

6 Niccolò Machiavelli as relationship marketing guru

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Introduction

My invitation to speak at the Machiavelli seminar stimulated me to reread *The Prince* and to see how useful parallels between his advice to the Prince and some of my current concerns about the future of marketing could be made. I have dwelt on the following topics, drawn from Machiavelli's chapter headings:

- I How many are the kinds of marketing and in what modes they are acquired
- II Of mixed marketing
- III How marketing should be administered
- IV Of those who have acquired marketing power through crimes
- V Of civil society
- VI In what mode marketing should be measured
- VII Of those things for which marketing is to be praised or blamed
- VIII Of liberality and parsimony
- IX What a marketer should do to be held in esteem

Machiavelli offered me one challenge:

It must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle than to initiate a new order of things. For the reformer has enemies in all those who profit from the old order, and only lukewarm defenders in all those who would profit by the new.

(Machiavelli 1995:51)

Jane Jacobs offered me another. She has written about right and wrong in business and politics. Her extraordinary book, *Systems of Survival* (Jacobs 1994), is written in the form of a Platonic dialogue about the moral foundations of commerce and politics. Jacobs explores two moral value systems. The dialogue that she constructs is based on two opposing moral syndromes, shown in table 6.1.

Table 6.1

<i>The commercial moral</i>	<i>The guardian moral</i>
<i>Syndrome A</i>	<i>Syndrome B</i>
Shun force	Shun trading
Come to voluntary agreements	Exert prowess
Be honest	Be obedient and disciplined
Collaborate easily with strangers and aliens	Adhere to tradition
Compete	Respect hierarchy
Use initiative and enterprise	Be loyal
Be open to inventiveness and novelty	Take vengeance
Be efficient	Deceive for the sake of the task
Promote comfort and convenience	Make rich use of leisure
Dissent for the sake of the task	Be ostentatious
Invest for productive purposes	Be exclusive
Be industrious	Show fortitude
Be thrifty	Be fatalistic
Be optimistic	Treasure honour

Source: Jacobs (1994:2 14)

This clearly suggests a conflict between marketers' value systems and the guardian moral syndrome (defended and advocated by Machiavelli). I have been stimulated to explore the possibilities of convergence. Jacobs refers to Machiavelli in her book:

Machiavelli's famous advice to the Prince seems to cover many topics, and its ostensible theme is prowess, but its gist is loyalty: its indispensability to a successful prince. He dwells on it from every angle. How to deserve loyalty. How to win it, buy it, inculcate it, cultivate it, terrorize people into it. How to subvert loyalty to rival princes and States. How to sniff out disloyalty and deal with it. All his digressions lead back to loyalty....

(*ibid.*: 68)

The very stuff of marketing and marketing management. But alas, now my problem is exposed. For it is Jacobs' contention that in contemporary civil society there is a conflict between two moral syndromes: the first of which, the commercial syndrome, arises from trade and production unique to human beings; the second of which, the guardian syndrome, derives from behaviour which we share with other animals, protecting our territories, the ethical basis for the existence of armed forces, the police, government ministries and their legislatures, courts and organized religions. Two modes of survival with contradictory ethical systems.

What I will attempt to do is to explore my world, the world of markets and marketing, using some of Machiavelli's concepts, to see if reconciliation between the guardian syndrome and the commercial syndrome is possible.

I How many are the kinds of marketing and in what modes they are acquired

Free markets are an instrument of capitalism, but capitalism itself is an artefact created by legal artifice and political intervention, as table 6.2 demonstrates.

This leads me to speculate about the nature of what we will call the stakeholder society and the social market paradigm.

