ridicules their pretensions. Where Machiavelli's contemporary Castiglione had written that a gentleman should find a place on the field of battle where their deeds could be noted; our essayist asks us whether we imagine someone is standing at our shoulder, writing down everything we do. "A man is not always at the top of a breach or at the head of an army, in sight of his general, as on a stage".¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ III 7, 702.

¹⁴⁷ I.40, 183.

¹⁴⁸ II.16, 471.

¹⁴⁹ II 16, 474.

Those that take pride in standing firm in a trench are not different than those who dug the trench itself! Continuing his attack Montaigne writes that in a battle in which ten thousand are killed there are only a handful that are remembered afterward. As for those who aspire to the glory of a Caesar or an Alexander he argues that they owe their fame to fortune; asking how many would be Caesars had their careers extinguished at their inception?¹⁵⁰ All that anyone can do is to go about quietly and hope that fortune decides to smile down on us.

What then is the worth of virtue? Montaigne never overtly answers this question but by comparing the interesting relationship between his two essays on virtue and cruelty we can begin to discern the argument. *Of Cruelty* is one of Montaigne's strangest. In an essay that's subject is stated to be on cruelty he begins with a discussion of virtue. He begins by making the claim that God cannot be called virtuous because virtue cannot be exercised without opposition. Virtue requires vice for something to fight against. Quoting Seneca he says that when challenged, virtue takes on much strength. Montaigne himself claims to be satisfied with having simply a well regulated soul; but for some it is not enough to have a soul that is well regulated or disposed to virtue. Certain men need to be able to put their virtue to the proof. They want to seek out pain and contempt in order to combat them and keep their soul trim. This kind of virtue refuses felicity for its companion; in others words to be virtuous is hard work.¹⁵¹

Who are these lovers of virtue whose number Montaigne does not count himself? We are provided an answer as Montaigne turns to a discussion of the death of Cato the Younger. In an earlier essay devoted to Cato Montaigne had defended the reputation of the austere senator. Now though our essayist changes tack. While not overtly criticizing Cato's character, we are left wondering whether he is a worthy model of emulation. Speaking of Cato's suicide after his

¹⁵⁰ II.16, 471.

¹⁵¹ II 11, 307.

defeat at the hands of Caesar Montaigne does not think that the statesman went to his death with grim solemnity. Rather he writes that

I believe without any doubt that he felt pleasure and bliss in so noble an action, and that he enjoyed himself more in it than any other action of his life... I go so far in that belief that I begin to doubt whether he would have wanted to be deprived of the occasion for so fine an exploit. And if his goodness, which made him embrace the public advantage more than his own, did not hold me in check, I would easily fall into this opinion, that he was grateful to fortune for having put his virtue to so a beautiful a test and for having favoured that brigand in treading underfoot the ancient liberty of his country. I seem to read in that action I know not what rejoicing of his soul, and an emotion of extraordinary pleasure and manly exultation, when it considered the nobility and sublimity of its enterprise.¹⁵²

Following this Montaigne takes a step back and defends Cato's reputation against those who view his act as spurred by hope for glory as a base and effeminate slander. But considering what Montaigne has previously written, this strikes us as damning with faint praise. This not to say that Montaigne is arguing Cato is not worthy of our admiration. Yet by connecting Cato's passionate pursuit of virtue and his grisly end (described vividly in the essay) he is suggesting that there is a linkage between spirited virtue and acts of cruelty. When later in the essay Montaigne writes of the Romans proclivity for watching the slaughter of animals in the arena lead them to lust for the blood of men as well, we are left to consider this hardness and its relationship to Cato's actions; and perhaps wonder though while Roman virtue is admirable at a distance, the cost of imitating it is too high.

In contrast while earlier Montaigne had informed us his virtue was not that of a Cato; he now refers to his views of animals, finally discussing the cruelty of the title. He informs us that he hates cruelty so much that his hatred softens him to the point that he cannot see a chicken's neck wrung without distress and he cannot bear to hear the cry of the hare when the dogs pounce upon it, and that he cannot without distress even see an animal pursued and killed which is

¹⁵² II 11 309.

defenseless and done no harm.¹⁵³ If there is a relationship between the Romans virtue and their tendencies toward cruelty, then perhaps there is a similar connection between Montaigne's virtue and his lack of cruelty.

While the essay on cruelty began with a discussion of virtue, the essay titled *On Virtue* opens with a recounting of acts of unusual cruelty. Montaigne provides us with the story of a villager who due to the jealous harping of his wife took a billhook and reaped off the parts that put her in a fervour and threw them in her face. Then there is the recounting of the young gentleman, who after a long pursuit managed to seduce a young woman; discovered at the crucial moment that he was unable to become erect. He returned home, cut off the offending member and sent it back to the woman. Montaigne concludes the story by observing that if this act had been done for religion what should we not say of so a sublime enterprise?¹⁵⁴ Leaving us to consider his statement's import; Montaigne moves on to a cataloging of Eastern funeral rituals. This culminates in the wives of the deceased throwing themselves into fires or being buried alive with their husbands; their devotion being so strong. The essay continues in a similar vein. Our essayist notes examples of individuals and people who, due to their passionate spirits are driven to commit violent acts which from his tone, we can infer Montaigne does not approve of. All of the actions he catalogues under virtue all involve violent acts; whether they are acts of self-mutilation, ritualistic suicide, or assassination. When we compare these actions to the description of Cato's death in II.11 the plan of Montaigne's critique of spirited, martial, or austere virtue becomes clear. Like greatness, it is not worth the cost. Glory, greatness and the pursuit of virtue (particularly the pursuit of virtue that is derived from spiritedness) leads to cruelty and misery. Rather than encouraging spiritedness Montaigne endorses a shift to private desires which unlike

¹⁵³ II 11, 313.

¹⁵⁴ II.29, 534.

public spiritedness prove to be more humane. Instead we should prefer peace, quiet, and good discussion directed at exploring our inner selves.

His solution therefore; is to go home. While Machiavelli had held out his hand to “those that deserve to be princes”, promising them the keys to political mastery; the “Gallic Thales” preaches mastery of oneself. Because the core of the human self is paradox, this is a never ending process. For Montaigne, the pleasures of self-exploration, particularly in the company of a true friend (as he experienced briefly with la Boite) is infinitely more satisfying than the pursuit of power. He tells us that he never wished for empire or royalty and describes the pleasures of absorbing discussion; referring to it in terms of friendly combat. Machiavelli, if he could, would chortle. After reading *The Prince* and the *Discourses* we should find it unlikely that the Florentine would be convinced by Montaigne’s argument that would be legislators and warriors could be willing to retire from the halls of power to private studies where in the company of a true friend could explore the mysteries of their souls. From the Machiavellian perspective; Montaigne’s appeal is reserved for priests. He offers nothing for the Castruccio Castracani’s of the world, not to mention the Napoleons.

This Machiavellian critique of Montaigne’s program goes to the core. If one wishes to redirect the orientation of martial aristocrats you need a bigger carrot. Later moderns we will see realized this and provided it. However, we should not underestimate the persuasiveness of Montaigne’s rhetoric. While not as exciting as the spirit of commerce Locke or Montesquieu champion; Montaigne provides the liberal regime with a cultivated aura for aristocrats and philosophers who may hesitate at the regime’s banality. These are the individuals who like our essayist really do want to go home, and leave politics for others, so long as they can live in peace.

