

# MACHIAVELLI'S INTENTION: *THE PRINCE*\*

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Many writers have attempted to describe the intention of *The Prince* by using the term "scientific." This description is defensible, and even helpful, provided it is properly understood. The present article is meant to prepare such an understanding.

## I. *THE PRINCE combines the characteristics of a treatise and a tract for the times.*

Let us begin at the beginning. In the Epistle Dedicatory Machiavelli gives three indications of the subject-matter of the book: he has incorporated into it his knowledge of the actions of great men both modern and ancient; he dares to discuss princely government and to give rules for it; he possesses knowledge of the nature of princes. As appears from the Epistle Dedicatory, from the book itself, and from what the author says elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> knowledge of the actions of great men, *i.e.*, historical knowledge, supplies only materials for knowledge of what princely government is, of the characteristics of the various kinds of principalities, of the rules with which one has to comply in order to acquire and preserve princely power, and of the nature of princes. It is only knowledge of the latter kind that *The Prince* is meant to convey. That kind of knowledge, knowledge of the universal or general as distinguished from the individual, is called philosophic or scientific. *The Prince* is a scientific book because it conveys a general teaching that is based on reasoning from experience and that sets forth that reasoning. That teaching is partly theoretical (knowledge of the nature of princes) and partly practical (knowledge of rules with which the prince has to comply).

In accordance with its character as a scientific, and not an historical book, only three out of twenty-six chapter headings contain proper names.<sup>2</sup> When referring to *The Prince* in *The Discourses*, Machiavelli calls the former a "treatise."<sup>3</sup> For the time being, we shall describe *The Prince* as a treatise, meaning by that a book that sets forth a general teaching of the character indicated. To the extent that it is a treatise, it has a lucid plan and its argument proceeds in a straight line without either ascending or descending. It consists at first sight of two parts; the first sets forth the science or the art of princely government, while the second takes up the time honored question of the limits of art or prudence—that is, the relation of art or prudence to chance in the management of governmental affairs. More particularly, *The Prince* consists of four parts: 1) the various kinds of principalities (chs. 1–11); 2) the prince

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<sup>1</sup> Letter to Vettori, December 10, 1513. Figures in parenthesis hereafter indicate the pages of the edition of Machiavelli's *Opere* by Flora and Cordiè (Mondadori, Milan, 1949).

<sup>2</sup> Of the 142 chapter headings of *The Discourses*, 39 contain proper names.

<sup>3</sup> *Discourses*, Bk. III, chs. 1 (p. 234), 19 and 42; cf. Bk II, ch. 20, beginning.

and his enemies (chs. 12–14); 3) the prince and his subjects or friends (chs. 15–23);<sup>4</sup> and 4) prudence and chance (chs. 24–26). We may go a step further and say that *The Prince* at first sight appears to be not only a treatise but even a scholastic treatise.

At the same time, however, the book is the opposite of a scientific or detached work. While beginning with the words "All states, all dominions which have had and have sway over men," it ends with the words "the ancient valor in Italian hearts is not yet dead." It culminates in a passionate call to action—in a call addressed to a contemporary Italian prince, Lorenzo de' Medici of Florence, that he should perform the most glorious deed possible and necessary then and there. It ends like a tract for the times. For the last part deals not merely with the general question of the relation of prudence and chance. It is concerned with the accidental also in another sense of the term. The chapters surrounding the explicit discussion of the relation between prudence and chance (ch. 25) are the only ones whose headings indicate that they deal with the contemporary Italian situation. *The Prince* is not the only classic of political philosophy which is both a treatise and a tract for the times. It suffices to refer to Hobbes' *Leviathan* and Locke's *Civil Government*. But the case of *The Prince* is not typical: there is a striking contrast between the dry, not to say scholastic, beginning and the highly rhetorical last chapter which ends in a quotation from a patriotic poem in Italian. Could Machiavelli have had the ambition of combining the virtues of scholasticism with those of patriotic poetry? Is such a combination required for the understanding of political things? However this may be, the contrast between the beginning of *The Prince*, or even its first twenty-five chapters, and its end, forces us to modify our remark that the argument of the book proceeds in a straight line without ascending or descending. By directly contrasting the beginning and the end, we become aware of some kind of ascent.

To the extent that *The Prince* is a treatise, Machiavelli is an investigator or a teacher; to the extent that it is a tract for the times, he assumes the role of an advisor, if not of a preacher. He was anxious to become the advisor of the addressee of *The Prince* and thus to rise from his low, even abject, condition.<sup>5</sup> The movement of *The Prince*, indeed, is an ascent in more than one sense; and it is not simply an ascent.

In contrast with *The Discourses*, *The Prince* comes first to sight as a traditional or conventional treatise. But this first appearance is deliberately deceptive. The anti-traditional character of *The Prince* becomes explicit shortly after the middle of the book, and after remaining explicit for some time, it recedes again. Hence the movement of *The Prince* may be described as an ascent followed by a descent. Roughly speaking, the peak is in the center. This law is prefigured in the first part of the book (chs. 1–11): the highest theme of this part (new principalities acquired by one's own arms and virtue) and the grandest examples (Moses, Theseus, Romulus, Cyrus) are discussed in chapter 6, which is literally the central chapter of the first part.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Prince*, ch. 15, beginning.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. the Epistle Dedicatory of *The Prince*.

II. *THE PRINCE combines a traditional surface with a revolutionary center.*

Let us follow this movement somewhat more closely. At first sight *The Prince* belongs to the traditional genre of *Mirrors of Princes*, which are primarily addressed to legitimate princes; and the most familiar case of the legitimate prince is the undisputed heir. Machiavelli almost opens *The Prince* by following custom in calling the hereditary prince the "natural prince." He suggests that the natural is identical with the established or customary, the ordinary or the reasonable; or that it is the opposite of the violent. In the first two chapters he uses only contemporary or almost contemporary Italian examples: we do not leave the dimension of the familiar. We cannot help noting here that in *The Discourses* which open with his declaration that he will communicate therein new modes and orders, the first two chapters are devoted to the remote beginnings of cities and states: we transcend immediately the dimension of the familiar. In the third chapter of *The Prince*, he continues to speak of "the natural and ordinary" and "the ordinary and reasonable" but he now makes it clear that the natural endangers the established, favors its disestablishment, or, more generally stated, that the natural and ordinary stands in a certain tension to the customary: since the desire for acquisition is "natural and ordinary," the destruction of "natural princes," "the extinction of ancient blood," by an extraordinary conqueror is perhaps more natural than the peaceful and smooth transition from one ordinary heir to another.<sup>6</sup> In accordance with this step forward, foreign and ancient examples come to the fore: the Turks and above all the Romans appear to be superior to the Italians and even to the French. Provoked by the remark of a French Cardinal that the Italians know nothing of war, Machiavelli felt justified in retorting, as he tells us here, that the French know nothing of politics: the Romans, whose modes of action are discussed in the center of the chapter, understood both war and politics. Furthermore he transcends the Here and Now also by referring to a doctrine of the physicians (for medicine is an achievement of the ancients),<sup>7</sup> and by opposing the wise practice of the Romans to "what is everyday in the mouth of the sages of our times." But he is not yet prepared to take issue with the opinion, held by more than one contemporary, that faith must be kept. In chapters 4 through 6, ancient examples preponderate for the first time. Chapter 6 is devoted to the most glorious type of wholly new princes in wholly new states, *i.e.*, to what is least ordinary and most ancient. The heroic founders discussed therein acquired their position by virtue, and not by chance, and their greatness revealed itself by their success in introducing wholly new modes and orders which differed profoundly from the established, familiar and ancient. They stand at the opposite pole from the customary and old established for two opposite reasons: they were ancient innovators, ancient enemies of the ancient. Chapter 6 is the only chapter of *The Prince* in which Machiavelli speaks of prophets, *i.e.*, of men to whom God speaks. In the

<sup>6</sup> We are thus not unprepared to find that the most extraordinary conqueror, Alexander (the Great), is mentioned twice in the heading of the following chapter.

<sup>7</sup> *Discourses*, Bk. I, preface.

same chapter the first Latin quotation occurs. Compared with that chapter, the rest of the first part marks a descent. The hero of chapter 7 is Cesare Borgia who acquired his principality by means of chance. He is presented to begin with as simply a model for new princes. But, to say nothing of the fact that he failed because of a grave mistake which he had committed, he was not a wholly new prince in a wholly new state: he is a model for those new princes who tried to make changes in ancient orders by means of new modes, rather than for the new princes who, like the heroes of chapter 6, tried to introduce wholly new modes and orders. Accordingly, the emphasis shifts from here on to modern examples.<sup>8</sup> As for chapters 8 through 11, it suffices to note that even their chapter headings no longer contain references to new princes; the princes discussed therein were at most new princes in old states. The last two chapters of the first part, like the first two chapters, contain only modern examples, although the last two include examples other than modern Italian.

The second part (chs. 12-14) marks an ascent compared with the end of the first part. The first part had ended with a discussion of ecclesiastical principalities which as such are unarmed. We learn now that good arms are the necessary and sufficient condition for good laws.<sup>9</sup> As Machiavelli indicates throughout the headings of chapters 12 through 13, he ascends in these chapters from the worst kind of arms to the best. We note in this part an almost continuous ascent from modern examples to ancient ones. This ascent is accompanied by three references to the question as to whether modern or ancient examples should be chosen; in the central reference it is suggested that it would be more natural to prefer ancient examples.<sup>10</sup> Machiavelli now takes issue not only with specific political or military errors committed by the "sages of our time," but with his contemporary Savonarola's fundamental error (without however mentioning his name): Savonarola erroneously believed that the ruin of Italy was caused by religious, and not by military sins. He refers in this fairly short part (about ten pages) six times to ancient literature while he had referred to it in the considerably more extensive first part (about thirty-seven pages) only twice. Only in the second part does he come close to referring deferentially to the highest authorities of political or moral thought. He refers, not indeed to the *New Testament*, but to the *Old*, and not then to what the *Old Testament* says about Moses but to what it says about David, and not to what it says about David literally but to what it says about David, or in connection with David, figuratively. And again, he refers, not to Aristotle or Plato, but to Xenophon, whom he regarded however as the author of the classic *Mirror of Princes*.

