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PATRICIDE AND THE PLOT OF *THE PRINCE*: CESARE BORGIA AND MACHIAVELLI'S ITALY

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An understanding of Machiavelli's assessment of Cesare Borgia in *The Prince* is essential for interpreting his view of politics, but the ambiguity of that assessment has led to vastly different conclusions about Machiavelli's political teaching and Cesare's significance. We approach Machiavelli's ultimate intentions through a consideration of his more immediate concern for Italy. Machiavelli's great interest in Cesare and his criticism of this potential hero stem from the historical context of an Italy divided due to the Church. Cesare possessed—yet squandered—an opportunity to rid Italy of the evils plaguing it by killing his father, Pope Alexander, and by eliminating the College of Cardinals. Machiavelli's suggested denouement to the plot of *The Prince* is an assault on the ecclesiastical power. He invites his reader to contemplate the vulnerability of the Church and to act where Cesare and others shrank. Machiavelli ultimately counsels us to break our reliance on God or fortune and thus create the conditions for a reinvigorated civil life.

Machiavelli confronts his readers in *The Prince* with an ambiguous portrait of Cesare Borgia. This ambitious son of Pope Alexander VI—this ruthless new prince of the Romagna—indisputably occupies a great deal of Machiavelli's attention in the work. Indeed, Machiavelli offers Cesare as an instructive model: "I do not know what better teaching I could give to a new prince than the example of his actions" (1985, 27).¹ Ultimately, however, Machiavelli's assessment of Cesare's achievement is mixed. Despite his outstanding *virtù*, in the end Cesare failed in his enterprise due to "an extraordinary and extreme malignity of fortune": surprised by the death of his father and his own illness, Cesare made an unfortunate choice in supporting the election of Julius II, the future warrior pope (pp. 32–33).

The prominent yet uncertain role of Cesare in *The Prince* is at the center of debates over Machiavelli's political theory. More than one reader of *The Prince* has been led by the relish with which its author relates the murderous deeds of the Borgias to conclude that Cesare is Machiavelli's hero, simply. "Machiavelli was full of his idol, Duke Valentino," declares Montesquieu (*Spirit of the Laws* 29.19). An actual prince eager to prove his humane credentials, Frederick of Prussia, indicts Machiavelli by saying Cesare is "the model on which the author forms his prince" and his "hero" (1981, 58; see also A. Gilbert 1938, 42). This conclusion requires revision in light of Machiavelli's own criticism of his exemplar (Sasso 1966, chap. 14). Some interpreters have therefore argued that Cesare, whatever his shortcomings, is Machiavelli's idealized "man of *virtù*" (Hullington 1983, 192) or the model for his own method of statecraft (e.g., Butterfield 1962, 97–98, see also Skinner 1981, 8–12, 33–34). Conversely, others have seen Machiavelli's attention to Cesare as evidence that *The Prince* is a satire. "The choice of his execrable hero is in itself enough to make manifest his hidden inten-

tion," Rousseau states, claiming that "*The Prince* is the book of republicans" (*Social Contract* 3.6 and n.; see also Mattingly 1958, 487–91). Cesare's place in *The Prince* thus raises questions about Machiavelli's intentions in that work and the relationship of his handbook for princes to his apparently more republican writings, especially the *Discourses*.

As political scientists or historians of political thought, we are ultimately interested in Machiavelli because of the general bearing of his thought and its influence, including his status as perhaps the first truly "modern" political thinker.² Nonetheless, Machiavelli did write in the context of sixteenth century Italy. Just as it is a mistake to read *The Prince* as essentially historically bound, so too is it an error to interpret it without reference to Machiavelli's surroundings and his more immediate intentions. We approach Machiavelli's ultimate intentions by concentrating on his more immediate ones in *The Prince*: his concern for an Italy overrun by "barbarians" and kept divided due to the papacy.

We argue that Machiavelli's concern with the Church's ruinous influence on Italy is the source of both his attention to Cesare and his criticism of this potential hero. Although we differ with Rousseau on the issue of whether Machiavelli's interest in Cesare is sincere, we agree with him that the Church is Machiavelli's target in *The Prince*: "The court of Rome has severely forbidden his book. I can well believe it; it is the court that he most clearly depicts" (*Social Contract* 3.6, n.).³ Because Cesare was perfectly situated to eliminate the power of the Church, he possessed—yet squandered—an opportunity to rid Italy of the evils plaguing it and thus to realize the grand achievement called for in the concluding chapter of *The Prince*. By following the development of the plot of *The Prince* and its protagonist, we uncover Machiavelli's advice for remedying Italy's ills. Like his play

Mandragola (a comedy of conspiracy), *The Prince* has a plot.