Table 6.2

	<i>United Kingdom and United States</i>	<i>Germany and Japan</i>
Time factor	Early industrializers.	Late industrializers.
Development strategy	Innovate across a broad front of entrepreneurship and management.	Catch up in technological sectors seen as the most valuable.
Historical role of governments	Generally ignorant of new business developments. Interfere after the fact to 'reform' wealth creators, who have adversarial roles to regulators.	Generally informed about strengths of leading economies. Co-operate before the fact to facilitate industrialization, playing a constructive role.
Education	Extremely broad and generalist, with stress on pure science and management studies.	More focused on successful technologies and science applied to key sectors.
Economies	Divided between macroeconomics (the whole economy) and microeconomics (the individual firm).	Organized around meso-economics (the dynamics of particular industries and sectors).
Social policies	Left behind in the leads to innovate. Government may seek to reimpose social 'burdens' on business retroactively.	Included in concerted efforts to industrialize. Government sees social benefits as key to winning popular consent.
Development philosophy	Laissez-faire, free-trade, and Anglo-American empiricism toward what markets demand, eschewing grand designs or 'picked winners'.	Managed competition, early protection, and teleology – a logic of ends – already accomplished by leading economies. Target key niches, 'pick teachers'.
Transition from feudalism	Slow and largely complete. Industry built on middle-class values of individualism and self-interest.	Rapid and partly unfinished. Industry built on collective concepts of feudal obligations and reciprocities.
Approach to financing industry	Domination by shorter-term equity markets and risk-taking profit-oriented individuals with high uncertainty, limited knowledge, fleeting relations.	Domination by longer-term bank financing and lower-risk industry-oriented institutions with lower uncertainty, deeper knowledge, closer relations.

Source: Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1993)

II Of mixed marketing: the social market paradigm and the stakeholder society

The social market paradigm highlights the following factors:

- 1 Market institutions are not forms of spontaneous order—they are human artefacts created by legal artifice and political intervention.
- 2 Market institutions are justified by their contribution to individual and collective well-being and their structure is perpetually open to revision and reform.
- 3 Market institutions must be complemented by other institutions, and modes of public policy:
 - economic policy to create stability of both employment and prices
 - control instruments such as Company Law, Monopolies Commissions, Securities and Exchange Commissions, the World Trade Organization, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund
 - market institutions are rooted in particular cultural traditions with an underpinning framework of law. These cultural traditions are diverse, as, to a degree, are the frameworks of law—individualistic in the Anglo-American tradition, solidaristic and familial in East Asia.

There is no universal or ideal typical market institution—all are rooted in cultural and historical forms. Markets that do not express the underlying national culture will be neither legitimate nor stable.

Markets will not have popular acceptance nor political stability if they do not meet the standards of legitimacy set by their underlying cultures. They must satisfy pervasive and deep seated norms of equity and fairness. Markets have a role as an important instrument of economic development—but only as an instrument.

Contemplate the following comparison in table 6.3, between the dominant social paradigm, and the environmental paradigm which is gathering support.

- 1 These two paradigms expose the tensions implicit in contemporary society. The stakeholder debate illustrates these tensions. It is the tension between personal autonomy and the need for membership and inclusion in the organization of civil society. Stakeholding is about the rights of ownership, the nature of trust relationships and political rights. All three exist and are defined in three contexts:
 - i At the micro level, concerning the rights and relationships of individuals in the workplace, in the household and in the neighbourhood.
 - ii At the next higher level, in communities and organizations—companies, schools, hospitals, churches, trades unions, management and professional organizations, and voluntary associations.

Table 6.3

	<i>Dominant social paradigm</i>	<i>Alternative environmental paradigm</i>
Core values	Material (economic growth) Natural environment valued as a resource Domination over nature	Nonmaterial (self-actualization) Natural environment intrinsically valued Harmony with nature
Economy	Market forces Risk and reward Rewards for achievement Differentials Individual self-help	Public interest Safety Incomes related to need Egalitarian Collective/social provision
Polity	Authoritative structures (experts influential) Hierarchical Law and order	Participative structures (citizen/worker involvement) Nonhierarchical Liberation
Society	Centralized Large-scale Associations Ordered	Decentralized Small-scale Communitarian Flexible
Nature	Ample reserves Nature hostile/neutral Environment controllable	Earth's resources limited Nature benign Nature delicately balanced
Knowledge	Confidence in science and technology Rationality of means Separation of fact/value, thought/feeling	Limits to science Rationality of ends Integration of fact/value, thought/feeling

Source: After Routley (1982)

- iii At the highest level, in national parliaments and in supranational organizations such as the European Union.

The tension, as reflected to a large degree in the social paradigm and the alternative paradigm, is the tension between the individual and the collective.

- 2 Being a stakeholder may imply autonomy and choice, freedom to enter and exit jobs, organizations and relationships. On the other hand, stakeholding implies collective obligations and rights conferred by membership of organizations. A stakeholder should have an interest in the decisions and actions of all the organizations that affect the stakeholder's life and well-being, a claim to the rights of consultation, access to all relevant information and, most importantly, participation in decision making.