<sup>8</sup> The tacit emphasis on ancient examples in chapter 9 has a special reason. It draws our attention to the impropriety of discussing in *The Prince* the most important modern example of "civil principalities" *i.e.*, the rule of the Medici. Machiavelli leaves it at discussing the ancient counterpart: Nabis of Sparta. Cf. ch. 21 (p. 73).

<sup>9</sup> Compare also the chief example of ch. 10 (the German cities which are free to the highest degree) with the remark about the Swiss in ch. 12 (the Swiss are armed to the highest degree and free to the highest). This distinction is developed somewhat more fully in *Discourses*, Bk. II, ch. 19 (pp. 286-287).

<sup>10</sup> Ch. 12 (p. 41) and 13 (pp. 43, 44). Cf. the letter to Piero Soderini of Jan. 1512.

Besides, the *Old Testament* citation in chapter 13 merely supplies at most an additional example of the right choice of arms; Xenophon's *Education of Cyrus*, mentioned at the end of chapter 14, however, is the only authority he refers to as setting forth a complete moral code for a prince. To say the least, the height reached at the end of the second part recalls the height reached in the center of the first part: the second part ends and culminates in the praise of Cyrus—one of the four "grandest examples" spoken of in chapter 6. In the first part, Machiavelli leisurely ascends to the greatest doers, and leisurely descends again; in the second part he ascends quickly to the roots of the traditional understanding of the greatest doers.

Right at the beginning of the third part (chs. 15–23), Machiavelli begins to uproot the Great Tradition. The emphasis is on a change in the general teaching: the first chapter of the third part is the only chapter of *The Prince* which does not contain any historical examples. He now takes issue explicitly and coherently with the traditional and customary view according to which the prince ought to live virtuously and ought to rule virtuously. From here we begin to understand why he refrained in the second part from referring to the highest authorities: the missing peak above the *Old Testament* and Xenophon is not the *New Testament* and Plato or Aristotle but Machiavelli's own thought: all ancient or traditional teachings are to be superseded by a shocking new teaching. But he is careful not to shock anyone unduly. While the claim to radical innovation is suggested, it is raised in a subdued manner: he suggests that he is merely stating in his own name and openly a teaching which some ancient writers had set forth covertly or else by using their characters as their mouthpieces.<sup>11</sup> Yet this strengthens Machiavelli's claim in truth as much as it weakens it in appearance: one cannot radically change the mode of a teaching without radically changing its substance. The argument ascends from chapter 15 up to chapters 19 or 20 and then descends again. In chapter 17 Machiavelli begins to speak again, after a pause of ten chapters, of "new princes," and he continues to do so in the three subsequent chapters; at the beginning of chapter 21 he still refers to "a quasi-new prince," but in the rest of the third part this high theme disappears completely: Machiavelli descends again to ordinary or second rate princes.<sup>12</sup> This movement is paralleled by a change regarding modern or ancient examples. Up through chapter 19, there is generally speaking an increase in emphasis on the ancient; thereafter modern examples preponderate obviously.<sup>13</sup> The last two-thirds of chapter 19, which deal with the Roman

<sup>11</sup> Ch. 17 (p. 52) and 18 (p. 55). In the only intervening reference to literature—ch. 17 (p. 54)—Machiavelli attacks "the writers," and no longer merely as he did at the beginning of chapter 15, "many" writers. Incidentally, "many writers" are attacked in *The Discourses* as early as in the tenth chapter; the break with the tradition becomes explicit in *The Discourses* proportionately much sooner than in *The Prince*.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. the relation of princes and ministers as it appears in ch. 22 with the relation of Cesare Borgia and his minister as presented in ch. 7 (p. 24).

<sup>13</sup> Chs. 20, 22 and 23 contain only modern examples. The explicit emphasis on modern examples in ch. 18 (how princes should keep faith) has a special reason just as had the tacit emphasis on ancient example in ch. 9. Machiavelli draws our attention to the modern

emperors, may be said to mark the peak of the third part. The passage is introduced as a rejoinder to what "many" might object against Machiavelli's own opinion. Chapter 19 is literally the center of the third part, just as the peak of the first part was literally its center (ch. 6).

This is no accident. Chapter 19 continues the explicit discussion of the founder which the sixth chapter had begun. Hence we may justly describe chapter 19 as the peak of *The Prince* as a whole, and the third part as its most important part.<sup>14</sup> Chapter 19 reveals the truth about the founders or the greatest doers almost completely. The full revelation requires the universalization of the lesson derived from the study of the Roman emperors, and this universalization is presented in the first section of chapter 20. Immediately thereafter the descent begins. Machiavelli refers there to a saying of "our ancients," i.e., of the reputedly wise men of old Florence, and rejects it in an unusually cautious manner:<sup>15</sup> after having broken with the most exalted teaching of the venerable Great Tradition, he humbly returns to a show of reverence for a fairly recent and purely local tradition. Shortly afterwards he expresses his agreement with "the judgment of many," and immediately before questioning the wisdom of building fortresses, and before showing that the practice has been wisely abandoned by a considerable number of Italian contemporaries, he says that he praises the building of fortresses "because it has been used from ancient times."<sup>16</sup> He shows every sign of wishing to pretend that he believes in the truth of the equation of the good with the ancient and the customary. Acting in the same spirit he expresses there a belief in human gratitude, respect for justice, and honesty,<sup>17</sup> which is quite at variance with everything he said before, and especially in the third part.

Just as the movement of the argument in the third part resembles that in

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form of faithlessness or hypocrisy which strikingly differs from the Roman form (cf *Discourses*, Bk. II, ch. 13, end). There is a connection between this thought and the reference to "pious cruelty" in ch. 21. Machiavelli indicates that the argument of ch. 18 requires a special act of daring (p. 56).

<sup>14</sup> Ch. 19 is the center not only of the third part but of the whole section of *The Prince* which follows the discussion of the various kinds of principality, i.e., of that whole section which in the light of the beginning of *The Prince* comes as a surprise (cf. ch. 1 where the theme "the various kinds of principality" is announced with the beginnings of chs. 12, 15 and 24). Whereas the first, second and fourth parts of *The Prince* each contain one Latin quotation, the third part contains two of them. Compare the beginning of ch. 6 with the beginnings of chs. 21-23 in the light of the observation made in the text.

<sup>15</sup> Ch. 20 (pp. 67-68). The opinion described there as held by "our ancients" is described in *Discourses*, Bk. III, ch. 27 (p. 403) as a modern opinion held by "the sages of our city sometime ago."

<sup>16</sup> Shortly before, Machiavelli mentions "natural affection" for a prince. He had not used that expression since early in ch. 4. But there he had spoken of the natural affection of the subjects for the French barons, their lords from time immemorial; now he speaks of natural affection for a new prince. The transition is partly effected by what he says in ch. 19 (p. 60) about the hatred, founded in fear, of the French people against the French magnates.

<sup>17</sup> Ch. 21 (p. 72). Cf. ch. 3, end.

the first part, the movement of the argument in the fourth part (chs. 24 through 26) resembles that in the second part. In contrast to the last chapters of the third part, the fourth part is characterized by the following facts: Machiavelli speaks again of the "new prince," and even "the new prince in a new principality," and he emphasizes again ancient models. Philip of Macedon, "not the father of Alexander, but the one who was defeated by Titus Quintus," *i.e.*, an ancient prince who did not belong to the highest class of princes, is presented as vastly superior to the contemporary Italian princes who were also defeated. While the central chapter of the fourth part contains only modern examples, it compensates for this, as it were, by being devoted to an attack on a contemporary Italian belief, or rather on a belief which is more commonly held in contemporary Italy than it was in the past. In the last chapter, Moses, Cyrus, and Theseus, three of the four heroic founders praised in chapter 6 are mentioned again; Moses and Theseus had not been mentioned since. In that chapter Machiavelli speaks in the most unrestrained terms of what he hopes for from a contemporary Italian prince, or, from the latter's family. But he does not leave the slightest doubt that what he hopes for from a contemporary new prince in a new state is not more than at best a perfect imitation of the ancient founders, an imitation made possible by the survival of the Italian's ancient valor: he does not expect a glorious deed of an entirely new kind or a new creation. While the last chapter of *The Prince* is thus a call to a most glorious imitation of the peaks of antiquity within contemporary Italy, the general teaching of *The Prince*, and especially of its third part, *i.e.*, Machiavelli's understanding of those founders and of the foundation of society in general, is the opposite of an imitation however perfect: while the greatest deed possible in contemporary Italy is an imitation of the greatest deeds of antiquity, the greatest theoretical achievement possible in contemporary Italy is "wholly new."<sup>18</sup> We conclude therefore that the movement of *The Prince* as a whole is an ascent followed by a descent.

### III. *Application of the foregoing considerations to the interpretation of the last chapter.*

It is characteristic of *The Prince* to partake of two pairs of opposites: it is both a treatise and a tract for the times, and it has both a traditional exterior and a revolutionary interior. There is a connection between these two pairs of opposites. As a treatise, the book sets forth a teaching which is meant to be true for all times; as a tract for his times, it sets forth what ought to be done at a particular time. But the timelessly true teaching is related to time because it is new at the particular time at which it is set forth, and its being new, or not coeval with man, is not accidental. A new teaching concerning the foundations of society being, as such exposed to enmity or unacceptable, a careful move-

<sup>18</sup> The most unqualified attack in *The Prince* on ancient writers in general—ch. 17 (p. 54)—occurs within the context of a praise of ancient statesmen or captains. The fourth part of *The Prince* contains one Latin quotation and the only Italian quotation occurring in the book.

ment is needed from the accepted or old teaching to the new, or a careful protection of the revolutionary interior by a traditional exterior. The twofold relation of the book to the particular time at which and for which it was composed explains why the preponderance of modern examples has a twofold meaning: modern examples are more immediately relevant for action in contemporary Italy than ancient examples, and a discussion of modern examples is less "presumptuous"<sup>19</sup> or offensive than a discussion of the most exalted ancient examples or of the origins of the established order. This must be borne in mind if one wants to understand what Machiavelli means by calling *The Prince* a "treatise."<sup>20</sup> It is necessary also to add the remark that in describing *The Prince* as the work of a revolutionary we have used that term in the precise sense: a revolutionary is a man who breaks the law, the law as a whole, in order to replace it by a new law which he believes to be better than the old law.