Unfolding in a chilling drama, Machiavelli's plot involves the conquest of the ecclesiastical principality of Rome, a special type of state to which he devotes a chapter of *The Prince*. The court of Rome has a peculiar mode of rule where the pope's authority is derived from the cardinals and that of the cardinals from the pope. The complete acquisition of this state would require the elimination of both the pope and the College of Cardinals. Machiavelli intimates that Cesare could have done just that: had Cesare acted more prudently, "he could have kept *anyone* from being pope (*poteva tenere che uno non fussi papa*)" (p. 33 [Machiavelli 1971, 268]; emphasis added). Cesare, however, failed to do this. To employ Machiavellian terminology from a similar context, Cesare was bad, but he failed because he was not altogether bad (see *Discourses* 1.27). Machiavelli approves with studied coolness the crimes the Duke committed in his ascent to power. We argue that for Machiavelli, Cesare's lapse was a sin of omission: he failed to commit a simultaneous homicide and patricide. Machiavelli's suggested dénouement to the plot of *The Prince* represents an assault on the power of the Church and of Christianity generally. Machiavelli thereby inspires one to contemplate the vulnerability of an inimical ecclesiastical power. In countenancing the most extreme measures to eradicate it, he counsels someone who possesses both the virtue and the fortune to act where Cesare and others shrank—whether that person be the immediate addressee of *The Prince*, Lorenzo Medici, the nephew of the pope at that time, or the ultimate audience that Machiavelli indicates—"whoever understands it" (p. 61).

After briefly discussing the historical context to which Machiavelli's immediate intentions in *The Prince* are a response, we follow the plot of *The Prince* through chapter 11, "Of Ecclesiastical Principalities."⁴ Our solution to the puzzle of Machiavelli's use of Cesare Borgia not only reveals the coherence of a work many readers find disjointed at first appearance (e.g., Allen 1960, 452; see also Skinner 1981, 23) and ascribes a significance to passages usually deemed insignificant, but also links the darkest, most sinister Machiavellian intent with his concern for Italy. Finally, we address how our interpretation speaks to the vexing problem of the relationship of Machiavelli's republicanism and patriotism to his role as an advisor to princes.

THE PRINCE AND MACHIAVELLI'S ITALY

The historical context in which Machiavelli wrote undoubtedly influenced his thought, but questions abound as to the manner in which and the extent to which it did so. It can be said with certainty that historical context dictated the way in which he presents his thought and provided many of the examples

he uses to expound it, notably that of Cesare Borgia. In order to understand Machiavelli's more immediate concerns in *The Prince* and thereby to comprehend his ultimate teaching, knowledge of Machiavelli's Italy is essential. Machiavelli is concerned with Italy's divisions and vulnerability. A number of scholars have sought to uncover Machiavelli's remedy for Italy's ills (or at least his native Florence's), sometimes with attention to how Cesare Borgia's enterprise—the creation of a large northern Italian state with the aid of his father, the pope—is in some way his model for that remedy. The interpretations offered by these scholars are, however, inadequate because they are not radical enough. Because they do not reckon with what Machiavelli indicates is the pervasive cause of Italy's woes—the papacy and its policy—these interpretations do not grasp the extremity of the remedy he prescribes. By examining these interpretations and then turning to Machiavelli's treatment of the papacy, we can establish the magnitude of the problem Machiavelli apprehends and make more plausible the extreme remedy we argue he contemplates.