We may conclude that a stakeholding society must differ from the free market model, since it places implicit limits on the way the free market works because the rights defined in the stakeholder model require direct concern with the problems of polarization of society, concern with the marginalization of groups within society (the unemployed, the unskilled, the old, those who have not made it in the competitive market place), with the ‘winner takes all’ mentality of unfettered market competition.

III How marketing should be administered

A new marketing paradigm is emerging which may hold rich possibilities for reconciling the dominant social paradigm with the environmental paradigm, the commercial moral syndrome with the guardian moral syndrome. These are questions that need to be addressed.

How do customers and consumers behave?

Much marketing thinking is guided by the belief that customers are rational value maximizers. What do we really know about how choices are made and exchanges consummated, in an era of proliferating choices and rapid technological and social change, and how these choices are influenced by persuasive efforts? What do we know about understanding customer needs—current, latent, and emerging?

What are the most appropriate models for describing and explaining the processes of search, preference formation and choice, and the resulting customer experience? Why are customers satisfied or dissatisfied, loyal or defectors? Further, what do we need to know about the influence of social trends, demographic shifts and market reforms on individual behaviour?

How do markets function and evolve?

The concepts of market segmentation, positioning and product life cycle are central to marketing. Yet serious doubts have been raised about the validity and utility of these foundation concepts. Are they adequate to the task of describing and explaining the function, structure and evolution of contemporary markets, or are new concepts and models needed? Issues that need to be addressed include: Are market boundaries distinct and stable, or shifting and overlapping? Is segmentation meaningful when it is possible to address and respond to segments of one? How do new products diffuse into new markets? How are patterns of market growth and evolution shaped by the forces of globalization, rapid information diffusion, and competitive consolidation? How do vertical market structures shift and how does value flow between levels?

How do firms relate to their markets

In today's complex and dynamic global environment, firms increasingly relate to one another in the multiple roles of customer, competitor and collaborator. This raises questions concerning how firms should and do relate to their customers (and, by extension, to their customers' customers), to their suppliers and partners and to their competitors.

Marketing thought is shifting from an emphasis on transactions and acquisition to relationships and retention. Meanwhile, developments in information technology and networks facilitate interactive communications and help tighten relationships. There is a pressing need to understand the sources and implications of these evolving forms of linkages: why do the parties participate, how are conflicts resolved in a web of relationships and how do they evolve and adapt in global markets? How will electronic commerce and interactivity transform markets?

Co-operative relationships are also changing the competitive landscape. Suppliers, customers and channels—and even rivals—are entering into alliances and partnerships, greatly extending the complexity of inter-firm relationships. How will increasingly disaggregated firms manage the total value or supply chain? What competitive advantages are gained, and how are they sustained? A related issue is: how do firms come to understand and anticipate the reactions of competitors? How should they deal with the emergence of competition?

What are the contributions of marketing to organizational performance and societal welfare?

The role and value of marketing has been repeatedly challenged. Within the organization there have been pointed queries about the productivity of marketing expenditures, the appropriate organizational role and influence of the marketing function and the contributions to financial performance.

Where and when do marketing processes and activities need to be performed? There is also wide acceptance of the value of a marketing orientation to the organization. What is known and should be known about how this orientation is achieved and leads to better performance?

From a societal perspective, what is the net contribution of marketing societies and economies as a whole? What criteria should be used to judge their societal value? Who are the stakeholders? What theories and evidence can be used to objectively examine both the benefits as identified by its advocates and abuses seen by its critics? How might society seek to preserve the benefits and minimize the negative aspects?

All of those questions, when answered, will provide us with insights as to how marketing should be administered. We can point to a current development in marketing thought that suggests the direction of movement.

Relationship marketing is:

The consistent application of up-to-date knowledge on individual customers, to product and service design, which is communicated interactively, in order to develop a continuous and long-term relationship, which is mutually beneficial.

Marketing needs to switch from current to lifetime value of customers. Indeed it could even open up an intriguing debate about whether or not excess returns are appropriately allocated to shareholders instead of customers. After all, shareholders only provide the commonest commodity—funds—whereas customers potentially provide the rarest loyalty.