If *The Prince* is obviously a combination of a treatise and a tract for the times, the manner in which that combination is achieved, is not obvious: the last chapter comes as a surprise. We believe this difficulty can be resolved if one does not forget that *The Prince* also combines a traditional surface with a revolutionary center. As a treatise, *The Prince* conveys a general teaching; as a tract for the times, it conveys a particular counsel. The general teaching cannot be identical with the particular counsel, but must at least be compatible with it. There may even be a closer connection between the general and the particular: the general teaching may necessitate the particular counsel, given the particular circumstances in which the immediate addressee of *The Prince* finds himself, and the particular counsel may require the general teaching of *The Prince* and be incompatible with any other general teaching. But at any rate, in studying the general teaching of *The Prince* we must never lose sight of the particular situation in which Lorenzo finds himself. We must understand the general in the light of the particular. We must translate every general rule which is addressed to princes, or a kind of prince, in general, into a particular counsel addressed to Lorenzo. And conversely, we must work our way upward from the particular counsel given in the last chapter to its general premises. Perhaps the complete general premises differ from the general premises as explicitly stated, and the complete particular counsel differs from the particular counsel as explicitly stated. Perhaps the unstated implications, general or particular, provide the link between the explicit general teaching and the explicit particular counsel.

<sup>19</sup> Ch. 6 (p. 18) and 11 (p. 36).

<sup>20</sup> To "treat" something means to "reason" about it. (*Prince*, ch. 2 beginning, and ch. 8, beginning.) Machiavelli calls his discourse on the Decemvirate which includes an extensive summary of Livy's account of the Decemvirate and therefore in particular of the actions of the would-be tyrant Appius Claudius, the "above written treatise" (*Discourses* I 43), whereas he calls his discourse on the liberality of the senate "the above written discourse" (*Discourses* I 52 beginning). In *Discourses* II 32 (323) *trattato* means "conspiracy." He calls Xenophon's *Hiero* a treatise on tyranny (II 2) while he calls Dante's *Monarchia* a "discourse" (I 53). In *Florentine Histories* II 2, he calls the first book of that work *nostro trattato universale*.



What precisely is the difficulty created by the counsel given in the last chapter of *The Prince*? As for the mere fact of surprise, one might rightly say that in *The Prince* no surprise ought to be surprising. In the light of the indications given in the first chapter, chapters 8 to 11 come as a surprise, to say nothing of other surprises. Besides, one merely has to read *The Prince* with ordinary care in order to see that the call to liberate Italy with which the book ends is the natural conclusion of the book. For instance, in chapter 12 Machiavelli says that the outcome of the Italian military system has been that "Italy has been overrun by Charles, plundered by Louis, violated by Ferdinand, and insulted by the Swiss" or that Italy has become "enslaved and insulted."<sup>21</sup> What other conclusion can be drawn from this state of things except that one must bend every effort to liberate Italy after having effected a complete reform of her military system, *i.e.*, that one ought to do what the last chapter says Lorenzo ought to do?

The last chapter presents a problem not because it is a call to liberate Italy but because it is silent about the difficulties in the way. In that chapter it is said more than once that the action recommended to Lorenzo or urged upon him will not be "very difficult"; almost everything has been done by God; only the rest remains to be done by the human liberator. The chapter creates the impression that the only thing required for the liberation of Italy is the Italians' strong loathing of foreign domination, and their ancient valor: the liberator of Italy can expect spontaneous cooperation from all his compatriots and he can expect that they all will fly to arms against the foreigners once he "takes the banner." It is true that Machiavelli stresses even here the need for radical reform of the Italian military system. In fact, he devotes the whole center of the chapter, *i.e.*, almost half of the chapter, to the military conditions for the liberation of Italy. But all the more striking is his complete silence about its political conditions. What would be the use of all Italians becoming the best soldiers in the world if they were to turn their skill and prowess against each other or, in other words, if there were not first established a strict unity of command, to say nothing of unity of training?

It is absurd to say that Machiavelli's patriotic fervor temporarily blinds him to the hard practical problems: His patriotic fervor does not prevent him from speaking in the last chapter very prosaically and even technically about the military preparation. The liberator of Italy is described as a new prince, for the liberation of Italy presupposes the introduction of new laws and new orders: he must do for Italy what Moses had done for the people of Israel. But, as Machiavelli had been at pains to point out in the earlier chapters of the book, the new prince necessarily offends many of his fellow countrymen, especially those who benefit from the customary order of things, and his adherents are necessarily unreliable. In the last chapter he is silent about the necessary offensiveness of the liberator's actions as well as about the powerful resistances

<sup>21</sup> Compare also the end of ch. 13 with ch. 25. In the first chapter Machiavelli indicates 13 subjects whose treatment might seem to require thirteen chapters, and he indicates in chapter fifteen, eleven subjects whose treatment might seem to require eleven chapters.

which he must expect. The liberator of Italy is urged there to furnish himself with his own troops who will be all the better if they see themselves commanded by their own prince: will the Venetian or the Milanese troops regard the Florentine Lorenzo as their own prince? Machiavelli does not say a word about the difficulties which the liberator might encounter on the part of the various Italian republics and princes. He merely alludes to these difficulties by raising the rhetorical question "what envy will oppose itself to him?" and by speaking once of "the weakness of the chiefs" in Italy. Does he mean to say that the patriotic fervor of the Italian people will suffice for sweeping aside those weak chiefs, however envious they might be? He certainly implies that before the liberator can liberate Italy, he would have to take not merely a banner, as is said in the text of the chapter, but Italy herself, as is said in the heading. It is a rare if not unique case in Machiavelli's books that the heading of a chapter should be more informative than its body.

Apart from chapters 26 and 24 whose headings refer us to contemporary Italy, only one chapter heading in *The Prince* contains proper names and thus draws our attention to the particular. Chapter 4 is entitled: "Why the Kingdom of Darius Which Alexander Had Seized Did Not Rebel Against Alexander's Successors After His Death."<sup>22</sup> As a consequence, the place of the chapter within the plan of the general teaching indicated in chapter 1, is not immediately clear. Chapter 4 is the center of three chapters which deal with "mixed principalities," *i.e.*, with the acquisition of new territory by princes or republics; or, in other words, which deal with conquest. The primary example in chapter 3 is the policy of conquest practiced by king Louis XII of France; but the country in which he tried to acquire new territory was Italy. In chapter 3, Machiavelli discusses the difficulties obstructing foreign conquests in Italy, a subject most important to the liberator of Italy. By discussing the mistakes the French king committed in attempting to make lasting conquests in Italy, Machiavelli undoubtedly gives advice to foreign conquerors as to how to go about making conquests in his own fatherland.<sup>23</sup> This might seem to cast a reflection on his patriotism. But one could justly say that such advice is only the reverse side, if the odious side, of advice as to how to defend Italy against foreign domination or as to how to liberate Italy. It appears from Machiavelli's discussion that but for the French king's mistakes he could easily have kept his Italian conquests. The mistakes lay in permitting the minor Italian powers to be destroyed and in strengthening a major Italian power, instead of protecting the minor Italian powers and humiliating that major power.

We are forced to wonder what conclusion the liberator of Italy would have to draw from these observations. Should he destroy the minor Italian powers and strengthen the major Italian powers? The destruction of the minor powers which Machiavelli has in mind was effected by Cesare Borgia whose actions he holds up as models for Lorenzo. But would not the strengthening of the other

<sup>22</sup> Chs. 26 and 4 of *The Prince* begin with practically the same word.

<sup>23</sup> *Cf. Discourses*, Bk. I, ch. 23 (p. 153).

major Italian powers perpetuate, and even increase, the difficulties of keeping the foreigner out of Italy?

It is this question which is taken up in an oblique way in chapter 4. Machiavelli distinguishes there two kinds of principality: one like the Persian, conquered by Alexander the Great, in which one man is prince and all others are slaves, and another kind, like France, which is ruled by a king and barons, *i.e.*, in which powers exist that are not simply dependent on the prince but rule in their own right. He makes this distinction more general by comparing the French monarchy to Greece prior to the Roman conquest. What he is concerned with is then the difference between countries ruled by a single government from which all political authority within the country is simply derived, and countries in which there exists a number of regional or local powers, each ruling in its own right. Seen in the light of this distinction, Italy belongs to the same kind of country as France. In discussing Alexander's conquest of Persia Machiavelli is compelled to discuss the conquest of a country of the opposite kind, *i.e.*, the conquest of France. This however means that he is enabled to continue surreptitiously the discussion, begun in the preceding chapter, of the conquest of Italy.<sup>24</sup> Chapter 4 supplies this lesson: while it is difficult to conquer Persia, it is easy to keep her; conversely, while it is easy to conquer France, it is difficult to keep her. France (for which we may substitute in this context Italy) is easy to conquer because there will always be a discontented baron (state) that will be anxious to receive foreign help against the king (against other states within the country). She is difficult to keep because the old local or regional loyalties will always reassert themselves against the new prince. Secure possession of a country is impossible as long as the ancient blood of the local or regional lords or dukes or princes survives.