Italy and Machiavelli's *Prince*

Numerous scholars have approached Machiavelli from a historical perspective, but in steering clear of lamentable ignorance of Machiavelli's Italy they have sometimes underestimated their author. Mary Dietz has done a great service in her own attempt to solve the problem of *The Prince* by reading Machiavelli with his historical situation in mind while at the same time redirecting our attention to the deceptiveness of the theorist of deception. Dietz argues that Machiavelli's work is itself a work of deception, a trap into which he intends Lorenzo Medici to fall: "Machiavelli devises a plot, a series of moves that, if followed, will lead Lorenzo to disaster" and Florence to a renewed embrace of its republican institutions (1986, 781). Dietz's application of Machiavelli's praise of the tactic of fraud to his own writing is well founded. For example, in a letter to Guicciardini of 17 May 1521, quoted by Dietz, Machiavelli declares, "For a long time I have not said what I believed, nor do I ever believe what I say, and if indeed sometimes I do happen to tell the truth, I hide it among so many lies that it is hard to find" (Machiavelli [1989, 2:973]). No longer able to play the lion, he adopts the nature of the fox. Machiavelli is indeed "outspoken, irrepressible, and fearless," as Hulliung insists (1983, 28), but his aims in *The Prince* themselves require subterfuge.

Although Dietz suspects something sinister, she identifies the wrong plot. To begin with, the scope of her investigation is too limited. Granting even that it was Machiavelli's intention to mislead the Medici to their downfall, a reconstituted Florentine republic would still have been vulnerable to the dealings of its neighbors. The republic for which Machiavelli had served as a loyal envoy had, after all, fallen in 1512 as a result of the French defeat at the hands of the Holy League, led by Pope Julius II. The viability of the

republic was therefore dependent not only on the organization of Florence but also on that of Italy. Our consideration of *The Prince* reveals that Machiavelli had precisely this problem in mind. Moreover, Dietz takes no account of Machiavelli's offer of Cesare Borgia as a model to be imitated. Surely looking into this mirror of princes would not reveal the vulnerable prince that Dietz suggests would result from Machiavelli's advice.

Attempts have been made to untangle the puzzle of *The Prince* with reference to its Italian context and the model of Cesare Borgia. Most notably, Hans Baron argues that Machiavelli wrote his plea in the concluding chapter of *The Prince* to "redeem" Italy in reaction to "a unique *occasione*" that offered itself to the Medici through their simultaneous hold on Florence and the papacy. Baron suggests that the request is made for the Medici to expel the barbarians "by founding, in accord with the rules established in the book, a strong new state modeled on the one built a decade earlier by Cesare Borgia as a power nucleus on the borders of north and central Italy—a historic enterprise which only misfortune had prevented from becoming the starting point for Italy's liberation" (1991, 85). Whitfield makes a similar argument and concludes that Cesare Borgia "represents the only historical parallel, the proof of how much one can build upon the favour of a pope" (1969, 28; see also Whitfield 1965, 62–64).

Baron and Whitfield mistake the *occasione* that Cesare's example reveals. The client state that Alexander VI was carving out through Cesare was an insufficient remedy for the illness diagnosed by Machiavelli. First, because of the brevity of the average pope's reign and the alternating creation of pontiffs from competing factions—points Machiavelli emphasizes in *The Prince* with reference to Cesare (pp. 32, 46)—any alliance of the papacy and a northern buffer state was certain to be ephemeral. As the head of the papal forces, Giuliano Medici was in the same position as Cesare, but he would be at the mercy of his uncle's successor in the same way that Cesare relied on the bad faith of his father's successor. Second, Baron and Whitfield do not take account of Machiavelli's argument for the ruinous effect of the papacy and his indictment of Christianity itself. Baron does recognize this second problem, but his solution is to read the chapters in the *Discourses* that indict Christianity as later interpolations, just as he seeks to resolve the question of the relationship of the fervent patriotism of chapter 26 of *The Prince* to the cold technique of the rest of the work by ascribing to the last chapter a separate and later composition (1991, 101–2; see Baron 1954). Like Baron and Whitfield, Strauss attends to Machiavelli's concern for Italy and seems to assume that he had in mind the creation of a northern Italian state (1958, 80–81). Strauss does recognize the problem of the Church and Christianity more generally for Machiavelli, although he does not combine the two concerns in the way we suggest. Machiavelli ultimately does not urge Giuliano or Lorenzo Medici, in league with Pope Leo, to imitate

Cesare Borgia in the manner Baron or Whitfield suggest. We shall show that Machiavelli's concern with the Church in connection with Italy's woes is present from the beginning of *The Prince* and unifies its development.