(Brady 1996:10)

Loyalty, that lovely Machiavellian word.

The lifetime value of the customer. That has a resonance with loyalty. Brady also challenges us to think about stakeholders. Table 6.4 explicates the contrast between transactional and relationship marketing.

Table 6.4

<i>Transactional marketing</i>	<i>Relationship marketing</i>
Do the deal and disappear	Negotiate a win-win sale situation and stay around, being a resource for better results
Push price	Promote value
Short-term thinking and acting	Long-term thinking and acting
Build the business on deals	Build the business on relationship
Getting new customers	Keeping all customers and clients
No structure for ongoing business	Structure created to support relationship; special clubs and memberships for frequent user-buyers
Selling-focused	Relationship-focused for results
Short-term empathy	Long-term empathy and rapport
Incentive for doing the deal	Incentive for long-term relationships and revenue
Foundation of sale – telling and selling	Foundation of revenue – trust
Race for a sale result	Swift, strong and enduring in results through relationship building
After-sales support and service poor – seen as cost	After-sales support and service strong – seen as an investment in the relationship
Product-service-focused	People-expectations and perception focused
Rewards – incentive for ‘doing deals’	Rewards – incentive for maintaining and growing relationship and revenue
‘The deal is the end’. Pursuit of deal	The sale – just the beginning. Pursuit of long-term relationship and results

IV Of those who have acquired marketing power through crimes

There is no doubt that many people have distrusted those who are involved in marketing. There is a curious paradox here. We are all of us consumers and, as consumers, we have power—the power to withhold our custom. We disapprove of selling refrigerators to Eskimos, we believe, rightly, that pyramid selling is exploitation, we disguise salesmen as commercial travellers. The carpet-bagger mentality supposes that consumers have short memories—my experience is quite the contrary. A cheated or short-changed customer never forgets. Nonetheless we should recognize, certainly historically, that there has been a lack of trust between buyers and sellers. One of the real benefits of globalizing business and the emergence of global brands, is that consumers are exposed to best practice, by which they may judge all competitors. That said, it would be myopic to believe that best practice is pervasive. We believe that the relationship paradigm does propose a long-term relationship as the way for buyers and sellers to relate, reducing the pay-off from short-termism. Whether caveat emptor will be replaced by caveat vendor is arguable, perhaps not even desirable. I have a particular interest in the economies in transition in the former Soviet empire. In parts of that empire there is today visible evidence of crime driving good business practice out and Mafiosi values ruling in many areas of business activity. Further, we are witnessing what Kapuscinski has called enclave development:

In a highly developed European country, in Holland, for example, or Switzerland, the entire material world around us is developed at more or less the same level: the houses are neatly painted, there are panes in all the windows, the asphalt on the roads is smooth and the traffic lines well demarcated, the stores everywhere are well stocked, the restaurants are warm and clean, the street lamps are lit, and the lawns are evenly mowed. In a country with enclave development, however, the landscape looks different. An elegant bank stands amid shabby apartment buildings; a luxurious hotel is surrounded by slums; from a brightly illuminated airport one plunges into the darkness of a grim, squalid city; beside the glittering display window of a Dior boutique, the dirty, empty, and unlit windows of local shops; next to impressive cars, old, stinking, crowded city buses. Capital (largely foreign) has constructed its fragrant and shining sanctuaries, these excellent enclaves, but it has neither the means to nor any intention of developing the rest of the country.

(Kapuscinski 1994:328–9)

That is a depressing picture of current reality in the former Soviet Union and contains an indictment of Western capitalists. In Poland, to which I am a frequent visitor, the juxtaposition of local Coca-Colonization and the creation of MacWorld values stand alongside growing income disparities and a still fairly

chaotic infrastructure. It is a situation where crimes and misdemeanours as drivers of trade and personal wealth creation outside the law flourish. We need not travel to Poland, however, for criminal economic and marketing activity are readily observed in the high-rise housing estates of Manchester, Liverpool, Edinburgh—the list goes on. And on a grander scale we cannot understand what is causing concern in the Pacific Rim, from which I have just returned, without understanding that criminal and conspiratorial behaviour is not unrelated to the problem. Covering clients' losses was the downfall of a major Japanese securities firm, just as Nick Leeson's greed (and those of his masters in London) led to the downfall of Barings Bank. That sort of marketing power is criminal and should be punished. It has no place in a responsible marketing environment, no place in a relationship marketing environment, though it clearly was part of the pathology of the transactional marketing environment.