I am content to enjoy the world without being wrapped up in it, to live merely an excusable life, which will be no more burden to myself or others
 Never did a man abandon himself more fully and relaxed to the care and rule of a stranger, than I would, if I had someone. One of my wishes at this moment at this moment would be to find a son-in-law who could spoonfeed my old age comfortably and put it to sleep, in whose hands I could deposit full sovereignty over the management and use of my possessions, that he might do with them as I do, and enjoy my present profit in my place, provided he brought to it a truly grateful and friendly heart.¹⁵⁵

Montaigne and those who follow his model are content to stay at home, avoid the dangers of the political realm, and enjoy the comforts of peace and prosperity. While Montaigne's new man would find trying to lead such a life in Machiavelli's Rome a trial; always forced to worry that his tranquil private life will be disrupted by tumultuous politics, he will prove to be the ideal citizen for the regime Montaigne's successors seek to construct.

Social Peace and Commodious Living

While the essayist was content to only articulate a cultural education, the English proponents of the assault on martial virtue sought to construct a new politics built on the rejection of it. Like Montaigne, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke also viewed martial aristocrats as an obstacle to the new mode of politics that they wished to initiate. Hobbes' *Leviathan* is filled with attacks against vainglorious men and their teachers, the Greek and Roman historians (with the exception of Thucydides). Locke while customarily not going to the rhetorical extremes as the monster of Malmesbury, still cautions against an education based entirely on the reading of history due to its hardening effect it has against the benevolent humanity Locke hopes to instill in young gentlemen. This along with their ultimate political goals unites, despite their profound disagreements; the confidant of Newton and Boyle with "that justly decried man" against their sometime believed master, Machiavelli.

¹⁵⁵ III.9, 727.

While Hobbes may be remembered for his attempt to establish a new form of absolutism and Locke is celebrated for his defence of political and religious liberty; they both remain in their different ways the fathers of the commercial liberal republic. This is because their primary goals are the same; the undermining of the Church's temporal power, the reorientation of politics from the care of souls to material satisfaction, celebration of the virtues of peace rather than war and the replacement of the Aristotelianism of the Scholastics with the new natural philosophy of Bacon, Descartes and Newton. For just as the Gallic essayist had witnessed the horror of the Wars of Religion in his native France, in their lifetimes the two Englishmen had both known civil war and religious strife, and were forced into exile for a time out of fear for their lives. In their different ways they were determined to ensure that England (and potentially the West itself) would never know this horror again. It is because of these shared goals that we shall consider them together in this section. Where they differ is how best to achieve their political goals. Where Hobbes argues that an absolutist sovereign is required to ensure social peace; Locke in turn defends limited government and the separation of powers.

The crux of this disagreement is their assessment of the natures of the martial class that Machiavelli had reawakened. Locke following Montaigne believes that the gentlemanly class can be educated and habituated into gentler souls rejecting the hardness and spiritedness of the ancients. Unlike Locke and his French teacher however; the philosopher of Malmesbury is not convinced that timocrats can be transformed into good liberal citizens only interested in their private lives. He believes that the Proud will never be satisfied with peace and quiet and will always seek new ways to satisfy their vanity. Therefore to counter this threat he plans on erecting the mighty Leviathan to crush the Sons of Pride. Only this mortal God will be strong enough to protect the greater part of the commonwealth from the machinations of would-be warriors.

Before we examine Hobbes' plan for maintaining social peace, a word is needed on the often perceived relation between Hobbes and Machiavelli. On the surface, of all the early modern thinkers Machiavelli would seem to have the most in common with the dour Englishman. Like the Florentine, Hobbes is not known for his idealization of human nature. Both thinkers view human beings within the perception of nature as matter in motion. Where Machiavelli writes in *The Prince* that it is a very natural thing to desire, Hobbes explains in Chapter XI of *Leviathan* that there is "a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death."¹⁵⁶ Finally, Hobbes shares with Machiavelli revulsion for priest-craft and argues like the Florentine that it is Rome that has benefited the most from Hobbes calls vain philosophy as a cursory reading of his principle work shows. With all of these similarities many commentators have been confident enough to assert that Hobbes merely restates, in an original fashion, the Machiavellian thesis.¹⁵⁷

To make this argument though is to ignore the repeated claims from Hobbes that he wants no elements of what we can fairly call Machiavellianism in his new science of politics. While both certainly consider the Roman Church and its defenders as representative of the tradition they seek to supplant; they differ on what they perceive as the effect of this priestly hegemony. As we discovered earlier, Machiavelli's criticism of priest-craft is based on his denouncement of the "effeminacy" it instills in princes and peoples and its depreciation of politics. Hobbes on the other hand takes the opposite view and claims that the domination of the schoolmen supported by "Aristotelity" has been the cause of upheavals and the undermining of political order. Where Machiavelli encourages the reading of history to revive ancient political virtue, Hobbes wishes knowledge of the Greek and Latin Histories to be forgotten. Lastly, while

¹⁵⁶ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Edwin Curley, (Indianapolis: Hackett 1994), 58.

¹⁵⁷ Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, 166-183.

Machiavelli's martial republic aims at imperial glory abroad and liberty at home, Hobbes (and as we will later see Locke) desires to found a political science and a new regime dedicated to individual security, social peace, and commodious living.

To better understand this, first let us consider the Englishman's political goals before we investigate his understanding of the problem with lovers of martial virtue. The architecture of Hobbes' new regime is built on a foundation of fear of violent death. People are willing to enter the Commonwealth and covenant together to create the Sovereign and accept the severe limits on their natural liberty in order to escape the horrors of the natural condition. Which as Hobbes famously described is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."¹⁵⁸ It is inadequate however to view Hobbesian politics as solely aimed at providing for physical well-being. At the end of Chapter XIII of *Leviathan*, upon concluding his description of the natural condition Hobbes states what he terms the passions that incline men to peace. He writes that they "are fear of death, desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living, and a hope by their industry to obtain them."¹⁵⁹ Not only the fear of death but also the desire for commodious living inclines human beings to depart from the natural condition and enter the commonwealth.

So while Hobbes may state that the ends of the Commonwealth in Chapter XVII is security, he also reminds his potential Sovereign that by security he has in mind more than bare preservation. In Chapter XXIV; *of the Nutrition and Procreation of a Commonwealth* Hobbes argues that that nutrition requires plenty and the distribution of commodious materials. Therefore the Sovereign is required to ensure the public distribution of land, and the trafficking of goods and the regulation of currency.¹⁶⁰ In Chapter XXX he tells us that the office of the sovereign;

¹⁵⁸ *Leviathan*, 76.

¹⁵⁹ *Leviathan*, 76.

¹⁶⁰ *Leviathan*, 159-64.

Consisteth in the end for which he was trusted with the sovereign power, namely, the procuration of *the safety of the people*... But by safety here is not meant a bare preservation, but also the other contentments of life, which every man by lawful industry, without danger or hurt to the commonwealth, shall acquire to himself.¹⁶¹

Beyond this he outlines the duties of the Sovereign as ensuring equal taxation, a system of public charity for those unable to work, and to create laws that encourage the navigation, agriculture, and manufacturing.¹⁶² Hobbes in short, once we look past the absolutism of the Sovereign is attempting to construct something quite similar to the Welfare State. With the fear of death guarded against and the path opened to the acquiring of commodious materials, politics in Hobbes' Commonwealth is no longer oriented around questions of the good (which Hobbes tells us is non-existent) but on the proper procedure.

By taking the grandeur and thus the danger out of politics the Englishman believes he has found a way solving the disorders of the state.¹⁶³ Therefore for Hobbes the fear of death and the desire of commodious living that are common to all human beings are tied together and provide the basis for social peace. Presumably laying the groundwork for the acceptance of his teaching by everyone once his wished for sovereign crushes the promoters of the Kingdom of Darkness in the universities and the Church. The problem with Hobbes' argument though is that there are times when he suggests that not everyone's passions lead them to be inclined to peace; that there is a type that will never be satisfied with the Hobbesian solution. Hobbes subtly admits as much in his discussion of the offices of the Sovereign in Chapter XXX. There he speaks of the vulgar "as clean like paper fit to receive whatsoever by public authority shall be printed in them"¹⁶⁴

The people who believe that one can be three and the same body can be everywhere will easily

¹⁶¹ *Leviathan*, 219.