Machiavelli's Treatment of the Papacy

The most important aspect of the historical context of *The Prince* for understanding Machiavelli's more immediate intentions in *The Prince* (as well as his ultimate aims) is his view of the influence of the Church on Italy and the problem of Christianity more generally. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli writes that Italy has been "subjected to barbarous cruelties and insults" of the French and Spanish armies and the mercenary forces of the Swiss and Germans (pp. 102, 104–5). In the *Discourses*, as well as in the *Florentine Histories*, he blames the papacy for the political division of Italy, the very problem he laments at the end of *The Prince*:

The Church has kept and still keeps this region divided. . . . The reason why Italy is not in that same condition and why she too does not have one republic or one prince to govern her is the Church alone; because, though she has dwelt there and possessed temporal power, she has not been so strong or of such ability that she could grasp sole authority [*occupare la tirannide*] in Italy and make herself ruler of the country. Yet on the other hand she has not been so weak that, when she feared to lose dominion over her temporal possessions, she could not summon a powerful man to defend her against anyone who in Italy had become too powerful. (1.12 [Machiavelli, 1971, 96]; see also *Florentine Histories* 1.9)

Machiavelli discusses the temporal power of the Church in *The Prince* at several points. He explains that Louis XII of France erred "by giving aid to Pope Alexander so that the pope might seize the Romagna" and by failing to realize that he was thus "making the Church great by adding so much temporal greatness to the spiritual one that gives it so much authority" (p. 14). Later in the same work, Machiavelli observes of the Church that "before Alexander, the Italian powers, and not only those that are called powers but every baron and lord, even the least, held her in low esteem in temporal affairs" (p. 45). Alexander increased the temporal power of the Church through his son, Cesare. Machiavelli might appear to commend such a strategy when he points to the powerful pontificate found by the Medician pope, Leo X, the uncle of the immediate addressee of *The Prince* (pp. 47, 102; but cf. *Discourses* 2.22).

Machiavelli nevertheless reveals that even a strong Church cannot be the solution to Italy's problems because of its reliance on mercenary arms. He makes this point in *The Prince* immediately following his treatment of ecclesiastical principalities, stating that "the present ruin of Italy is caused by nothing other than its having relied for a period of many years on mercenary arms. . . . And he who said that our sins were the cause [of the French invasion of Italy] spoke the truth. But the sins were surely not those he

believed, but the one I have told of" (p. 49).⁵ The Church is primarily responsible for this condition: "Since Italy had almost fallen into the hands of the Church and a few republics, and since the priests and the other citizens did not have knowledge of arms, they began to hire foreigners" (p. 52). Citizens can be armed, and Machiavelli dedicated himself to that end in Florence and throughout his writings, but the clergy is always unarmed and at the mercy of others (see p. 81).

Machiavelli expands on the Christian clergy in connection with the political corruption of the moderns in his *Discourses*. When he refers to those who administer to the pope as a "court" (1.12), he establishes that the members of the clergy constitute a type of noble class. Later in the same work he speaks of a type of gentleman (*gentiluomo*) particularly inimical to "any political life," those "who without working [*oziosi*] live in luxury on the returns from their landed possessions," and points his reference when he lists the Papal States (*Terra di Roma*) as one place where such gentlemen can be found in abundance.⁶ He ominously reports that the Germans kill these gentlemen when they find them (1.55 [Machiavelli 1971, 138]). Machiavelli challenges anyone who may disagree with his analysis of the responsibility of the "Roman court" for Italy's ills to send this court to Switzerland. He concludes in advance of the experiment that such largess on the part of the Italians would in a very short time create similar disorders even among the Swiss, who, of all modern peoples, live in a manner most akin to the ancients (1.12). Christianity has disarmed a noble class, thereby rendering it useless to life by making it dependent on other arms.

In the *Discourses*, Machiavelli states that "we Italians" have as "our first debt to the Church and to the priests that we have become without religion and wicked" (1.12, see also 1.27). Some readers have argued that this passage is informed by Machiavelli's firm foundation in the Christian faith and concern that the clergy be reformed (e.g., Grazia 1989, 89–90; cf. Parel 1992, 62). Nevertheless, Machiavelli indicts not just the Church for Italy's woes but Christianity for the ills of modern states generally. The Christian religion "has made the world weak and turned it over as prey to wicked men, who can in security control it, since the generality of men, in order to go to Heaven, think more about enduring their injuries than about avenging them" (*Discourses* 2.2). Machiavelli holds out as his utmost standard the exaltation of his earthly homeland (see Machiavelli to Vettori, 16 April 1527 [1989, 3:1010]). A Christianity reformed to his specifications would cease to be recognizably Christian (see Berlin 1980, esp. 46–50; Hulliung 1983, 67). Machiavelli's view of Christianity itself strengthens his indictment of the papacy and precludes a strong Church from being the remedy for Italy's condition.