V Of civil society: glimpse of paradise lost and paradise regained

New productive technologies are raising the importance of human skills, of innovative technology based on research and development and of infrastructure, including virtual reality infrastructure like the Internet. All three are social investments.

Technology is a social process of human creativity and innovation. Social investment in education and research, and in infrastructure, leads to increased productivity. Yet we live at a moment when the current emphasis is on individual consumption and hence acquisition is the centre, the core of the value system—it is the pursuit of hedonism encouraged by market freedom. Can we shift capitalism from consumption ideology to a builder ideology? Success in the future will be based on building, on building brain power industries such as the bio-technology, pharmaceutical and chemical industries, the semi-conductor industry, telecommunications, aerospace, robotics, information technology—man-made brain-power industries, all are transforming our lives. The educational system and the healthcare delivery system are essentially public goods and their quality is an acid test of civil society. Both depend on builder ideology, both depend on human skills, advancing technology and infrastructure. Both are under threat from market forces, both are being seduced by the ethics of unfettered market capitalism. Hedonism and profit maximization should have nothing to do with education and healthcare. To temper the market we must reclaim civil society and government—we must again embrace the idea that government and civic vitality are allies not adversaries.

Paradise lost

1 Consumerism rules. The consumer and the person have become synonymous.

- 2 Civic alienation and spiritual poverty are widespread.
- 3 The nation state yields all power to global corporations and global financial markets.
- 4 Global companies seek out market freedom, but market freedom does not equal democracy. The biggest loser from globalization is labour, especially unskilled labour in the First World.
- 5 The invisible hand pays no attention to full employment, to environmental protection, to social safety nets, to personal protection.
- 6 Markets are not guarantors of the public good.
- 7 Increasing global production will lead to growing surpluses of goods because of the present and foreseeable maldistribution of income. Global production also endangers cultural identity—cars look alike, pop music and MTV are all persuasive, and English, peppered with Americanisms, is the world language.

The threats to the future of civil society:

- 1 Individual greed, unenlightened self-interest. Untrammelled individualism corrupts a nation. It leads to an emphasis on rights, with no regard to duties or responsibilities. It breeds distrust and jealousy—and lots of lawyers. If we can leave families when we feel like it, live free to ignore or insult our neighbours, treat organizations as stepping stones on a personal trip, and only make friends who will be useful contacts, to be discarded when no longer needed, we will erode that ‘social capital’ which more and more people are recognizing as the bedrock of a successful and prosperous society. The first principles of a civil society should be inclusion and self-restraint.
- 2 Global warming.
- 3 Nuclear weapons and international arms traffic.
- 4 Competing nationalisms.
- 5 Species extinction/habitat destruction.
- 6 Population pressures and mass refugee migration.
- 7 Poverty both in the Third World and at home (3 million people sleep on the streets of western Europe).
- 8 Disaffection with politics and political parties.
- 9 Pervasive loss of community. Loss of cohesion and stability in society.
- 10 Spread of restrictive, condemnatory religious fundamentalism.
- 11 Rising unemployment.

The architecture of paradise regained:

- 1 Social justice.
- 2 Democratic renewal.
- 3 Community regeneration.
- 4 A social market economy.

- 5 Equitable rewards for all stakeholders.
- 6 Cultural benefits (presently enjoyed by only a minority).
- 7 A peaceable global society.

VI In what mode marketing should be measured: sophisticated measurement instruments will be revealed

It follows from what has preceded, that marketing and business activity needs to be measured in a much more sophisticated way than presently institutionalized by the accounting profession under the euphemism ‘generally accepted accounting principles’. I have written extensively on this topic, but here I can only highlight the principles that I have elaborated elsewhere.

I have argued that successful companies add value more efficiently and more effectively than their competitors, judged primarily by the attitudes and behaviour of their customers.

I advocate that an organization’s ability and success in adding value requires measurement of leadership (ability to deliver customer value), of marketing professionalism (market share, return on marketing investment, brand development, brand strength performance, the customer management process, customer retention performance), innovation management (customer and product development processes), supply chain management, financial management (investor satisfaction, price, relative cost of capital), employee management (investment in people, motivation, empowerment, turnover, value added per employee) and community relations.