One might think for a moment that what is good for the foreign conqueror of a country of this sort is not necessarily good for the native liberator of such a country. But, as Machiavelli indicates in chapter 3, the superiority of France to Italy in strength and unity is due to the extirpation of the princely lines of Burgundy, Brittany, Gascony and Normandy. Given the urgency arising from the foreign domination of Italy, the liberator cannot afford to wait until the other princely families have become extinct in the course of centuries. He will have to do on the largest scale what Cesare Borgia has done on a small scale:<sup>25</sup> in order to uproot the power of the old local and regional loyalties which are a major source of Italian weakness, one must extinguish the families of the obnoxious Italian princes.

Cesare Borgia fulfills in *The Prince* a crucial function for the additional reason that he is the link between the foreign conqueror of Italy and her native, patriotic liberator: since he was not simply an Italian, he cannot well be re-

<sup>24</sup> Only at the end of ch. 4 does Machiavelli allude to Italy by mentioning the failure of Pyrrhus, *i.e.*, his failure to keep his conquests in Italy.

<sup>25</sup> Ch. 7 (pp. 23-25); *cf. Opere*, Vol. I, p. 637; consider Machiavelli's statement on the pernicious character of the feudal nobility in *Discourses*, Bk. I, ch. 55.

garded as a potential liberator of his fatherland.<sup>26</sup> As for the Italian republics, we learn from chapter 5, the last chapter devoted to the subject of conquest, that the only way in which a prince, or a republic, can be secure of the loyalty of a conquered republican city with an old tradition of autonomy, is to ruin it and to disperse its inhabitants, and that this holds true regardless of whether the conqueror and the conquered are sons of the same country or not.<sup>27</sup>

#### iv. *The problem of the Church.*

The information about the political requisites for the liberation of Italy is withheld in the chapter explicitly devoted to the liberation of Italy because Machiavelli desired to keep the noble and shining end untarnished by the base and hard means that are indispensable for its achievement. He desired this because the teaching that the "end justifies the means" is repulsive, and he wanted *The Prince* to end even more attractively than it began. The information withheld in the last chapter is supplied in the section on conquest. To that section we have to turn if we desire to know what kind of resistance on the part of his countrymen the liberator of Italy will have to surmount and what kinds of offense against his fellow countrymen he will have to commit.

To liberate Italy from the barbarians means to unify Italy, and to unify Italy means to conquer Italy. It means to do in Italy something much more difficult than what Ferdinand of Aragon had done in Spain, but in certain respects comparable to it.<sup>28</sup> The liberator of Italy cannot depend on the spontaneous following of all inhabitants of Italy. He has to pursue a policy of iron and poison, of murder and treachery. He must not shrink from the extermination of Italian princely families and the destruction of Italian republican cities whenever actions of this kind are conducive to his end. The liberation of Italy means a complete revolution. It requires first and above everything else a revolution in thinking about right and wrong. Italians have to learn that the patriotic end

<sup>26</sup> The term "fatherland" which occurs in chs. 6, 8 and 9, is avoided in ch. 7, the chapter devoted to Cesare Borgia.

<sup>27</sup> The subject-matter of ch. 5 is slightly concealed (see the unobtrusive transition from states in general to cities, *i.e.*, republics, near the beginning: *volerli . . . ruinarle*) It almost goes without saying that nearly all examples in this chapter are ancient.

When discussing the badness of mercenary armies Machiavelli uses almost exclusively examples which show that mercenary armies have ruined or endangered republics. He thus shows in effect that mercenaries can be eminently good for a leader of mercenary armies, like Sforza who by being armed became a new prince; compare ch. 12 with chs. 7, (p. 21) and 14 (p. 46). These remarks taken together with those about the soldiers of the Roman emperors in ch. 19 and about the impossibility of arming all able bodied Italian subjects in ch. 20 (p. 67) reveal a possibility which deserves attention. In this connection one should also consider what Machiavelli says toward the end of the ninth chapter, immediately after having praised (the tyrant) Nabis of Sparta, about the superiority of absolute principalities, *i.e.*, about the kind of principality which was traditionally called tyranny (*Discourses*, Bk. I, ch. 25, end), and compare it with the confrontation of the Turkish and the French monarchies in ch. 4 (p. 14).

<sup>28</sup> Compare ch. 25 (p. 79) with chs. 18, end, and 21, beginning, as well as *Discourses*, Bk. I, ch. 12 (p. 130).

hallows every means, however much condemned by the most exalted traditions both philosophic and religious. The twenty-sixth chapter of *The Discourses* which supplies us with more than one key to *The Prince*, confirms our present conclusion. Its heading says: "a new prince, in a city or country taken by him must make everything new." From its text we learn that just as Cesare Borgia did not become master of the Romagna except by "cruelty well used," Philip of Macedon did not become within a short time "prince of Greece" except by use of means which were inimical not only to every humane manner of life but to every Christian manner of life as well.<sup>29</sup>

The major Italian power which the would-be foreign conqueror, Louis XII, mistakenly strengthened instead of humiliating, was the Church. The native liberator of Italy on the other hand, is advised to use his family connection with the then Pope Leo X in order to receive support for his patriotic enterprise from the already strengthened Church. He is advised in other words to use the Church ruled by Leo X, as Cesare Borgia, the model, had used the Church ruled by Alexander VI. But this counsel can only be of a provisional character. To see this, one has to consider Machiavelli's reflections on Cesare's successes and failures. Cesare's successes ultimately benefited only the Church and thus increased the obstacles to the conquest or liberation of Italy. Cesare was a mere tool of Alexander VI and hence, whatever Alexander's wishes may have been, a mere tool of the papacy. Ultimately Alexander rather than Cesare represents the contemporary Italian model of a new prince. Cesare's power was based on the power of the papacy. That power failed him when Alexander died. His failure was not accidental, seeing that the average length of a Pope's reign is ten years, that the influence of any Italian prince on the election of a new Pope is not likely to be greater than that of the great foreign powers and above all, that the Church has a purpose or interest of its own which casts discredit on the use of the power of the Church for purposes other than strengthening the Church.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Compare *Discourses*, Bk. I, ch. 26 with *Prince*, chs. 7 (p. 24), 8 (p. 30), 13, end, 17, 21, beginning. Just as Philip became "from a little king prince of Greece" by the use of the most cruel means, Ferdinand of Aragon became "from a weak king the first king of the Christians" by the use of "pious cruelty."

<sup>30</sup> *Prince*, ch. 3 (pp. 11-13), 7 (pp. 23, 26), 11 (pp. 37-38); cf. *Discourses*, Bk. III, p. 29. We note in passing that in *The Prince*, ch. 16 (pp. 50-51), Machiavelli holds up "the present king of France," "the present king of Spain" and Pope Julius II but not the present Pope, Leo X, who possesses "goodness and infinite other virtues," (ch. 11, end) as models of prudent stinginess which is the indispensable condition for "doing great things." Cf. Ranke, *Die Roemischen Paepste*, ed. F. Baethgen, Vol. I, p. 273 on Leo X's extravagance—Machiavelli tells in *The Prince* two stories about private conversations which he had had (chs. 3 and 7). According to the first story Machiavelli once told a French cardinal that the French know nothing of politics, for otherwise they would not have permitted the Church to have become so great (through the exploits of Cesare Borgia). The second story deals with what Cesare told Machiavelli on the day on which Pope Julius II was elected, i.e., on which Cesare's hopes were dashed through his insufficient control of the Church: Cesare had in fact committed the same mistake as the French, but he had the excuse that he had no choice.

The liberation of Italy which requires the unification of Italy requires therefore eventually the secularization of the Papal states. It requires even more. According to Machiavelli, the Church is not only through its temporal power the chief obstacle to the unity of Italy. The Church is also responsible for the religious and moral corruption of Italy and for the ensuing loss of political virtue. Besides, Machiavelli was very much in fear of the Swiss whose military excellence he traced partly to their sturdy piety. He draws the conclusion that if the Papal Court were removed to Switzerland, one would soon observe the deterioration of Swiss piety and morals and hence of Swiss power.<sup>31</sup> He seems to have played with the thought that the liberator of Italy would have to go beyond secularizing the Papal states by removing the Papal Court to Switzerland and thus to kill two birds with one stone. The liberator of Italy must certainly have the courage to do what Giovampagolo Baglioni was too vile to do, namely, "to show the prelates how little one ought to respect people who live and rule as they do and thus to perform an action whose greatness obliterates every infamy and every danger that might arise from it." He must make Italy as united as she was "in the time of the Romans."<sup>32</sup>

The addressee of *The Prince* is advised to imitate Romulus among others. To imitate Romulus means to found Rome again. But Rome exists. Or could the imitation of Romulus mean to found again a pagan Rome, a Rome destined to become again the most glorious republic and the seminary and the heart of the most glorious empire? Machiavelli does not answer this question in so many words. When he mentions for the second time, in the last chapter of *The Prince*, the venerable models whom the addressee of *The Prince* ought to imitate, he is silent about Romulus.<sup>33</sup> The question which he forces us to raise, he answers by silence. In this connection we may note that whereas in *The Discourses* "We" sometimes means "We Christians," "We" never has this meaning in *The Prince*. At any rate, both the explicit general teaching and the explicit particular counsel conveyed by *The Prince* are more traditional or less revolutionary than both the complete general teaching and the complete particular counsel. The two pairs of opposites which are characteristic of *The Prince*, namely, its being both a treatise and tract for the times and its having both a traditional outside and a revolutionary center, are nicely interwoven. *The Prince* is altogether, as Machiavelli indicates at the beginning of the second chapter, a fine web. The subtlety of the web contrasts with the shocking frankness of speech which he sometimes employs or affects. It would be better to say that the subtle web is subtly interwoven with the shocking frankness of speech which he chooses to employ at the proper time and in the proper place.

<sup>31</sup> *Discourses*, Bk. I, ch. 12. Cf. the letter to Vettori of April 26, 1513. In *Florentine Histories*, Bk. I, ch. 23. Machiavelli alludes to the possibility that the papacy might become hereditary. Could he have played with the thought that a new Cesare Borgia might redeem Italy after having himself become Pope and the founder of a papal dynasty?