Machiavelli's discussion in the *Discourses* of the effects of Christianity refers to "modern" peoples generally. He indicates the pervasive influence of Christianity on modern times in *The Prince* when he

relates his conversation with Rouen: "For when the cardinal of Rouen said to me that the Italians do not understand war, I replied to him that the French do not understand the state, because if they understood they would not have let the Church come to such greatness" (pp. 15–16). Louis's fault was his faith: (1) the "faith" Louis might be said to have owed Alexander "for dissolving his marriage and for the [cardinal's] hat of Rouen," faith Machiavelli explicitly urges Louis to break by referring the reader to his discussion of faith later in the work (pp. 15–16 and chap. 18, esp. p. 70); and (2) his faith more generally, which Machiavelli implies we should break. The power of Christianity over the modern mind is pervasive, and Machiavelli must make us see the religion as both inimical and vulnerable if we are to break our faith with it and adopt his "new orders" (see pp. 23–24, 61).

Healthy politics in Italy and modern times more generally would require as a first step the destruction of the power of the Church, if not its total elimination. Machiavelli does consider the possibility of the murder of a pope and the destruction of the "Roman court." In the *Discourses* he reports that when Pope Julius II undertook to expel the tyrants who had seized the land of the Church, he entered Perugia to remove Giovampagolo Baglioni. Machiavelli first comments on the rashness of Julius (see 1985, 100–101), who entered the city entirely unarmed while his enemy maintained troops there. But the tyrant Baglioni receives Machiavelli's harshest criticism. Baglioni's "cowardice" permitted the unarmed pope to leave Perugia with his prey. Machiavelli complains: "All the sagacious [*prudenti*] men with the Pope . . . could not reckon whence it came that [Baglioni] did not, to his everlasting fame, at one stroke [*ad un tratto*] put down his enemy and enrich himself with booty, since with the Pope were all the cardinals with all their precious things." Machiavelli is indeed shocked at Baglioni's uncharacteristic omission of a sin from conscience: "So Giovampagolo, who did not mind being incestuous and an open parricide, could not or, to put it better, did not dare, when he had a perfect opportunity [*occasione*] for it, do a deed for which everybody would have admired his courage and for which he would have left an everlasting remembrance [*perpetua fama*] of himself. . . . And he would have done a thing the greatness of which would have transcended every infamy, every peril that could have resulted from it" (*Discourses* 1.27 [Machiavelli 1971, 109–10]; see also Machiavelli 1985, 54).⁷

The greatness of the reward that would accrue from this terrible deed—the deed from which even Baglioni shrunk—suggests the significance of the elimination of the papacy for Machiavelli. Yet his characterization of Baglioni's potential reward does not appear to accord with an earlier remark in the *Discourses*. Whereas "heads and organizers [*ordinatore*] of religions" are "most famous" (*laudati*) of all human beings, "those men are infamous and detestable who have been destroyers of religions, squan-

derers of kingdoms and republics, enemies of virtue" (1.10 [Machiavelli 1971, 91]). Baglioni's "cowardice" would be indictable, but surely the murderer of a pope and his entourage would seem to merit "eternal infamy" rather than "perpetual fame"—unless, of course, the act not only destroys but also founds. Machiavelli suggests just this conclusion in his *Florentine Histories* when he relates Stefano Porcari's ambition: animated by a desire for glory, the Roman Porcari "judged he could do nothing else than to try to see if he could take his fatherland from the hands of prelates and restore it to its ancient way of life, hoping by this, should he succeed, to be called the new founder and second father of [Rome]" (6.29). Porcari's "mode" entailed killing the pope and calling the disaffected people to arms against the Church. Porcari failed in his conspiracy (see *Discourses* 3.6), and Machiavelli comments, "The intentions of this man could be praised by anyone, but his judgment will always be blamed by everyone because such undertakings, if there is some shadow of glory in thinking of them, have almost always very certain loss in their execution" (*Florentine Histories* 6.29). Machiavelli blames only Porcari's failure to acquire, not his aim. "Machiavelli more than hinted that the time had come for a political takeover of the church," Hulliung comments; "Where Stefano Porcari and Cesare Borgia had failed, others could succeed" (1983, 217). Hulliung thus intimates the solution, although he fails to indicate the means to that end as it comes to light in *The Prince*.