¹⁶² *Leviathan*, 219-233.

¹⁶³ *Leviathan*, 243-44.

¹⁶⁴ *Leviathan*, 221.

acquiesce to Hobbes' new science. It is the learned that the sovereign must be concerned with. The universities must be reformed, for it is the universities that are bastions of Vain Philosophy and encourage learned aristocrats to emulate the ancients and oppose the civil authority. By admitting as much, Hobbes forces us to wonder whether all men are by nature equal in their capacities.¹⁶⁵

Let us therefore go back to the beginning. Hobbes begins his famous Chapter XIII by making the argument that all men are equal by nature, are therefore equally susceptible to violent death at the hands of others, and thus are inclined by this fear to peace. Nature he writes, has made men so equal in both mind and body that when all reckoned together no man can claim a benefit that another cannot have. As for strength of body no one is strong enough defend oneself against secret machinations or a confederacy.¹⁶⁶ From this equality of condition arises an equality of hope. If everyone is so similar than everyone will have a chance of acquiring their desires. Thus if two people desire the same thing and only one can enjoy it, they become enemies and attempt to destroy or subdue the other. Out of this conflict grows the war against all if there is no one or institution there to act as a check.

However, while the impression that Chapter XIII leaves is that all human beings are equally motivated by the same passions (thus collapsing Machiavelli's distinction between *il popolo* and *il grandi*) while discussing the chain of reasoning that leads to the war against all he also reminds us that men go to war for different reasons. Echoing Thucydides, he writes that the causes of war are either competition, diffidence, or glory. The first makes men war for gain; whether it is for livestock, people or possessions. The second to defend against the first, while

¹⁶⁵ *Leviathan*, 214-216, 225-226.

¹⁶⁶ *Leviathan*, 74.

the third is for “trifles, as a word, a smile, a different opinion, any other sign of undervalue...”¹⁶⁷ From this description it is clear that Hobbes views war for glory as the least worthy rationale. Hobbes had earlier in the chapter in his discussion of the natural equality of men made a similar disparagement of those who war for glory. Explaining why some feel the need to defend themselves by attacking he writes that “there be some that taking pleasure in contemplating their own power in the acts of conquest, which they pursue farther than their security requires, if others (that otherwise would be glad to be at ease within modest bounds) should not by invasion increase their power, they would not be able, long time, by standing only on their defense, to subsist.”¹⁶⁸ Suggesting that while most people are willing to live within modest limits there are others who as he writes in the Original Latin version that would “from pride and a desire for glory, would conquer the whole world...”¹⁶⁹ By presenting this argument, Hobbes tacitly modifies his earlier claim and in a way admits to the Machiavellian distinction between the natures of peoples and princes.

Who are these individuals that derive pleasure from the contemplation of their own power? Hobbes refers to them as vainglorious men. In Chapter VI he defines vainglory as a joy arising from imagination of a man’s own power and ability.¹⁷⁰ This vainglory which consists in supposing abilities in ourselves (which we have no way of knowing) is most often found, Hobbes tell us, in young men who “nourished by the histories or fictions of gallant persons” who imagining themselves greater than others seek to prove their worth. This reading of histories is encouraged by what Hobbes views as an undesirable admiration for antiquity in his own time.

¹⁶⁷ *Leviathan*, 75.

¹⁶⁸ *Leviathan*, 75.

¹⁶⁹ *Leviathan*, 75.

¹⁷⁰ *Leviathan*, 75.

Warning his potential sovereign that the admiration for antiquity is one of the causes of the dissolution of the Commonwealth he continues this attack on admirers of ancient political virtue.

And as to rebellion in particular against monarchy, one of the most frequent causes of it is the reading of books of policy and histories of the ancient Greeks and Romans, from which young men (and all others that are unprovided of the antidote of solid reason), receiving a strong and delightful impression of the great exploits of war achieved by the conductors of their armies, receive withal a pleasing idea of they have done besides, and imagine their great prosperity not to have proceeded from the emulation of particular men, but from the virtue of their popular form of government... From this reading I say, of such books, men have undertaken to kill their kings, because the Greek and Latin writers, in their books and discourses of policy, make it lawful and laudable for any man so to do, provided, before he do it, he call him tyrant.¹⁷¹

Hobbes fears that continued reverence and study of the ancients will cause the timocratic class to remain in place and grow. Pushed on by their desire to emulate their heroes and with their conception of virtue and liberty shaped by classical sources these would be warriors will engender a constant state of upheaval that to hear Hobbes describe it, has many similarities to the war against all found in the natural condition. Often throughout *Leviathan* Hobbes lays the blame for the engendering of the love of antiquity at the feet of the schoolmen and their masters Aristotle and Cicero. Yet while never mentioning Machiavelli by name, writing in Chapter XI in a passage that reads a refutation of the *Discourses*. Hobbes argues that

by reading of these Greek and Latin authors men from their childhood have gotten the habit (under a false show of liberty) of favouring tumults and of licentious controlling the actions of their sovereigns, and again of controlling those controllers, with the effusion of so much blood as I think I may truly say: there was never anything so dearly bought, as these western parts have bought the learning of the Greek and Latin tongues.¹⁷²

As we have seen; Machiavelli argues that tumults were conducive to the liberty and greatness of Rome, and encouraged “the young” to read the ancient histories. Telling his potential prince to choose an ancient statesman as a model of emulation.

¹⁷¹ *Leviathan*, 214-15.

¹⁷² *Leviathan*, 141.

The so-called monster of Malmesbury wants nothing to do with the regime and the citizens that Machiavelli wishes to form. Those who the Florentine believed deserved to be princes Hobbes' wishes to crush. The Englishman is not interested in the bloody struggles that Machiavelli takes so much delight in. Therefore Hobbes believes that the Sovereign must be given his often criticized absolute power so that the rest of the commonwealth may enjoy the conditions they hoped for when they choose the commonwealth over the natural condition. While Hobbes does argue that a change in education can lead to a dampening of the timocrats lust for glory, his argument that our natural passions (particularly those of the vainglorious men) run contrary to the establishment of peace. The Leviathan therefore is the only reliable check on the proud and the guarantor of commodious living.

While both Hobbes and Locke shared a disgust with the political upheaval and religious strife that tore apart England and Europe during their era; it is Locke not Hobbes who is remembered for providing a defence of liberty. This is due as we noted above, to the differences in the means they promote to provide this liberty. While Hobbes thought only an absolutist state that was strong enough to keep the vainglorious in check and discouraged public deliberation could provide for commodious living; Locke countered that the best way to achieve comfortable self-preservation is for the establishment of limited government; built on the separation of powers, majority rule, and political power residing with the people. Regarding the problem of vainglory Locke in a way goes even farther than Hobbes does. Whereas Hobbes still requires one vainglorious individual (due to his preference for monarchy) to crush the proud in their position of Sovereign; by arguing for limited rule Locke neatly does away with the need for anyone of this type.¹⁷³

¹⁷³ To return briefly to the Preface, where I claimed that the debate between John Rawls and Robert Nozick took place in the context of modern liberalism; I would now add the debate between the two is an echo of the debate

The question can be raised however that it is not *thumos* or spiritedness that is the political problem for Locke but the upheavals engendered from warring factions of Christianity and absolutist monarchy. The *Letter Concerning Toleration* after all aims at inspiring *religious* toleration and the *First Treatise of Government* is a critique of absolute monarchy derived from paternal authority. We would counter though that at the core of Locke's political and educational writings is the recognition by him no less than Hobbes or Montaigne that lovers of glory are the true obstacles to his political project. The *Letter* while attacking Christian sects for their cruel attempts to force conformity among their fellow human beings still leaves Christianity in place; so long as it accepts toleration as its central tenet and retreats to the private sphere. Any idea that the goal of government is the care of souls or the cultivation of virtue though is completely removed from the equation.