<sup>32</sup> *Discourses*, Bk. I, ch. 27; *Opere*, Vol. I, p. 638.

<sup>33</sup> Machiavelli prepares for the silence about Romulus in ch. 26 in the following manner: in ch. 6 he enumerates the four heroic founders three times and in the final enumeration Romulus is relegated to the end. Cf. *Florentine Histories*, Bk. VI, ch. 29.

v. *Lorenzo's imitation of Moses.*

This much for the time being about the character of *The Prince*. The subject of the book is the prince, but especially the new prince. In the Epistle Dedicatory, Machiavelli indicates that his teaching is based on his knowledge of the actions of great men; but the greatest examples of great men are new princes like Moses, Cyrus, Romulus and Theseus, men "who have acquired or founded kingdoms." In the first chapter, he divides principalities into classes with a view to the differences of materials and modes of acquisition rather than to differences of structure and purpose. He thus indicates from the outset that he is chiefly concerned with men who desire to acquire principalities (either mixed or wholly new), *i.e.*, with new princes. There is a twofold reason for this emphasis. The obvious reason is the fact that the immediate addressee of the book is a new prince and besides is advised to become prince of Italy and thus to become a new prince in a more exalted sense. But what at first glance seems to be dictated merely by Machiavelli's consideration for the needs and prospects of his immediate addressee, on reflection proves to be necessary for purely theoretical reasons as well. All principalities, even if they are now elective or hereditary, were originally new principalities. Even all republics, at least the greatest republics, were founded by outstanding men wielding extraordinary power *i.e.*, by new princes. To discuss new princes means then to discuss the origins or foundations of all states or of all social orders, and therewith the nature of society. The fact that the addressee of *The Prince* is an actual or potential new prince conceals somewhat the eminent theoretical significance of the theme "the new prince."

The ambiguity due to the fact that *The Prince* deals sometimes with princes in general and sometimes with new princes in particular, is increased by the ambiguity of the term "new prince." The term may designate the founder of a dynasty in a state already established, *i.e.*, a new prince in an old state, or a man who "seizes" a state like Sforza in Milan or Agathocles in Syracuse or Oliverotto in Fermo. But it may also designate a new prince in a new state or "a wholly new prince in a wholly new state," *i.e.*, a man who has not merely acquired a state already in existence but has founded a state. The new prince in a new state in his turn may be an imitator, *i.e.* adopt modes and orders invented by another new prince, or in other ways follow the beaten track. But he may also be the originator of new modes and orders, or a radical innovator, the founder of a new type of society, possibly the founder of a new religion—in brief, a man like Moses, Cyrus, Theseus, or Romulus. Machiavelli applies to men of the highest order the term "prophets."<sup>34</sup> That term would seem to fit Moses rather than the three others. Moses is indeed the most important founder: Christianity rests on a foundation laid by Moses.

At the beginning of the chapter devoted to the grandest examples, Machiavelli makes it unambiguously clear that he does not expect the addressee of *The*

<sup>34</sup> *Prince*, ch. 1, 6 (pp. 17–19), 8 (pp. 29–30), 14 (p. 48), 19 (p. 66), 20 (p. 67), and 24 (p. 77); cf. *Art of War*, Bk. VII (pp. 616–617).

*Prince* to be or to become an originator: he advises his reader to become an imitator or to follow a beaten track or to be a man of second rate virtue. This is not surprising: an originator would not need Machiavelli's instruction. As he states in the Epistle Dedicatory, he wishes that Lorenzo would "understand" what he himself "had come to know and had come to understand": he does not expect him to have come to know the most important things by himself. Lorenzo may have an "excellent" brain; he is not expected to have a "most excellent" brain.<sup>35</sup> However this may be, being "a prudent man," he is exhorted to "follow the track beaten by great men and to imitate those who have been most excellent," *i.e.*, men like Romulus and Moses.

On the other hand, the precepts which Machiavelli gives to Lorenzo are abstracted from the actions, not of Romulus or Moses, but of Cesare Borgia;<sup>36</sup> for, to say nothing of other considerations, Lorenzo's hoped for rise depends upon his family connection with the present head of the Church, and therewith on chance, just as Cesare's actual rise depended on his family connection with a former head of the Church; whereas Romulus and Moses rose to power through virtue as distinguished from chance. By imitating Cesare Borgia, Lorenzo would admit his inferiority to Cesare: Machiavelli's book would be somewhat out of place if meant for a man of Cesare's stature and lack of scruples. Still, Lorenzo is advised to imitate men of the stature of Romulus and of Moses. As appears from the last chapter however, that imitation is expected less of Lorenzo himself than of the illustrious house to which he belongs.

In the last chapter the emphasis is altogether on Moses. Machiavelli says there that God was a friend of Moses, Cyrus and Theseus. The description is applied to Moses with greater propriety than to Cyrus and to Theseus. Lorenzo is then exhorted to imitate Moses. The notion of imitating the prophets of old was familiar to Machiavelli's contemporaries: Savonarola appeared as a new Amos or as a new Moses, *i.e.*, as a man who did the same things which the Biblical prophets had done, in new circumstances. This is not to say that there is no difference between the imitation of Moses as Savonarola meant it and the imitation of Moses as Machiavelli understood it.

In order to encourage Lorenzo to liberate Italy, Machiavelli reminds him of the miracles which God had performed before their eyes: "The sea has been divided. A cloud has guided you on your way. The rock has given forth water. Manna has rained." The miracles of Lorenzo's time, which indeed are attested to by Machiavelli alone, imitate the miracles of Moses's time. More precisely, they imitate the miracles which were performed, not in Egypt, the house of bondage, but on the way from Egypt to the promised land—to a land to be conquered. Differing from Savonarola, Machiavelli does not predict that Florence, or her ruler will become the ruler of Italy,<sup>37</sup> for the success of the venture depends now alone on the exercise of human virtue which, because of man's

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *Prince*, ch. 22.

<sup>36</sup> Ch. 7 (pp. 21–22).

<sup>37</sup> Letter to [Ricciardo Bechi] March 8, 1497.



free-will, cannot be foreseen. What may be imminent, Machiavelli suggests, is the conquest of another promised land, of the land which he has half promised to Lorenzo. But alas, the imitation of Moses is bad for Lorenzo; for Moses did not conquer the promised land: he died at its borders.

In this dark way, Machiavelli, the new sibyl, prophesies that Lorenzo will not conquer and liberate Italy.<sup>38</sup> He did not regard the practical proposal with which he concluded *The Prince*, as practicable. He had measured the forces of contemporary Italy too well to have any delusions. As he states in the two Prefaces of the companion book which in this respect takes up the thread where *The Prince* drops it, "of that ancient virtue [which is political] no trace has been left" in Italy. Not the short range project suggested at the end of *The Prince*, but rather the long range project indicated throughout *The Discourses* offers hope for success. Many writers have dismissed the last chapter of *The Prince* as a piece of mere rhetoric. This assertion—provided it were followed up by an intelligent account of the enigmatic conclusion of *The Prince*—could be accepted as a crude expression of the fact that that chapter must not be taken literally or too seriously.

Machiavelli does not leave it at indicating his opinion by making us think of the inauspicious character of the imitation of Moses as far as the conquest of a promised land is concerned. While stressing the imitative character of the work to which he exhorts Lorenzo he stresses the fact that the liberator of Italy must be an originator, an inventor of new modes and orders, and hence not an imitator. He himself gives some hints regarding far reaching practical innovations. But it is clear that the innovator or the inventor in these matters would be Machiavelli, not Lorenzo. The cryptic prediction of Lorenzo's failure in case he should make the attempt to liberate Italy, can therefore be restated as follows: only a man of genius, of supreme virtue, could possibly succeed in liberating Italy; but Lorenzo lacks the highest form of virtue. This being the case, he is compelled to rely too much on chance.

Machiavelli indicates and conceals how much Lorenzo would have to rely on chance by the religious language which he employs in the last chapter. He mentions God as often there as in all other chapters of *The Prince* taken together. He calls the liberator of Italy an Italian "spirit"; he describes the liberation of Italy as a divine redemption and he suggests its resemblance to the resurrection of the dead as depicted by Ezekiel; he alludes to the miracles wrought by God in Italy. However much we might wish to be moved by these expressions of religious sentiment, we fail in our effort. Machiavelli's certainty of divine intervention reminds us of his expectation of a spontaneous all-Italian rising against the hated foreigners. Just as that expectation is at variance with what earlier chapters had indicated about the certainty of powerful Italian

<sup>38</sup> The shift in *Prince*, ch. 26, from Lorenzo to his family can be understood to some extent from the point of view indicated in the text. As for the unreliability of promises stemming from passion, cf. *Discourses*, Bk. II, ch. 31; for the popularity of grand hopes and valiant promises, cf. *Discourses*, Bk. I, ch. 53.

resistance to the liberator and unifier of Italy, so the expression of religious sentiment is at variance with earlier explicit remarks.

According to these remarks, fear of God is desirable or indispensable in soldiers and perhaps in subjects in general, while the prince needs merely to appear religious; and he can easily create that appearance, considering the credulity of the large majority of men. In the last chapter itself Machiavelli calls the God-wrought contemporary events which resemble certain Biblical miracles, not "miracles" but "extraordinary" events "without example":<sup>39</sup> He thus denies the reality of those Biblical miracles and therewith, for an obvious reason, the reality of all Biblical miracles. Without such a denial, his own free invention of the contemporary "extraordinary" events would not have been possible; those invented miracles have the same status as the Biblical miracles. According to *The Prince*, miracles are happenings which are neither common nor reasonable. They are happenings which cannot be traced to secondary causes but only to God directly. Near the beginning of chapter 25 Machiavelli suggests that what is generally meant by God, is in truth nothing but chance. Hence the suggestion made in chapter 26 that a number of miracles have happened in contemporary Italy is the figurative equivalent of the assertion made explicitly in chapter 25 that chance is particularly powerful in contemporary Italy.