The person who removes the religious blight from Italy would provide the possibility for the growth of healthier political institutions. As Machiavelli repeatedly emphasizes in many contexts, the very act of founding or reforming requires horrifying deeds. Most prominently, Machiavelli's first example of a prince by virtue, Moses, had to commit terrible acts and, even if Machiavelli only implies it, eliminate a former religion (*Discourses* 2.5, 3.30; see, esp., Exodus 32:27–28). Machiavelli's other instances of the greatest exemplars are similarly guilty. Romulus, for example, committed fratricide and consented to the death of his colleague, Titus Tatius. Romulus must be forgiven, however, because his object was to found *un vivere civile* (*Discourses* 1.9 [Machiavelli 1971, 90]; see also 1.18, 3.1).⁸ Cruelties "well used" are necessary to establish political order and vibrancy. Perhaps if Baglioni had had a similar end in view, his deed of papicide, like that of Romulus's fratricide (or Theseus' possible patricide),⁹ would have earned him fame rather than infamy. Borgia had the same opportunity as did Baglioni and Porcari; if he had seized it, Machiavelli would certainly rank him beside Romulus and the others as "one of the most excellent of princes."

THE PLOT OF THE PRINCE

Machiavelli discusses his greatest exemplars—new princes who acquire through their "own arms and

virtue"—in chapter 6 of *The Prince*. Those who acquire through "others' arms and fortune"—the theme of chapter 7—pale in comparison. Yet Machiavelli offers these princes, notably Cesare Borgia, as examples to be imitated. Unlike the wholly or partially mythical exemplars of chapter 6, Cesare was of flesh and blood. Hulliung suggests that Cesare is "an abstraction Machiavelli created by taking elements from both Greek and Roman thought and compounding them into a creation all his own" (1983, 192). We insist upon the historical Cesare as the key to grasping Machiavelli's more immediate intentions in *The Prince*. Through Cesare's example Machiavelli instructs a prince not only not to rely on the arms and fortune of others but also how to solve Italy's political problem.

As we have shown, the politics of Italy in particular and of modern times in general was decisively affected by the Church. In order to understand Machiavelli's remedy for Italy, one has to read *The Prince* from the very beginning with the discussion of ecclesiastical principalities in chapter 11 in mind. Wolin is therefore incorrect when he states that "Machiavelli contended that ecclesiastical governments were irrelevant to the proper concerns of the new science" he was developing and that they were "not politic enough to warrant the attention of political thought" (1960, 198–9). The chapter on ecclesiastical principalities does indeed appear to be almost an afterthought, since the ecclesiastical state of Rome does not fit into Machiavelli's initial categorization at the outset of *The Prince* and is not included there. This appearance is not inadvertent, however, and the anomalous position of that discussion is actually the culmination of an argument that develops in the previous chapters. We shall now make the plot of *The Prince* manifest.

The Conquest of Italy

Chapter 1 of *The Prince* begins with what Machiavelli claims is an exhaustive enumeration of different sorts of states, which can be categorized generally as republics or principalities. In chapter 2, after setting aside "reasonings on republics because I have reasoned on them at length another time" (presumably in the *Discourses*), Machiavelli commences with a discussion of hereditary principalities. Hereditary states do not occupy Machiavelli for long since, he claims, "if such a prince is of ordinary industry, he will always maintain himself in his state unless there is an extraordinary and excessive force which deprives him of it." His example of such a prince, the duke of Ferrara (actually two dukes), already alerts us to the existence of the papacy, for according to Machiavelli, this duke did not succumb to the attack of either Venice (a republic) or Pope Julius II (pp. 6–7). This prince or these princes actually did lose their state, however, and were fortunate to be restored by others. Although Machiavelli follows tradition by calling hereditary princes "natural" in this context, there is perhaps something more "natural" about new princes who acquire states, because, as

Machiavelli informs us, the desire to acquire is a "very natural and ordinary thing" in a world marked more by change than by stability (pp. 14–15; cf. *Florentine Histories* 5.1; see also Pocock 1975, 158; Strauss 1958, 57).