The *Two Treatises of Government* with the claim that man is by nature equal as its foundation certainly undermines the divine right of kings, it is equally an assault on the idea that *anyone* has a right to rule by nature. There are no individuals who "deserve to be princes" in Locke's universe. So long as those who believe that the greatest renown is reserved for conquerors remain, social peace will always be threatened. For to celebrate glory as the aim of politics is to go against what Locke claims is the natural duty of everyone; to preserve mankind. As he warns in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (echoing Hobbes' complaint in *Leviathan*) ancient history presents a political problem because:

All the entertainment and talk of history is nothing almost but fighting and killing: and the honour and renown that is bestowed on conquerors (who for the most part are but the

between Hobbes and Locke. If we stripe away Hobbes' absolutism we find a strong state committed in many ways to ensuring comfortable living and in some ways possessing the trappings of a welfare state. Locke on the other hand by arguing that the state's primary goal is the preservation of property and leaving citizens to provide for themselves foreshadows the arguments of Nozick. Indeed, I think this is something that Hobbes and Locke would be quite proud of as they have ensured that those that follow them argue on their terms and have left behind much of the pre-modern political science they wished to discard.

great butchers of mankind) farther mislead growing youth, who by this means come to think slaughter the laudable business of mankind, and the most heroic of virtues. By these steps unnatural cruelty is planted in us; and what humanity abhors, custom reconciles and recommends to us, by laying it in the way to honour.¹⁷⁴

Locke's accusation against the convergence of political power and Christianity is that the actions of the Church in its attempt to enforce religious conformity are more "marks of men striving for Power and Empire over one another, than of the Church of Christ."¹⁷⁵ As the argument of the *Letter* makes clear; whatever Locke's private views of Christianity, as a social institution it can be preserved. What has to go is the striving for Power and Empire. Lockean politics is ultimately as hostile to the Marlboroughs of the world as it is of the James Stuarts and Louis XIVs. Once of course the Marlboroughs have eliminated the threats posed by would-be Sun Kings.

Let us examine the nature of the regime that Locke wishes to promote. He writes his *Letter Concerning Toleration* because he argues that his native country has for too long suffered under a state that has been partial in matters of religion. Absolute liberty, just and true liberty, equal and impartial liberty are the things we stand in need of. He laments the horror of people calling themselves Christians putting others to death because they are part of a different denomination. "That any man should think fit to cause another Man whose Salvation he heartily desires, to expire in Torment and that even in an unconverted estate, would, I confess, seem very strange to me, and I think, to any other also."¹⁷⁶ Locke's charge against the political order of his time, and of all previous political orders is the cruelty they inflict upon men for the goal of

¹⁷⁴ Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, (London: Scolar Press, 1970), Sec.116.

¹⁷⁵ Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. James Tully, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), 23.

¹⁷⁶ *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, 25.

“caring for their souls”. For Locke and his contemporaries the solution to this problem is to change the nature of politics.

Locke splits the interests of religion and those of civil government. One is the care of souls, the other care of the commonwealth. The Civil Interests as Locke sees it concerned only with “Life, Liberty, Health, and Indolency of Body; and the Possession of outward things, such as Money, Lands, Houses, Furniture and the like.”¹⁷⁷ Put differently; government should only be concerned with economic issues; ensuring citizens have the opportunity to pursue commodious living. Anything beyond this is consigned to the private sphere. However, this is not to say that the various churches are left with the ability to exert control of people’s private lives. A church no less than a commonwealth is a voluntary society. While this means that members must adhere to the precepts of the church they choose to join (so long as toleration is its central principle); no one is born into a church and they may join and leave them at will. The Church therefore no more than the State has the power to peer into the souls of its citizens. Membership in one of the Christian denominations becomes a private choice the individual is free to make on their own with the commonwealth taking no particular interest in their decision. Social peace, in Locke’s view could be maintained only on these grounds. To go beyond these limits would endanger the compromise he hoped would be established.

When we turn to *Two Treatises of Government* we discover this argument in far greater detail. In Chapter IX of the *Second Treatise: “Of the Ends of Political Society and Government”*; Locke outlines the aims and purpose of civil society and government. He asks the reader if as he has concluded, that men are equal in the state of nature, why they would set aside the power and freedom they possessed in their original state to enter into society. As Locke had argued in

¹⁷⁷ *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, 26.

previous chapters, the justification for the entering into society can only be the preservation of individual property which would be threatened if the state of nature were to devolve into the state of war. With this in mind, Locke writes that “the great and *chief end* therefore, of Mens uniting into Commonwealths, and putting themselves under Government, *is the preservation of their property.*”¹⁷⁸

The role of government therefore is to ensuring the rationale for entering into the commonwealth is preserved. Everyone while surrendering their executive power does not give up their legislative authority, it continues to reside with the people. The State therefore can never be an arbitrary power; despotically ruling over the lives of the people. “It is a power that hath no other end but preservation, and therefore can never have a right to destroy, enslave, or designedly to impoverish the Subjects.”¹⁷⁹ This is not to say that limited government implies a complete libertarianism. Locke writes that anyone who enjoys the protection of government should pay for the maintenance of it, but this can only be done with consent. Any government that becomes an arbitrary power and fails to adhere to the precepts of its existence can be dissolved and replaced with a new commonwealth that is better for the happiness of the People.

This general outline of Locke’s political project is I trust fairly uncontroversial.¹⁸⁰ Locke fairly bluntly claims that self-preservation is the purpose of government. In a certain sense Machiavelli could even agree with a large portion of Locke’s analysis. The Florentine argues in *The Prince* and the *Discourses* that the many are primarily driven by a desire for self-

¹⁷⁸ Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 350-51

¹⁷⁹ *Two Treatises of Government*, 357.

¹⁸⁰ Despite their differences, the schools represented by Pocock and Strauss actually come somewhat close to an agreement on the thought of Locke. Strauss and his allies view Locke as the thinker who made liberalism palatable. Pocock meanwhile, primarily devotes his *opus* to demonstrate that the American founding is not entirely Lockean or liberal but has elements of civic republicanism; *Machiavellian Moment*, 526-28, 545-52. While I disagree with some of Pocock’s conclusions and his method, there is much to admire in his attempt to show the nuances in modern political thought.

preservation and the enjoyment of their property. The majority as Machiavelli sees them are content to stay out of politics so long as they are not dominated and can freely enjoy their possessions. This description proves to be only a less subtle version of Locke's description of the citizen who will inhabit his regime. The difference between the two though is that from a Machiavellian perspective the regime that Locke lays out has a particularly large gap. There is no discussion by Locke about the role played by those Machiavelli calls the great; who thirst for political power. Unless it is in the negative, as his descriptions of Conquest in *Two Treatises of Government* or of the problem posed by history for education, Locke is silent on this group that Machiavelli is so fascinated by. The reason for Locke's silence is not difficult to understand. He blames Machiavellian princes for much of the tumults that threaten to undermine social peace. In the political order he hopes to usher in there will be no place for the conquering heroes that Machiavelli approves of. The Lockean citizen does not lead a particularly eventful life, and the regime they reside is rather boring when compared to Machiavelli's Rome.

Locke concludes though, as a study of his writings indicate, that tumultuous politics lead to cruelty and tyranny. The man who published his celebrated letter on toleration under the pseudonym "*Philanthropus*" was determined to help found a politics based on humanitarian grounds. Like Hobbes' regime, the Lockean commonwealth is a quiet realm but everyone is left alone and given the opportunity for commodious living. The question remains though whether the peace and quiet of commodious living is enough to satisfy everyone.