More specifically, many "miraculous losses" have been sustained in contemporary Italy.<sup>40</sup> In the last chapter he enumerates seven astonishing defeats suffered in the immediate past by Italian troops.<sup>41</sup> Since there is no defeat without a victor, one may speak with equal right of "miraculous losses and miraculous acquisitions" being the necessary consequence of the preponderance of Fortuna's power in contemporary Italy.<sup>42</sup> This means that, given the poverty of the Italian military system and the ensuing rule of chance, a well advised and industrious prince might have astounding contemporary successes against other Italian princes, just as Pope Julius II had such successes against his cowardly enemies. In particular, Lorenzo might succeed in building up a strong power in Tuscany. But the thought of defeating the powerful military monarchies which dominate parts of Italy, remains for the time being a dream.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> This is not to deny the fact that the miracles attested to by Machiavelli are without example insofar as their sequence differs from the sequence of the Mosaic miracles.

<sup>40</sup> *Prince*, ch. 3 (p. 13), 12 (pp. 39, 41), 18 (pp. 56-57) and 25 (pp. 80-81); cf. *Discourses*, Bk. I, ch. 27. One can express the progress of the argument in the last part of *The Prince* as follows: 1) everything depends on virtue (ch. 24); 2) very much depends on chance but chance can be kept down by the right kind of man (ch. 25); 3) chance has done the most difficult part of the work required for liberating Italy, and only the rest needs to be done by means of virtue (ch. 26).

<sup>41</sup> The seven real defeats must be taken together with the four invented miracles if one wants to grasp Machiavelli's intimations.

<sup>42</sup> *Discourses*, Bk. II, ch. 30, end.

<sup>43</sup> In the "highest" part of *The Prince* Machiavelli speaks of "us Florentines" (chs. 15 and 20), while in the other parts of the book he speaks of "us Italians" (chs. 2, 12, 13 and 24).

vi. *The ambiguity of Machiavelli's role.*

One cannot understand the meaning of the last chapter and therewith of *The Prince* as a whole without considering the position, the character and aspirations of the other partner in the relationship, not to say in the dialogue, which constitutes the book. In proportion as the status of Lorenzo is lowered, the stature of Machiavelli grows. At the beginning, in the Epistle Dedicatory, Lorenzo appears as dwelling in the wholesome heights of majesty whereas Machiavelli must inhale the dust at his feet; the favorite of Fortuna is contrasted with her enemy. Machiavelli presents himself as a man who possesses information which princes necessarily lack and yet need. He describes that information in a way which is surprising not only to those who are forced by disposition or training to think of statecraft. He claims to possess knowledge of the nature of princes: just as one sees mountains best from a valley and valleys best from a mountain, so one must be a prince in order to know well the nature of peoples and one must be a man of the people in order to know well the nature of princes. In other words, while Lorenzo and Machiavelli are at opposite ends of the scale of Fortuna, they are equal in wisdom: each possesses one half of the whole of political wisdom; they are born to supplement each other.

Machiavelli does not say that they should pool their resources in order to liberate Italy. Nor does he wish to hand over his share of political wisdom to Lorenzo as a pure gift. He desires to receive something in return. He desires to better his fortune. Looking forward to the end of the book, we may say that he desires to better his fortune by showing Lorenzo how to better his own fortune through becoming prince of Italy. For, as he has already said in the Epistle Dedicatory, chance, and Lorenzo's other qualities, promise him a greatness which even surpasses his present greatness. He dedicates *The Prince* to Lorenzo because he seeks honorable employment. He desires to become the servant of Lorenzo. Perhaps he desires to become an occasional or temporary advisor of Lorenzo. Perhaps he is even thinking of the position of a permanent advisor. But the absolute limit of his ambition would be to become the minister of Lorenzo, to be to Lorenzo what Antonio da Venafro had been to Pandolfo Petrucci, prince of Siena.

His desire would be wholly unreasonable if he did not see his way toward convincing his master of his competence. The proof of his competence is *The Prince*. But competence is not enough. Lorenzo must also be assured of Machiavelli's loyalty or at least reliability. Machiavelli cannot refer, not even in the Epistle Dedicatory, to the fact that he once had honorable employment in which he loyally served. For he was a loyal servant of the republican regime in Florence, and this fact by itself might compromise him in the eyes of his prince.

He faces this difficulty for the first time in the chapter on civil principalities, *i.e.*, on the kind of principality of which Lorenzo's rule is an example. He discusses there the question of how the prince ought to treat the notables among his subjects. He distinguishes three kinds of notables, the central one consisting of men who do not commit themselves entirely to the cause of the prince

because they are pusillanimous and have a natural defect of courage. Machiavelli advises the prince to employ men of this kind provided they are men of good counsel, "for in prosperity you are honored on account of this, and in adversity you have nothing to fear from them." Men of good counsel will have the required pusillanimity if the power of the prince has strong popular support: the few who can see with their own eyes "do not dare to oppose themselves to the opinion of the many who have the majesty of the state on their side."

Since Machiavelli was suspected of having participated in a conspiracy against the Medici, it was particularly necessary for him to show through *The Prince* that men of his kind would never have the temerity to engage in such dangerous undertakings; for they would think only of the probable outcome of the deed and not of its possible intrinsic nobility. He almost presents the spectacle of a conversation between himself and a potential conspirator against the prince in which he tries to convince the conspirator of the folly of his imaginings—a spectacle the very suggestion of which must have edified and reassured Lorenzo if he should have read *The Prince*. Eventually Machiavelli does not refrain from speaking explicitly about how a new prince should treat men who in the beginning of his reign had been suspect because of their loyalty to the preceding regime. He urges the prince to employ men of this kind. "Pandolfo Petrucci, prince of Siena ruled his state more with those who were suspected by him than with others." The mere fact that such men are compelled to live down a past makes them willing to be reliable servants of the prince.

But by proving so completely his reliability in addition to his competence, Machiavelli might seem to have overshot the mark. His potential employer might well wonder if a man of his cleverness if employed as an advisor or minister, would not receive all credit for wise actions of the government and thus by contrast bring contempt on the less wise prince. Machiavelli assures him, as well as he can, by setting up the infallible general rule that a prince who is not himself wise cannot be well advised.<sup>44</sup>

Considering the great hazards to which Machiavelli exposed himself by trying to enter the service of a new prince, one may wonder whether according to his principles he ought not to have preferred poverty and obscurity. He answers this question in *The Discourses* since it cannot be answered with propriety in *The Prince*. Men in his position, he indicates, live in continuous danger if they do not seek employment with the prince; in trying to give advice to the prince, they must indeed "take things moderately," *i.e.*, they must avoid standing forth as the chief or sole promoters of a bold scheme. Only if the bold scheme is backed by a strong party can some risks safely be taken.<sup>45</sup> The particular counsel which Machiavelli gives to Lorenzo explicitly, *i.e.*, the

<sup>44</sup> *Prince*, chs. 9 (p. 32), 18 (p. 57), 19 (pp. 58–59), 20 (pp. 68–69) and 23 (pp. 76–77). In each of the two chapters, 20 and 21, Machiavelli gives five rules to princes; the fourth rule in chapter 20 concerns the employment of men who were suspect at the beginning of the reign of a new prince; in the fourth rule given in ch. 21 the prince is urged to honor those who are excellent in any art.

<sup>45</sup> *Discourses*, Bk. III, ch. 2, end, and ch. 35 (pp. 422–423).

counsel he gives in the last chapter of *The Prince*, is moderate both because it is silent about the extreme measures required for the liberation of Italy and because it cannot but be very popular with very many Italians.

VII. *Is THE PRINCE amoral or immoral?*

We have not yet considered Machiavelli's strange suggestion that he possesses one-half of political wisdom, namely, knowledge of the nature of princes, whereas Lorenzo may possess the other half, namely, knowledge of the nature of peoples.

He makes this suggestion in the same context in which he declares his intention to give rules for princely government. But to give rules to princes as to how they ought to rule, means to teach them how they ought to rule their peoples. Machiavelli cannot then teach princes without possessing good knowledge of the nature of peoples as well. In fact, he gives plenty of evidence of his possessing such knowledge in as much as he transmits it in *The Prince* to his princely pupil. He knows everything of relevance that the prince knows and in addition he knows much of relevance of which the prince is ignorant. He is not merely a potential advisor of a prince but a teacher of princes as such. In fact, since more than one of his precepts is not required for princes at all, because princes would know such things without his instruction, he also informs, through *The Prince*, subjects of princes, about what they ought to expect from their princes or about the nature of princes.<sup>46</sup> As an advisor of a prince, he addresses an individual; as a teacher of political wisdom, he addresses an indefinite multitude. He indicates his dual capacity and the corresponding duality of his addressees by the way in which he uses the second person of the personal pronoun: he uses *Thou* when addressing the prince, and even the man who conspires against the prince, *i.e.*, when addressing men of action, while he uses *You* when addressing those whose interest is primarily theoretical.<sup>47</sup>

Machiavelli mentions only one teacher of princes: Chiron the centaur who brought up Achilles and many other ancient princes. Machiavelli's own model is a mythical figure: he returns to the beginnings not only by making the heroic founders his most exalted theme and the foundation of society his most fundamental theme, but likewise in understanding his own doing. His model is half-

<sup>46</sup> Compare *Discourses*, Bk. I, ch. 30 (p. 163) with 29 (pp. 160–161).