VII Of those things for which marketing is to be praised or blamed

Some would be brave enough to argue that marketing was responsible for the collapse of communism. The Ossies knew what was available to the Wessies on the other side of the Berlin Wall, so one day in 1989 they decided to break down the wall. Others will argue that the Soviet system imploded. Yes, its inability to deliver worldly goods was undoubtedly an important factor.

Less controversially, consider the following factors, all of which are market and marketing related. The internationalization of business is market driven—the search for customers. Nationally separate markets are no longer relevant. Where markets are not growing (characteristic of western Europe) competition between producers (of both products and services) leads to a search for better value for money strategies, for customer retention and loyalty strategies. Timebased competition (JIT) leads to ‘faster to market’ and ‘first mover’ strategies, which accelerates innovation rates. Market and performance assessment become more critical. The marketing concept (the whole business seen from the point of view of its end result—the consumer or customer) is now seen as relevant to all organizations—giant multinationals, SMEs,

universities, theatres, symphony orchestras, the Salvation Army, the Boy Scouts—all have to be managed but none will survive unless what they offer to the market is perceived by consumers as having value.

VIII Of liberality and parsimony

We can identify the things that make managers' lives difficult. The sheer scale of contemporary management change; the frequency of management failure; the tension between business and the environment; the tension between business's need for innovation and the community's need for stability; the tension between the changing nature of knowledge and the limited capacity of the human mind; the tension between business's need to compete internationally and society's interest in the common good. How do we reconcile these tensions?

IX What a marketer should do to be held in esteem

Though we must beware of millennial pessimism, recent events in the Pacific Rim have reminded us that the global economy is not as robust as we might like to think. We, in Europe, are to a degree surrounded by economic, social and ideological uncertainty. Rising unemployment here (not mirrored in the USA) carries the threat of social instability. Global competition and the IT revolution have forced industrial restructuring, and are accelerating the process of technological change. Concerns about job security, about crime, about healthcare create social insecurity, at a time when it has been popular to reduce or dismantle the welfare state and to privatize. Pro-market ideology has been triumphant for the last twenty years.

As a marketer I react in this way. Companies, organizations and indeed governments should be in the business of delivering value—if they do so, they inculcate loyalty. In western Europe we must be clear as to where our comparative advantage lies. We have a relatively well-educated middle class, so I must believe that technological innovation remains a major source of adding value. The pharmaceutical companies of Europe are world-class players. We have the capability of adding more value in the semi-conductor industry (we must reduce our dependence on America and Japan). We surely can add (global) value to the arts, culture and music (both pop and classical!) and in the fields of fashion goods and design. In the field of education, our quality standards are still highly regarded worldwide. We will still make things like refrigerators, automobiles and aircraft, but the growing markets are elsewhere and there will be continuing pressure to take manufacturing closer to those markets.

We are left to speculate about the future relationship between marketing and politics. I detect some reaction against pro-market ideology. Let us talk about the politics of moderation. Will a reaction develop against our harried and congested lives? Will the growth markets be associated with leisure, relaxation and healthcare? Might we become bored with material possessions

(and their acquisition) and consumerism *per se*? Will increasing emphasis on personal qualities, on knowledge (and knowledge acquisition), on health, lead politics toward the environmental paradigm? That paradigm holds the promise of self-actualization, of the public interest, of communitarian values, of mutual interdependence.

If there is a move in this direction, then we may begin to understand the relationship between excessive inequality and political instability, between over-consumption and environmental degradation, between social values and economic performance.

Perhaps I am contemplating a postmodern, post-marketing, post-consumerist society. But if you believe, as do I, that marketing is about delivering value, then companies, organizations and politicians will have to deliver value to sovereign consumers and citizens. If we demand a change—in our life styles, in our society's values—then in the market for ideas there will be responses and those who respond appropriately will be rewarded with our loyalty. How to deserve loyalty, how to win it, inculcate it, cultivate it, is what marketing is all about.

Note

- 1 Taken from Gilbert, A. (trans.) (1989) *Machiavelli: The Chief Works and Others*, vol. 1, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, p. 44.

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