Machiavelli turns in chapter 3 to the epochal event that changed the landscape of Italian politics—the invasion of Italy by the French in 1494 and again in 1499. Although the chapter is entitled "Of Mixed Principalities," it is actually an account of Louis XII's failure, through his 1499 invasion, to create a mixed state by adding much of Italy to his own kingdom. Machiavelli offers Louis advice on how he could have succeeded—or rather, since Louis was dead, he counsels anyone who would conquer Italy. He offers the same advice in his *Discourses* (1.23), hardly an act of simple patriotism. Mansfield suggests an explanation: "Much as he loved Florence and Italy, he is not fundamentally a city or national patriot. He is a patriot on behalf of humanity, seeking to protect men against outside forces, consequently a patriot of the home of human beings, the earth" (1981, 303). While Mansfield's explanation is ultimately in accord with our own, it does not account for Machiavelli's more immediate intentions as revealed in this context. Butterfield embraces the opposite extreme, seeing Machiavelli's advice to Louis as nothing more than a compendium of maxims of statecraft (1962, 30–31, 60). Machiavelli's concern with the historical dilemma confronting Italy is in fact the unstated theme animating chapters 3 and 4 of *The Prince*.

Louis entered France with the aid of the Venetians and, most importantly, with the collusion of Pope Alexander. Machiavelli thus reminds us of the reason Italy was subject to such divisions and invasions—the papacy. He speaks of the division of Italy in the chapter on ecclesiastical principalities, although he does not there reveal the cause of the division: "Before Charles, king of France, came into Italy, this province was under the dominion of the pope, the Venetians, the king of Naples, the duke of Milan, and the Florentines" (pp. 45–46). As noted, chapter 3 is purportedly on "mixed" principalities but is actually about Louis's failure to conquer Italy. Italy is similar to France, where "Burgundy, Brittany, Gascony, and Normandy" have "been with France for so long a time" (p. 9).¹⁰ Like France, Italy itself is a "mixed" or "disparate" province (see p. 11). Despite this similarity, Italy would appear to differ from France in one important respect, namely, the residence of the pope (at least after the end of the "captivity" of Avignon). If chapter 3 contains Machiavelli's advice on how to acquire a mixed province like France or Italy, he expands his plan of conquest with implicit reference to the papacy in the next chapter.

The subject of conquest continues in the apparently anomalous chapter 4, whose announced subject is, "Why the Kingdom of Darius Which Alexander Seized Did Not Rebel from His Successors after Alexander's Death." The conquest of Darius' kingdom was maintained because it was governed in a particular "mode," namely, by one prince whose

ministers owe their power to him rather than by a prince surrounded by barons with hereditary privileges and their own subjects. Machiavelli states that "principalities of which memory remains" have been governed through one of these two modes. He presents a contemporary parallel to Darius' kingdom through the government of the Turk and contrasts it with that of the king of France. He explains: "Whoever considers the one and other of these states will find difficulty in acquiring the state of the Turk, but should it be conquered, great ease in holding it. So inversely, you will find in some respects more ease in seizing the state of France, but great difficulty in holding it" (pp. 17–18). Machiavelli advises one how to acquire both the state of France and that of the Turk. We have already seen that he considers Italy to be like France, so his remarks on the conquest of France would apply to Italy as well, with the notable exception of the papacy.

The papacy, in turn, is similar to the government of the Turk. Machiavelli has already furnished us with the information necessary to categorize the papacy when he remarked in the previous chapter that one reason Louis kept faith with the Pontiff was that Pope Alexander had undertaken to elevate one of Louis's ministers to cardinal (p. 15). The pope makes his own ministers, who therefore have no independent source of rule, just like the ministers of the Turk. The result of this comparison would be heartening to anyone contemplating an attack on the papacy: like the dominion of the Turk, this ecclesiastical principality is difficult to conquer but easy to hold after the initial assault. Machiavelli comments that once the Turk has been defeated, "one has only to fear the blood line of the prince" (p. 18). This statement, however, points to the manner in which the papacy must be distinguished from the Turk's state and Darius' kingdom of old: the papacy does not have a (recognized) blood line. The pope's authority derives from election. Later in *The Prince*, Machiavelli states that the sultan's state shares this feature with "the Christian pontificate" (p. 82). (Further, in this context, Machiavelli groups the Turk and the Sultan because of their dependence on their armies rather than on the people, a feature that the Christian pontificate shares in its dependence on mercenary arms.) The Christian pontificate is similar to the states of both the Turk and the Sultan.