Machiavellianism vs The Spirit of Commerce

The last proponent of the enlightenment project I will examine is Montesquieu. While he is committed to the overall goals of the modern project and is not moved by a desire to return to classical political practice, Montesquieu lacks the ardour or the urgency of his predecessors and

proves to be of all Machiavelli's modern successors, the most open to the charm of ancient martial virtue while at the same time committing himself to completing the project begun by the earlier liberal thinkers.¹⁸¹ We cannot be certain as to why the French aristocrat was more inclined to favour the ancients than the earlier thinkers we have examined. Perhaps Montesquieu was moved by the grandeur of the Sun King or even though the Frenchman was a defender of modernity perhaps the passions of the early Enlightenment had begun to cool. That Montesquieu contemplated the great alternatives of ancient and modern virtue we can see from a comparison of his *Considerations on the Causes of the Grandeur of the Romans and Their Decline* which illuminates the rise and fall of the ancient republic with his magnum opus, *The Spirit of the Laws*. While Montesquieu's study of the Romans in the former work presents the austere martial virtue of the ancients in a positive light, when read along-side his principle work this view is gradually undermined. Montesquieu in the end concludes that while "things were done in those governments that we no longer see and that astonish our small souls", he decides in favour of the "timid bourgeoisie". For despite the appeal of the grandeur of ancient politics so clearly presented in Montesquieu's *Considerations of the Romans* and *The Spirit of Laws*; their immoderation, cruelty and love of military glory led him to champion moderate regimes, animated by the spirit of commerce, aimed at cultivating the arts of peace.

To understand why Montesquieu made his choice we shall first investigate his study of the ancient martial regime. A brief perusal of *Considerations on the Romans* quickly shows that Montesquieu's Romans bear a striking resemblance to Machiavelli's Rome, according to

¹⁸¹ In addition to Montesquieu, one could just easily included in this section the leading lights of the Scottish Enlightenment; David Hume, Adam Smith, and Adam Ferguson. Like Montesquieu, these thinkers also are more sympathetic to martial glory and classical conception of citizenship, especially Ferguson. However, in order to limit the number of moderns under consideration in this chapter I have chosen Montesquieu as being fairly representative of 18th century liberal enlightenment thinking.

Montesquieu, aimed at war and expansion in order to be great. That the city was “in an endless and constantly vicious war” and therefore the Romans honed the art of war to the point that they “put their whole spirit and their thoughts into perfecting it.”¹⁸² This Machiavellian reading of the history of Rome goes even further. Montesquieu accepts the Florentine’s claim that the Romans had universal conquest as their object and goes so far to agree with Machiavelli that a secret war was waged between the Roman classes within the city.¹⁸³ Even the corruption and fall of Rome is treated by Montesquieu (as Machiavelli did before him) as the natural outcome of the course it set out upon. Once the Romans had made the decision to expand beyond the walls of the city their destiny was set.¹⁸⁴

With all of these points of agreement between the Florentine and the French aristocrat on the nature of the Roman spirit against at times what the classical authors had claimed; it begins to appear that Montesquieu’s Romans are really Machiavellians. Even if Montesquieu is reading the Romans through Machiavelli, this does not mean that they are not worthy of admiration and perhaps even emulation.¹⁸⁵ The Romans are praised by Montesquieu in the manner that they achieve their empire. In the war with Hannibal he repeats the praise of Livy that after Cannae when other Peoples would have sued for peace, the Romans thanks to their institutions refused to knuckle under, endured the defeats, regrouped and overcame their Carthaginian enemies. Unlike Carthage which according to Montesquieu was corrupted by its wealth, the Romans because their ambition derived from pride rather than the avarice were deserving of world-empire.

¹⁸² Montesquieu, *Considerations on the Causes of The Greatness of the Romans and Their Decline*, translated by David Lowenthal, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1999), 27, 33. For a different interpretation of the place of *Considerations of the Romans* in Montesquieu’s work, see Rahe’s *Montesquieu and the logic of liberty: war, religion, commerce, climate, terrain, technology, uneasiness of the mind, the spirit of political vigilance, and the foundations of the modern republic*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

¹⁸³ *Considerations*, 83.

¹⁸⁴ *Considerations*, 91.

¹⁸⁵ Perhaps the alternatives for Montesquieu are not classical and modern virtue; but Machiavellian and modern.

While Montesquieu views the rise and fall of Rome from the perspective of the Republic, he still finds objects of praise in the Imperial period. The Emperor Trajan is celebrated as the most accomplished prince in the annals of history and he confides to us of the secret pleasure he derives from speaking of Marcus Aurelius, and he cannot speak of his life without experiencing a kind of tenderness.¹⁸⁶ Montesquieu it seems is impressed by all the examples of Roman virtue. Indeed, the reader of *Considerations on the Romans* could come away with the impression that Montesquieu like Machiavelli desires a rebirth of Pagan Rome. As David Lowenthal notes in the introduction to his translation; Montesquieu is almost completely silent on the momentous events of Christianity during the same period and the existence of the new faith is only introduced in the context of Rome's decline.¹⁸⁷

While Montesquieu's presentation of Rome suggests that the ancient republic is a worthy model of the ideal political order, how are we to square this with the regime he lays out in the *Spirit of the Laws*? While in *The Considerations* Rome's martial spirit is admired, the Stoics praised and Christianity for the most part ignored; Montesquieu writes critically in *The Spirit of the Laws* that the ancient Greeks were a society of athletes and fighters and he praises the social effect of Christianity.

Let us envisage, on the other hand, the continual massacres of the kings and leaders of the Greeks and Romans, and on the other, the destruction of peoples and towns by Tamerlane and Genghis Khan, the very leaders who ravaged Asia, and we shall see that we owe to Christianity...¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ *Considerations*, 41, 45.

¹⁸⁷ *Considerations*, 175.

¹⁸⁸ Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, eds. Anne M. Cohler, Basia C. Miller and Harold S. Stone, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 461-62.

What are we to make of these different claims? First, on closer reading of *The Considerations* Montesquieu's study is not as positive as it first appears, or at least reminds us of the cost the Romans were forced to pay in order to achieve their greatness. He reminds us that:

“This frightful tyranny of the emperors derived from the general spirit of the Romans. Since the Romans fell under an arbitrary government suddenly, with almost no interval between their commanding and their serving, they were not at all prepared for the change by a moderation of their manners. Their fierce humour remained; the citizens were treated as they themselves had treated conquered enemies, and were governed according to the same plan.¹⁸⁹

Echoing Montaigne, Montesquieu argues that by becoming accustomed to making sport of human nature in the gladiatorial arena the Romans became fierce. He concludes this analysis of the Roman spirit by noting that were infinite examples of emperors putting men to death for their wealth, he finds nothing similar in modern history. This, he argues, is due to “gentler manners, and to a more repressive religion... The advantages we draw from the moderate size of our fortunes is that we are more secure: it is not worth anyone's trouble to plunder our wealth.¹⁹⁰

This subtle critique of Rome, that the glory is not worth the cost, takes full bloom in *The Spirit of the Laws*. As we noted above, Montesquieu describes ancient citizenry as consisting of fighters. This was due to the ancient's civic education which emphasised the martial virtues. Since the ancients thought that commerce and agriculture were shameful pursuits to involve themselves in (being only the work of slaves), but as they did not wish their citizens to be idle; the Greeks like the Romans found occupation in the exercises derived from gymnastics and those related to war. Citizens became so martial that the Greek republics were forced to implement a musical education in order to soften the souls of their citizens.¹⁹¹ With this in mind we should not be surprised by Montesquieu's discussion of the Venetian Republic which he treats as the closest

¹⁸⁹ *Considerations*, 135-37.

¹⁹⁰ *Considerations*, 135-37.