<sup>47</sup> Apart from the *Epistle Dedicatory* and ch. 26 where Machiavelli, speaking of Lorenzo to Lorenzo uses the plural of reverence, he uses the second person plural only in connection with verbs like "seeing," "finding," "considering," and "understanding." There are, I believe, 11 cases of the latter kind in *The Prince*, while in *The Discourses*, if I remember well, there are only two, Bk. I, ch. 58 (p. 221), and Bk. II, ch. 30 (p. 317); in *The Discourses* which are addressed to potential princes, the need to distinguish between doers and thinkers does not arise to the same extent as in *The Prince*. In the chapter of *The Prince* on flatterers—ch. 23 (p. 75)—Machiavelli uses *Thou* when speaking of the prince to the prince, while he uses the third person when speaking of the prudent prince: he is not a flatterer. Ch. 3 (pp. 10–11) beautifully illustrates how Machiavelli the teacher works together with his readers in examining certain things as well as how his contribution differs from that of his readers.

beast, half-man. He urges princes, and especially new princes, first to make use of both natures, the nature of the beast and the nature of man, and in the repetition, simply to imitate the beast, *i.e.*, to use the person of the fox and the lion or to imitate these two natures.<sup>48</sup> The imitation of the beast takes the place of the imitation of God.

We may note here that Machiavelli is our most important witness to the truth that humanism is not enough; since man must understand himself in the light of the whole or of the origin of the whole which is not human, or since man is the being that must try to transcend humanity, he must transcend humanity in the direction of the sub-human if he does not transcend it in the direction of the super-human. *Tertium, i.e.* humanism *non datur*: there is no third alternative. We may look forward from here to Swift whose greatest work culminates in the recommendation that men should imitate the horses,<sup>49</sup> to Rousseau who demanded the return to the state of nature, a sub-human state, and to Nietzsche who suggested that TRUTH is not God but a Woman. As for Machiavelli, one may say with at least equal right that he replaces the imitation of the GOD-MAN, Christ, by the imitation of the BEAST-MAN, Chiron. That BEAST-MAN is, as Machiavelli indicates, a creation of the writers of antiquity, a creature of the imagination. Just as Scipio by imitating Cyrus in fact imitated a creature of Xenophon,<sup>50</sup> the princes by imitating Chiron will in fact imitate, not Chiron, but the ancient writers, if the carrying out of a teaching can justly be called an imitation of that teaching. But whatever may be true of princes or other actors, certainly Machiavelli by teaching princes what Chiron was said to have taught, imitates Chiron or follows the creators of Chiron. Yet, as we have noted before, merely by teaching openly, and in his own name, what certain ancient writers had taught covertly and by using their characters as their mouthpieces, Machiavelli sets forth an entirely new teaching. He is a Chiron of an entirely new kind.

In general, as a teacher of princes, or of new princes, Machiavelli is not particularly concerned with the particulars facing contemporary Italian princes. Such problems would be of interest to him only as illustrations of typical problems. The primary purpose of *The Prince* is then not to give particular counsel to a contemporary Italian prince, but to set forth a wholly new teaching regarding wholly new princes in wholly new states, or a shocking new teaching about the most shocking phenomena.

From this we understand the meaning of the last chapter. The particular counsel there given serves the purpose of justifying the novel general teaching

<sup>48</sup> *Prince*, ch. 18 (p. 55) and 19 (p. 62).

<sup>49</sup> Swift's Houyhnhnms, being reasonable horses, are centaurs if a centaur is a being which combines the perfection of a horse with the perfection of a man. In order to understand what the recommendation to imitate these beast-men means in *Gulliver's Travels* one would have to start from the facts that the relation between Lilliput and Brobdingnag imitates the relation between the moderns and the ancients, and that the same relation is imitated again on a different plane in the last two parts of the work.

<sup>50</sup> Compare *Prince*, ch. 14, end, with *Discourses*, Bk. II, ch. 13.

before the tribunal of accepted opinion: a general teaching however novel and repulsive, might seem to be redeemed if it leads up to a particular counsel so respectable, honorable and praiseworthy as that of liberating Italy. But how is this transformation achieved? Machiavelli does not merely suppress mention of the unholy means which are required for the achievement of the sacred end. He surreptitiously introduces a new end, an end not warranted by the argument of the first twenty-five chapters. He urges Lorenzo to liberate Italy on patriotic grounds or, to use a term to which he alludes near the beginning of chapter 26, on grounds of the common good. He thus creates the impression that all the terrible rules and counsels given throughout the book were given exclusively for the sake of the common good.

The last chapter suggests then a tolerable interpretation of the shocking teaching of the bulk of the work. But the first twenty-five chapters had observed complete silence about the common good. The allusion to the common good near the beginning of chapter 26 has the same status as the other surprising features of that chapter: the expectation of a spontaneous all-Italian rising against the foreigners and the expression of religious sentiment. It is only when one subjects the particular counsel given in the last chapter to political analysis along the lines demanded by the earlier chapters that one realizes that one must have broken completely with traditional morality and traditional beliefs in order even to consider that counsel.

But the judicious reader cannot leave it at raising the question of how that particular counsel could be put into practice and thereafter whether it can be put into practice under the given circumstances. He must raise this further and more incisive question: would Machiavelli condemn the immoral policies recommended in the bulk of the book if they did not serve a patriotic purpose? Or are these immoral policies barely compatible with a patriotic use? Is it not possible to understand the patriotic conclusion of *The Prince* as a respectable coloring of the designs of a self seeking Italian prince? There can be no doubt regarding the answer; the immoral policies recommended throughout *The Prince* are not justified on grounds of the common good, but exclusively on grounds of the self-interest of the prince, of his selfish concern with his own well being, security and glory.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Machiavelli does not even suggest that Cesare Borgia, the model, was animated by patriotism or concerned with the common good. It is true that he contrasts Cesare with the criminal Agathocles by not calling Cesare a criminal. But if one looks at the actions of the two men, the contrast vanishes: in describing Agathocles as a criminal, he provisionally adopts the traditional judgment on that man, whereas there does not yet exist a traditional judgment on Cesare. The traditional condemnation of Agathocles was partly based on the fact that he had risen to princely power from "a base and abject condition." Machiavelli refers to a similar consideration when explaining the failure of Maximinus—*Prince*, ch. 19 (pp. 64–65)—but it is irrelevant for his own judgment as can be seen from *Discourses*, Bk. II, ch. 13, to say nothing of the Epistle Dedicatory to *The Prince*, where he describes himself as "a man of low and base state." The main reason why Machiavelli has to speak of a criminal ruler was that he was compelled to indicate that he was questioning the traditional distinction between the criminal and the non-

The final appeal to patriotism supplies Machiavelli with an excuse for having recommended immoral courses of action. In this light, his character may very well appear to be even blacker than even his worst enemies have thought. At the same time, however, we are not forced to leave it at saying that the last chapter of *The Prince* is a piece of mere rhetoric, *i.e.*, that he was not capable of thinking clearly and writing with consummate skill.

These observations are not to deny that Machiavelli was an Italian patriot. He would not have been human if he had not loathed the barbarians who were devastating and degrading his fair country. We merely deny that his love for his fatherland, or his fatherland itself, was his most precious possession. The core of his being was his thought about man, about the condition of man and about human affairs. By raising the fundamental questions he of necessity transcended the limitations and the limits of Italy, and thus he became enabled to use the patriotic sentiments of his readers as well as his own for a higher, ulterior purpose.

One must also consider an ambiguity characteristic of his patriotism. In *The Prince* there occur eight references to "the fatherland"; in one case Italy is described as the fatherland; in six cases the fatherlands mentioned are, not countries, but cities; in one case, one country (Persia) and two cities (Athens and Rome) are described as fatherlands while in the fourth example mentioned in that context, the example of Moses, it is unclear whether the fatherland honored by Moses was Egypt or Canaan *i.e.*, the land of his birth or the land of his aspiration.<sup>52</sup> When we apply this observation to Machiavelli, we become

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criminal as far as founders are concerned. He presents Agathocles then as the classical example of the criminal ruler, as a breaker of all divine and human laws, a murderer and a traitor, and a man without faith, mercy or religion; Agathocles possessed indeed greatness of mind; while being a most excellent captain, he cannot be counted among the most excellent men; his actions could acquire for him empire but not glory; he benefited indeed his subjects, or rather the common people, but he did this of course entirely for selfish reasons. In the sequel Machiavelli retracts everything he had said in connection with Agathocles about the difference between an able criminal ruler and an able non-criminal ruler. The first step is the praise of Nabis whom he calls a prince in *The Prince*, while he calls him in *The Discourses* a tyrant; Nabis' policy was fundamentally the same as that of Agathocles. Compare *Prince*, ch. 9 (p. 33) and ch. 19 (p. 58) with *Discourses*, Bk. I, ch. 10 (p. 122) and ch. 40 (p. 187). The second step is the questioning of the difference between "most excellent captain" and "most excellent man": good arms are the necessary and sufficient condition of good laws, and Agathocles had good arms; the excellent man most emphatically praised, Cyrus, is not said to have possessed faith, mercy and religion, but he is distinguished by greatness of mind, *i.e.*, by a quality which Agathocles also possessed. One reason why Agathocles cannot be counted among the most excellent men, is his savage cruelty and inhumanity; but Hannibal who is likewise characterized by inhuman cruelty is a most excellent man. Compare *Prince*, ch. 12 (pp. 38-39), ch. 14 (pp. 47-48), ch. 17 (p. 54), ch. 26 (p. 81) with *Discourses*, Bk. II, ch. 18 (p. 280) and Bk. III, ch. 21, end. The last step is to show that glory can be acquired by crime or in spite of crime. This is shown most clearly by *Prince*, ch. 18 towards the end, and by the case of Severus to say nothing of Machiavelli's observations regarding Giovampagolo Baglioni in *Discourses*, Bk. I, ch. 27.

<sup>52</sup> *Prince*, ch. 6 (p. 18), ch. 8 (pp. 27, 29, 30), ch. 9 (pp. 31, 33), ch. 26 (p. 84).



aware of the tension between his Italian patriotism and his Florentine patriotism. Or should one not rather speak of a tension between his Roman patriotism and his Tuscan patriotism? There exists a close connection between the transpatriotic core of his thought and his love for Italy. Italy is the soil out of which sprang the glory which was ancient Rome. Machiavelli believed that the men who are born in a country preserve throughout all times more or less the same nature. If the greatest political achievement which the world has ever known was the fruit of the Italian soil there is ground for hope that the political rejuvenation of the world will make its first appearance in Italy. The sons of Italy are the most gifted individuals in the world; all modern writers referred to in either *The Prince* or *The Discourses* are Italians.