¹⁹¹ *Spirit of the Laws*, 41.

exemplar of the ancient regime in the modern world. While the aristocratic republic is able to cultivate virtue among its citizens, Montesquieu points out that this is only able to be done at an incredible cost; the institution of Venetian inquisitors whose tyrannical powers keeps the Venetians in check.

Montesquieu concludes that a regime aimed at cultivating the austere virtue he claims ancient republics were directed toward is too severe. Instead he encourages a regime that is directed toward political liberty encouraged by the spirit of commerce. Commerce, which the ancients (and Machiavelli) had denounced, proves to be the key for establishing the moderate regime Montesquieu hopes to found. So important is commerce to the argument of the *Spirit of the Laws* that Montesquieu opens Book Four's discussion of commerce with an invocation to the Muses. Commerce, he writes, "cures destructive prejudices, and it is an almost general rule that everywhere there are gentle mores, there is commerce and that everywhere there is commerce, there are gentle mores." He adds that "the natural effect of commerce is to lead to peace. Two nations that trade with each other become reciprocally dependent; if one has an interest in buying, the other has an interest in selling, and all unions are founded on mutual needs."¹⁹²

With commerce encouraged by a State's constitution, the State is in a better position to achieve political liberty for its citizens. For with a State's mores gentled, it will be less strict and less likely to impose an austere conception of virtue on its citizens. As to what form of regime the State should be, this is not a central for Montesquieu. For as he argues whether it be monarchy, democracy, or aristocracy none of them have a monopoly on liberty. They are not free states by nature. Political liberty according to Montesquieu can only be found only in what he terms "moderate government". Moderate government he defines as the distribution of powers

¹⁹² *Spirit of the Laws*, 338.

and calculating the degrees of liberty for the citizen.¹⁹³ What does this government look like in practice though? To answer this question Montesquieu turns our attention to the Constitution of England which he claims is the only one of his knowledge that has political liberty as its aim.

We take from this that Montesquieu favours the liberty of Locke against that of Machiavelli. Both Montesquieu and Locke (and Hobbes) define liberty essentially as security; and because the aim of Montesquieu's preferred Moderate regime is liberty; he joins the earlier liberals in identifying comfortable self-preservation, the promotion of commerce, cultivation of social peace, and the moderating of the martial passions as the aim of politics. Machiavelli it is true also places a great deal of emphasis on security; arguing that self-preservation is the goal of the many. However, as we saw with Locke, the martial aristocrat has no place in the regime dedicated to liberty that Montesquieu articulates.

Montesquieu may have an enduring admiration for the virtues of antiquity as his *Considerations* make clear, but there is no equivalent in his writings to the bloodlust in Machiavelli's description of the Sabines religious rituals, for example. With his dedication to toleration and individual liberty and his defence of the a Moderate commercial regime against the Martial Montesquieu joins Montaigne, Hobbes, and Locke in limiting the scope of politics and redirecting their aim from glory and conquest to the relief of man's estate. Modern man may have a small soul but like the other liberals is willing to accept this in order to be free from the tumults and wars of the ancients. The problem though is whether their price is something others will be willing to pay.

¹⁹³ *Spirit of the Laws*, 155.

The Commercial Republic Triumphant

As we have seen, despite their shared rejection of the classical tradition, Machiavelli and his modern successors are radically divided on what they should replace the tradition with. While Machiavelli hoped for the emergence of a new kind of warrior-statesman and a regime dedicated to the cultivation of martial virtue and imperial glory, the other moderns I have examined are opposed to the Machiavellian enterprise and hope to fashion a new kind of citizen for a new, modern regime. The battle for modernity therefore proved to be between these two vision of politics; with the likes of Henry VIII, Charles V, Cardinal Richelieu, Louis XIV, and Napoleon lining up with Machiavelli on one hand, and liberal statesmen such the Marquis of Halifax, John Somers, Robert Harley, James Madison, and John Adams joining with the proponents of the Enlightenment on the other. This is a battle that despite the occasional emergence of a Napoleon that has gone in favour of the Enlightenment in its goal of stripping politics of its grandeur.

If there are any doubts of the triumph of the Enlightenment over Machiavellianism, they are quickly dispelled with an examination of the founding of the American Republic. While there are certainly other regimes that are founded upon the principles of the Enlightenment project, it was the American Founders who first explicitly claimed to be founding their regime upon the new science of politics introduced by thinkers such as Locke and Montesquieu, and declared that they were ushering in a “new order of the ages.” Due to its incredible success, it is the American regime that has become the modern republic *par excellence*. By examining how the American founders built their regime on the foundation of prepared by Montaigne, Hobbes, Locke, and Montesquieu; we can see why thanks to modernity, Machiavelli’s new birth of politics proved to be a still birth.

The authors of *The Federalist*, like Jefferson in *The Declaration of Independence*, announce the novelty and tremendous importance of the task they have set themselves to. Publius begins the opening essay of *The Federalist* by remarking “that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country to decide, by their conduct and example, the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not, of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend, for their political constitutions, on accident and force.”¹⁹⁴ Where Hobbes had argued that once a sovereign were to accept the new principles of politics he had articulated, the problems besetting men would be solved; Publius argues that now the American people have a chance to prove this claim.

Publius shares the confidence of the modern thinkers, because like them he is convinced that the new science of politics represents an enormous improvement over classical political science. This is most famously articulated in *Federalist #9*, where the author explains why modern republics will succeed where the ancients failed.

If it had been found impracticable to have devised models of a more perfect structure, the enlightened friends of liberty would have been obliged to abandon the cause of that species of government as indefensible. The science of politics, however, like most other sciences, has received great improvement. The efficacy of various principles is now well understood, which were either not known at all, or imperfectly known by the ancients. The regular distribution of power into distinct departments; the introduction of legislative balances and checks; the institution of courts composed of judges, holding their offices during good behaviour; the representation of the people in the legislature, by deputies of their own election; these are either wholly new discoveries, or have made their principal progress towards perfection in modern times.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, James Madison, *The Federalist*, eds. George W. Carey and James McCellan, (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund 2001), 38. There is of course debate the nature of the American Founding, whether it is Lockean or possesses other elements. Consider Pocock’s *Machiavellian Moment* in contrast to Pangle’s *Spirit of Modern Republicanism*. Pocock as I pointed out in the above seeks to show that the American Founding consisted of a civic republican element while for Pangle all early moderns are liberals of similar stripes. For my purposes here, the debate between these two camps need not be addressed in detail. My goal here is to demonstrate briefly that the American Founders were seeking to create a commercial republic that by its nature stood as a rejection of Machiavellianism.

¹⁹⁵ *The Federalist* #9, 39-40.

This argument, while certainly having its roots in the thought of Montesquieu and Hobbes, could also just as easily be made by Machiavelli. The Florentine could never be described as lacking in confidence or daring. After all, he intends to achieve through planning what the Romans did through accident and bring about the perfect republic. In fact, if we move deeper into *The Federalist* along with the sections of the U.S. Constitution concerning the executive branch, one can easily uncover the debt the American executive has to Machiavelli's arguments on behalf of the Roman dictatorship. Perhaps, the founders' debt to Machiavelli is simply better hidden than their connection Locke.¹⁹⁶

The response to this however, is the same counter to the argument that despite their differences, the hand of Machiavelli can be found in thought of modern political thinkers; namely, setting aside any similarities in approach or structure, what are the goals of the regime that Hamilton, Madison, and Jay believe the new constitution will help found? What are the justifications they provide to persuade their fellow citizens to accept the new, more perfect union? To begin with, we can see that Publius, unlike Machiavelli, shares the same distaste for bloody upheavals of the ancient world with Montaigne and Locke. In fact, *Federalist #6* at times almost reads as a direct rebuttal to the Florentine. Here Publius denounces the love of power and the desire for pre-eminence and dominance. Arguing that men like Pericles or Cardinal Wosley driven by a lust for political mastery brought war upon their countrymen and ruined their commonwealths.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Consider *Federalist #67-77* with Article II sec.1-4 of the U.S. Constitution in comparison to D.I.34. For an in depth discussion of the Machiavellian executive and effect on the modern state see Harvey Mansfield's "Machiavelli and the Modern Executive", *Understanding the Political Spirit*, Catherine H. Zuckert, ed., (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 88-110.

¹⁹⁷ *Federalist #6*, 22.

On the other hand, the author of *Federalist #6* is not as convinced as Montesquieu or David Hume that the spirit of commerce will be able to overcome the desire in men for political mastery. He tells us that he does not count himself among the “visionary” men who imagine that commerce will lead to perpetual peace. As Publius points out, Carthage was a commercial republic, and so was Venice, and these two cities could not be described as pacifistic.¹⁹⁸ Indeed, when one reads Publius’ account of how republics fall into tumults amongst themselves and go to war either for personal glory or avarice springing from commercial interests, we can be quickly drawn to the conclusion that Publius shares the same understanding of human nature as Machiavelli. There remains one crucial difference though. Where Machiavelli of course celebrates this nature in men, and particularly in republics because it leads to competition and glory, Publius views it as a serious problem. It is because the spirit of commerce is not even enough to ensure that New York and Pennsylvania will not go to war in the future, a federal constitution is needed to keep the ambitions of men in check.

In *Federalist #9* Publius’ distaste for the tumults of the ancient republic is made even clearer. He writes that “it is impossible to read the history of the petty republics of Greece and Italy, without feeling sensations of horror and disgust at the distractions with which they were continually agitated, and at the rapid succession of revolutions, by which they were kept perpetually vibrating between the extremes of tyranny and anarchy.”¹⁹⁹ Like Hobbes, Publius has no interest in repeating the tumults of the past nor shares Machiavelli’s contention that tumults are the source of liberty. Therefore, following the moderns, and in contrast to Machiavelli, the new federal constitution will create institutions that will check the ambitions of men rather than

¹⁹⁸ *Federalist # 6*, 23-26.

¹⁹⁹ *Federalist #9*, 37.

encourage a republic to become aggrandizing. By introducing the idea of representation, the institutions of the American regime.

This is the logic behind the argument of *Federalist #10*. Here Publius argues that the greatest advantage of the federal union will be to break up the violence of faction. While faction may not be eliminated, due to its roots in human nature; its effects can be controlled. If a faction is less than a majority, the majority will defeat it, and if it is in the majority then the division of powers in representative government can ensure that those who desire mastery over the public good will be blocked.²⁰⁰ The system of checks and balances will ensure that no one private interest is able to dominate the state and that liberty will be preserved. The lack of this system of checks and balances has been the downfall of previous republics, or those that Publius labels as pure democracies. The American regime, thanks to its system of representation not only will be able to overcome the size problem identified by Montesquieu, it will also be able to provide “the cure” to the tumults that beset ancient republics.²⁰¹

Finally, Publius attempts to persuade his readers of the utility of the federal union by appealing to commerce and revenue. Publius tells us that “a prosperous commerce is now perceived and acknowledged, by all enlightened statesmen, to be the most useful, as well as the most productive, source of national wealth; and has accordingly become a primary object of their political cares.”²⁰² In *Federalist #11* Publius argues that one of the great benefits the federal union will entail is that a single government will be able to protect the manufacturing, and navigation interests of the American people against the machinations of the European powers. In *Federalist #12* and *#13* meanwhile, he undertakes to show that the federal union will help

²⁰⁰ *Federalist #10*, 42-45.

²⁰¹ *Federalist #9*, 39-40; *Federalist #10*, 46-49.

²⁰² *Federalist #12*, 55.

increase the state's revenue and will greatly benefit their economy. No-where in these essays do we find a Machiavellian claim that the passage of the constitution will help the American states achieve greatness and glory. The lesson we are to derive from *The Federalist* is that thanks to the institutions being introduced the American regime will contain the effects of faction and overcome the horrors that beset ancient republics, while ensuring that the commodious living promised by the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness can be even more easily secured. Machiavellian glory is not a part of America's commercial regime. Instead, the American regime is partially dedicated to ensuring that there are no more Machiavelli's.

The goal of blocking those who would upset the balance of the modern regime is carried on by Abraham Lincoln in his speech "*The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions*". Here Lincoln, concerned with the growing disregard to law (which he blames on a reliance on the passions rather than reason) reminds his audience that while they should be proud of the regime that their ancestors founded, they cannot presume to believe along with *Federalist #10* or modern political thought that the threat posed by "vainglorious men" to the liberal regime has been contained or become a thing of the past. Lincoln argues that while there will be a number of decent men who will be willing to settle for a seat in Congress or the office of the Presidency; there remains a more ambitious breed for whom this is not enough. While I quoted Lincoln's speech at the beginning of this dissertation, it is worth repeating here.

What! Think you these places would satisfy an Alexander, a Caesar, or a Napoleon?- Never! Towering genius disdains a beaten path. It seeks regions hitherto unexplored.- It sees *no distinction* in adding story to story, upon the monuments of fame, erected to the memory of others. It *denies* that it is glory enough to serve under any chief. It *scorns* to tread in the footsteps of *any predecessor*, however illustrious. It thirsts and burns for distinction; and if possible, it will have it... It is unreasonable then to expect, that some man possessed of the loftiest genius, coupled with ambition sufficient to push it to its utmost stretch, will at some time, spring up among us? And when such a one does, it will

require the people to be united with each other, attached to government and laws, and generally intelligent, to successfully frustrate his designs.²⁰³

In his study of the truly ambitious soul, Lincoln reaches a level of analysis that rivals Plato and Machiavelli, but in his solution to the problem posed by this incredible individual, he echoes Hobbes far more than the Florentine (or the Athenian). As the above makes clear, Lincoln has no desire to see anyone of the “tribe of the eagle” or “family of the lion” come to prominence. Instead he hopes to unify the people against such figures by attaching them to the Constitution in a manner that resembles religious reverence. The future president therefore joins the moderns in arguing that the pursuit of glory he so accurately describes has no place in the modern regime that the United States is representative of. Like Hobbes, he does not share the others hope that the desire for glory can be transformed or muted. Lincoln seeks to build institutions to stop or crush the vainglorious whenever they appear in order to preserve the liberties of the liberal republic. The author of America’s new birth of freedom, is just as opposed to Machiavelli’s new birth of politics as the American Founders and the proponents of the modern political project. What separates him is his foresight to understand that a reliance on the spirit of commerce or the power of checks and balances to tame the timocrats or at the very least contain them. He acknowledges the threat glory seekers present to a liberal commercial republic and attempts to teach his fellow citizens –both present and future- that they must ever stand on guard.

Conclusion

My argument in this chapter has endeavoured to show why Machiavelli cannot be considered to be the founder of the same modernity as Locke and Hobbes due to their diverse goals. In place of the captain-prince of Machiavelli we find Montaigne and Locke’s bourgeois

²⁰³ Lincoln, *His Speeches and Writings*, 83.

gentleman, rather than an imperialistic new Rome, there is a regime oriented toward achieving comfort for its citizens and in some cases, specifically designed to check the ambitions of vainglorious men. Indeed, the new science of politics is so hostile to the pursuit of glory that nowhere do we find the equivalent of Machiavelli's founder-prophet, who was articulated as a replacement for the Platonic philosopher. Modern political science has no need for those who desire to be founders of new modes and orders, and according to Lincoln and Hobbes, should consider them a threat.²⁰⁴

Machiavelli revolted against classical political science because he considered the classical project's attempt to show glory seekers that their *eros* for honour could be satisfied by adhering to a rational order and the best regime of Plato and Aristotle, to be based on a delusion, and only served as a form of castration and led to political corruption. The disagreement between Machiavelli and the ancients therefore has its primary origin in the role of the timocrat within the city. The moderns go even farther. If Machiavelli considered the subservience of the honour lovers to the philosophers and priests an error, one can imagine his disgust that the modern regime intends to remove the honour lovers completely. Machiavelli and his timocrats are not at home within liberal modernity.