Since that political rejuvenation is bound up with a radical change in thought, the hope from Italy and for Italy is not primarily political in the narrow sense of the term. The liberation of Italy which Machiavelli has primarily in mind, is not the political liberation of Italy from the barbarians but the intellectual liberation of an Italian elite from a bad tradition. But precisely because he believed that the men who are born in a country preserve throughout all times more or less the same nature, and as the nature of the Romans was different from that of the Tuscans, his hope was also grounded on his recollection of Tuscan glory:<sup>53</sup> the old Etrurians had made a decisive contribution to the religion of the Romans. He seems to have regarded himself as a restorer of Tuscan glory because he too contributed toward supplying Rome with a new religion or with a new outlook on religion. Or perhaps he thought of Tarquinius Priscus the Etrurian who strengthened the democratic element of the Roman polity.

Furthermore, once one grasps the intransigent character of Machiavelli's theoretical concern, one is no longer compelled to burden him with the full responsibility for that practical recklessness which he frequently recommends. The ruthless counsels given throughout *The Prince* are addressed, less to princes who would hardly need them than to "the young" who are concerned with understanding the nature of society. Those true addressees of *The Prince* have been brought up in teachings which, in the light of his wholly new teaching, reveal themselves to be much too confident of human goodness, if not of the goodness of creation and hence too gentle or effeminate.

Just as a man who by training or by nature is too much given to fear, cannot acquire that courage which is a mean between cowardice and foolhardiness, unless he drags himself in the direction of foolhardiness, Machiavelli's pupils must go through a process of brutalization in order to become free from effeminacy. Or just as one learns bayoneting by using weapons which are much heavier than those used in actual combat,<sup>54</sup> one learns statecraft by seriously playing with extreme courses of action which are rarely, if ever, appropriate in actual politics. Not only some of the most comforting, but precisely some of the most

<sup>53</sup> *Prince*, ch. 26 (p. 83); *Discourses*, Bk. II, ch. 4, toward the end, and Bk. III, ch. 43; *Art of War*, at the end; compare *Discourses*, Bk. I, ch. 1, end, with Livy, Bk. I, ch. 34.12-35.12. Also Livy, Bk. V, ch. 15. Cf. note 43 above.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. *Art of War*, Bk. II (p. 489).

outrageous statements of *The Prince* are not meant seriously but merely serve a pedagogic function: as soon as one understands them, one sees that they are amusing and meant to amuse.

Machiavelli tries to win over the young from adhering to the old teachings by appealing to the taste of the young which is not the best taste or, for that matter, to the taste of the common people:<sup>55</sup> he displays a bias in favor of the impetuous, the quick, the partisan, the spectacular, and the bloody, over and against the deliberate, the slow, the neutral, the silent, and the gentle. In *The Prince* he says that a prince who has conquered a city which was wont to live free, must destroy it if he cannot make it his residence. In *The Discourses* he says that precisely a prince, as distinguished from a republic, provided he is not a barbarian, would spare and protect conquered cities and would leave intact, as much as possible, their autonomy.<sup>56</sup>

Another resolute course of action recommended in *The Prince* is to avoid neutrality when two powerful neighbors come to blows: to take sides is always better than to stay neutral. Machiavelli gradually discloses the limitations of this advice. He admits first that neutrality is not always fatal. He states then that because of the power of justice, to take sides is safer than to stay neutral. Thereafter he makes clear that under certain conditions it is most unwise to abandon neutrality in case of conflict between two powerful neighbors. Finally he admits that no course of action is perfectly safe or, in other words, that the power of justice is not as great as he previously indicated.<sup>57</sup> He suggests very strongly in *The Prince* that the one thing needful is good arms; he speaks less loudly of the need for prudence.<sup>58</sup>

#### VIII. Machiavelli as Prophet.

We must return once more to Machiavelli's suggestion that he possesses adequate knowledge of the nature of princes whereas Lorenzo may possess adequate knowledge of the nature of peoples. As we have said, this suggestion is absurd: since to be a prince means to rule the people, it is impossible to know well the first without knowing well the second; to say nothing of the facts that he displays knowledge of the nature of peoples throughout *The Prince* and, as he says explicitly in *The Discourses*, there is no difference of nature between princes and peoples.<sup>59</sup> Since he knows well the nature of peoples, he intimates by his strange suggestion that he is a prince.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. *Discourses*, Bk. I, ch. 53.

<sup>56</sup> *Prince*, ch. 5; *Discourses*, Bk. II, ch. 2 (pp. 239-240). In the preceding chapter of *The Discourses* (p. 234) there occurs one of the few references to *The Prince*; it is to the third chapter, i.e., to the section which deals with conquest.

<sup>57</sup> *Prince*, ch. 21 (pp. 71-73).

<sup>58</sup> *Prince*, ch. 12 (pp. 38-39) and ch. 19 (p. 58); *Discourses*, Bk. I, ch. 4 (p. 103); *Opere*, Vol. II, p. 473.

<sup>59</sup> *Prince*, ch. 3 (p. 6), ch. 6 (p. 19), ch. 9 (pp. 31, 32), ch. 10 (pp. 35-36), ch. 17 (p. 53), ch. 18 (p. 57), ch. 23 (p. 75), ch. 24 (p. 78); *Discourses*, Bk. I, chs. 57 and 58 (pp. 217-219). In *The Prince*, chs. 7 (p. 22) and 8 (p. 28) he applies expressions to Cesare Borgia and to Agathocles which he had applied to himself in the Epistle Dedicatory.

This intimation will appear strange only to those who lack familiarity with Xenophon or Plato: he who knows the art of ruling is more truly a ruler than men who rule merely by virtue of inheritance or force or fraud or election by people who know nothing of the art of ruling.<sup>60</sup> But if Machiavelli is a prince, he is a new prince, and not a new prince who imitates the modes and orders which were founded by others, but one who is an originator or true founder, a discoverer of new modes and orders, a man of supreme virtue. In fact, if it is proper to call prophet the founder of a new social order which is all-comprehensive, and not merely political or military, he is a prophet. Not Lorenzo, but Machiavelli, is the new Romulus-Numa or the new Moses, *i.e.*, a man who not merely repeats in new circumstances what Romulus-Numa or Moses had done in the olden times, but who is as original as they were.

In the last chapter of *The Prince*, he attests to certain miracles which had happened somewhere in contemporary Italy—miracles which resemble those of the time of Moses. The ancient miracles happened on the way from the house of bondage to the promised land: they happened immediately before the revelation on Mount Sinai. What is imminent, Machiavelli suggests then, is not the conquest of a new promised land, but a new revelation, the revelation of a new code, of a new decalogue. The man who will bring the new code cannot be Lorenzo or any other prince in the vulgar sense of the term. The bringer of the new code is none other than Machiavelli himself: he brings the true code, the code which is in accordance with the truth, with the nature of things.

Compared with this achievement the conquest of the promised land, the liberation of Italy is a *cura posterior*: it can wait, it must wait until the new code has regenerated the Italians. The new Moses will not be sad if he dies at the borders of the land which he had promised and if he will see it only from afar. For while it is fatal for a would be conqueror not to conquer while he is alive, the discoverer of the all-important truth can conquer posthumously.<sup>61</sup>

Concerning new prophets in general, Machiavelli remarks that all armed prophets have conquered and the unarmed prophets have failed. The greatest armed prophet is Moses. The only unarmed prophet mentioned is Savonarola. But as is shown by the expression "all armed prophets . . . and the unarmed ones," he thinks not merely of Savonarola. Just as he, who admired so greatly the contemporary Muslim conquerors, cannot help thinking of Muhammad when speaking of armed prophets, he must have thought of Jesus when speaking of unarmed prophets.

This is perhaps the greatest difficulty which we encounter when we try to enter into the thought of *The Prince*: how can Machiavelli, on the basis of his principles, understand the victory of Christianity? Certain of his successors attempted explicitly to account for the victory of Christianity in purely political terms. To quote from a present day historian:

<sup>60</sup> Cf. *Discourses*, Epistle Dedicatory, and the letter to Vettori of Dec. 10, 1513.

<sup>61</sup> The 11 pairs of opposite moral qualities mentioned in ch. 15 and the 11 rules of conduct discussed in chs. 20 to 21 prove on examination to be 10. Compare Hobbes's re-writing of the decalogue in *Leviathan*, ch. 30.

In the most starkly Erastian utterance of the [seventeenth] century, [Henry] Parker all but maintained that it was Constantine and not the preaching or the miracles of the early Church, that won Europe to the Christian fold.<sup>62</sup>

But we cannot bring ourselves to believe that a man of Machiavelli's intelligence would have been satisfied with an answer of this kind which obviously leads to this further question: what motivated Constantine's action? Must Christianity not already have been a power in order to become an attraction or a tool for a politician? To see how Machiavelli could have accounted for the victory of Christianity, we have to consider a further difficulty which is no less obvious. All unarmed prophets, he says, have failed. But what is he himself if not an unarmed prophet? How can he reasonably hope for the success of his enormous venture—enormous in itself and productive of infinite enormities—if unarmed prophets necessarily fail? This is the only fundamental question which *The Prince* raises in the reader's mind without giving him even a suspicion of Machiavelli's answer. It recalls the question which is likewise left unanswered in *The Prince*, as to how new modes and orders can be maintained throughout the ages.<sup>63</sup> If Machiavelli has answered these questions at all, he is likely to have answered them in *The Discourses* rather than anywhere else.

<sup>62</sup> W. K. Jordan, *Men of Substance* (Chicago, 1942), p. 82.

<sup>63</sup> Compare *Discourses*, Bk. III, ch. 35, beginning, with *Prince*, ch. 6 (p. 19).