²⁰⁴ Modernity would have to wait for Rousseau to bring consideration of founder-legislators to a central place. Even Rousseau does not return completely to the Machiavellian heights. There is a crucial difference between the Catonian legislator we find Rousseau from the founder prophet of the Florentine. See Joseph Masciulli, "The Armed Founder versus the Catonic Hero: Machiavelli and Rousseau on Popular Leadership," *Interpretation* 14 (1986): 265-80.

Epilogue:

“Even if, and precisely if we are forced to grant that his teaching is diabolical and he himself a devil, we are forced to remember the profound theological truth that the devil is fallen angel.”
-Leo Strauss, Thoughts on Machiavelli

In Bk. 8 of *The Republic*, Socrates informs Glaucon and Adiemantus that the city of the philosopher-kings is eventually brought down by a revolt of the timocrats, men who occupy themselves with war and create a constitution like that of Sparta and Crete (along with Rome) that is directed toward the aspects of making war. In this new regime, honour become the orienting principle where under the previous regime it had served in a secondary position. The character of this timocratic regime is described by Socrates by offering a portrait of the timocratic soul. According to Socrates, the timocrat is a man who derives honour from his exploits in war, is a devotee of gymnastics and hunting, and is publicly disdainful of money. In his youth, the timocrat is moved by his father’s lack of honour within the city and encouraged by his mother, becomes haughty and covets the honour denied this father.²⁰⁵

It has been my thesis that Machiavelli and his political project is an example of the timocratic soul and regime described so well by Plato. Machiavelli too, believes that the humiliation of his fatherland derives from a lack of martial virtue and seek to found new modes and orders to ensure that honour and glory returns to his country. He rejects the classical political project because adherence to it cultivates a growing disregard for the importance of politics and ushers in corruption and decay. The core elements that I have examined in this dissertation seek to overturn this.

The captain-prince replaces the classical gentleman ruler. Rather than having a Scipio Africanus the Younger, who retires to his country estate to discuss natural philosophy or his

²⁰⁵ Plato, *The Republic*, 547d-550c.

predecessor Scipio Africanus the Elder, who is more concerned with adhering to a trans-political standard than successfully prosecuting a war; Machiavelli offers his Castruccio Castracani, who prefers arms to books, and knows that in order to be successful, he must be ruthless.

Machiavelli's captain-prince therefore will not remove himself from political life, and abandon the pursuit of glory nor be troubled by questions of morality in the face of carrying out deeds for his city. The captain-prince stays on earth, within the walls of the city.

That city is Machiavelli's new Rome, his perfect republic. The best regime of classical political science sought to bring the city to rest, to direct it at peace because leisure is a requirement of contemplation. A peaceful city is one most open to the philosophic life. Machiavelli's city however is never at rest. It is founded to be at strife with itself, in order to wage war. An imperial republic draws on the energy created by the conflict between the few and many and directs into the building of world-empire. In pursuing this goal, glory can be won for the great while ensuring security for the many. The perfect republic responds to how people actually live, not how they should.

Even the perfect republic however, will eventually cease to be virtuous and enter a period of decay. Decay though, offers the chance for renewal. Only a truly virtuous individual will possess the spirit required to introduce the new modes and orders required to restore virtue and usher in a new birth of politics. Despite the difficulty, the person who is able to do so will take their place among the other great founder prophets, Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, and Theseus. Unlike the classical philosopher who transcends the city in order to contemplate the eternal, Machiavelli's founder prophet stays within the city, and aims at winning the highest honour possible for human beings, to become next to divine.

However, due to Machiavelli's lack of arms and reliance on fortune, his project suffers the same fate as the timocratic regime in *The Republic*. It is overthrown and replaced by a regime dedicated to the pursuit of wealth, where honour is discredited. If we are to call Machiavelli modern, or the founder of the modern project, then we must admit that there are two opposing modern projects. Machiavelli's modernity is the revolt of *thumos*, the rejection of classical political philosophy, and the attempt to repeat the feats of ancient political practice. The modernity of Hobbes, Locke, and Montesquieu is the rejection of classical political philosophy and ancient political practice in the attempt to relieve man's estate.

The study of Machiavelli therefore serves the purpose of highlighting the importance of honour in Machiavelli's thought and its part of the martial side of modernity's origins. This is not to say that Machiavelli can safely be passed off to history departments, and treated as an historical curiosity, knowing that the modernity of Hobbes superseded that of the Florentine. For just as studying Machiavelli is useful for seeing where we came from, it is just as relevant for determining where we are going.

In New York on February 26th, 1941, while Britain grimly defied the German *Luftwaffe* during the *Blitz*, the recent German-Jewish émigré Leo Strauss gave a lecture entitled, *German Nihilism*. Strauss' goal in the lecture was to educate his audience in the intellectual roots of nihilism in Germany and the Nazi regime. Most tellingly, Strauss placed the roots of the movement with the rejection of the modern project by a generation of young Germans. These young nihilists had become disillusioned with modernity and hated the idea of a world where "everyone would be happy and satisfied, in which everyone would have his little pleasure by day and his little pleasure by night, a world in which no great heart could beat and no great soul

could breath, a world without real, unmetaphoric, sacrifice, i.e. a world without blood, sweat, and tears.”²⁰⁶

The nihilist’s rejection of modernity therefore had its roots in a romanticism about the martial virtues, of war and conquest. War becomes more noble than peace, and the sight of the ruthless subjugating the weak causes pleasure.²⁰⁷ Deriving pleasure from violent upheaval, reading about the exploits of the ruthless should immediately remind us of Machiavelli; particularly in the use of history to educate his potential princes as I discussed in Chapter II. Machiavelli is not a nihilist, and I am certainly not making the case that the fascism of the 20th century can be traced back to the *Discourses* or *The Prince*. What I would like to suggest here is that the timocratic reaction to modernity represented by Strauss’ German nihilists is an echo of Machiavelli’s revolt against the classical project. The reaction of the nihilists is more intense because modernity went so much farther than classical political science did in finding a solution for the timocratic soul. Where the classics attempted to tame, the moderns sought to purge.

If the classical cycle of regimes is correct then the argument can be made that modernity will continue to face revolts against the Enlightenment project as it continues to press forward. This is not argument in favour of rejecting modernity in order to satisfy certain human types’ love of distinction and glory. I am arguing that the pursuit of glory should be treated as a natural passion and a political order should find a way to harness it. Strauss himself, points in this direction in his lecture by arguing that while the answer to the nihilistic charge against modernity could not be made with technical language; as youths who had been taught to see Rome’s

²⁰⁶ Strauss, “Nihilism,” 360.

²⁰⁷ Strauss, “Nihilism,” 369.

greatest glory in its response to the defeat at Cannae, they would have been impressed by the example of Churchill during Britain's Finest Hour.²⁰⁸

As the example of Churchill shows, honour and glory can be won in defence of a liberal democratic regime. Modernity and glory do not have to be opposed. The study of Machiavelli therefore is a window into the soul of the timocrat. By examining the desires of those whom Hobbes would say have been "nourished by the histories or fictions of gallant persons," contemporary political science can gain a better understanding of the nature of the timocrat and attempt to harness the honour lovers for the betterment of our liberal regime. To do otherwise is risk a revolt of *thumos* far greater than even Machiavelli could imagine.

²⁰⁸ Strauss, "Nihilism," 363.

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