Now in the case of Pope Alexander, Cesare Borgia himself represented the blood line, and so the pontificate under Alexander was more similar to the government of the Turk. Because his father ruled from the Vatican, however, Cesare was not the apparent heir to his father's rule. Indeed, this very circumstance would necessitate that Cesare, the natural son of the pope, conquer his father's principality in order to rule it. Burckhardt, for example, detects in Cesare's actions a plan to succeed his father as pope and to secularize the lands of the Church (1958, 129–30). Machiavelli draws our attention to the peculiar situation of the pope and his son at the very end of chapter 3, when he is relating a discussion with

Rouen that took place “when Valentino (for so Cesare Borgia, son of Pope Alexander, was called by the people) was occupying Romagna” (p. 16). Immediately after making this remark about Alexander and Cesare, Machiavelli turns in chapter 4 to Alexander the Great and his successors, causing us to think of the possible successor of a different Alexander from the one mentioned (twice) in the title of chapter 4.¹¹ Alexander the Great seized the kingdom of Darius, and his successors held it; Alexander Borgia attained the papacy, but *his* successor never gained possession of it.

Machiavelli provided a plan in chapters 3 and 4 of *The Prince* to conquer the whole of Italy, both the part resembling France and that resembling the sultan and the Turk. Cesare was more successful in conquering the part of Italy akin to France—eliminating the nobles and thus gaining the people to himself, “since they had begun to taste well-being” (p. 29),¹² an accomplishment to which Machiavelli appears to refer at the end of chapter 3 when he relates that Cesare was called Valentino by the people. (Actually, he was Duke Valentino, or Valentinois, as a vassal to the French king.) However, he did not succeed in acquiring his father’s principality, a task that would have required overcoming those features of the papacy that make it similar to the Sultan and Turk’s states. Cesare had the rare opportunity to accomplish the deed Machiavelli suggests, but he failed because he did not grasp the character of his father’s realm or the deeds necessary to acquire it.

Finally, in chapter 5, Machiavelli offers advice on how to administer “cities or principalities” that lived under their own laws: “In truth there is no secure mode to possess them other than to ruin them”—or, he adds, to live in them (pp. 20–21). Such is the course Cesare would have had to take with Florence or any other republic in Italy, although we shall take up the relationship between princes and republics at greater length later. Machiavelli’s plan for the conquest of Italy is complete by the end of chapter 5.

Virtue and Fortune, Crime and Opportunity

The play between virtue and fortune animates *The Prince* as a whole, and it is in chapters 6 and 7 of the work that the contrast comes to life. Speaking of “principalities that are altogether new in prince and in state,” Machiavelli alerts us in chapter 6 that he will speak of “the greatest examples.” He exhorts “a prudent man” to imitate such examples “so that if his own virtue does not reach that far, it is at least in the odor of it.” Although the greatest examples have relied on their own virtue and arms, fortune or opportunity is also needed. Machiavelli writes of his great examples that “their excellent virtue enabled the opportunity to be recognized,” but maintenance of the acquisition requires virtue above all. Among such princes, Machiavelli avers that “the most excellent are Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, Theseus, and the like” (pp. 21–23). As the founder of both a religion and a state, a combination Machiavelli esteems most

highly (see *Discourses* 1.10), Moses is perhaps the most excellent of princes. Machiavelli initially claims to be reluctant to speak of Moses—just as he later states that “it would be the office of a presumptuous and foolhardy man to discourse” on ecclesiastical principalities (p. 45)—before proceeding to do just that. “And although one should not reason about Moses, as he was a mere executor of things that had been ordered for him by God, nonetheless he should be admired if only for that grace which made him deserving of speaking with God”—who, Machiavelli laconically remarks, was “so great a teacher” (pp. 22–23). What God taught Moses is unclear, but what Machiavelli seems to admire about Moses is his having relied on his own arms. He contrasts Moses to Savonarola, who also claimed to speak with God but was an “unarmed” prophet and therefore unsuccessful (p. 24). In order to understand Moses’ accomplishment, as well as the power of the ecclesiastical dominion of Rome (a dominion founded by Jesus, a successful unarmed prophet, thus requiring us to amend Machiavelli’s estimation of such prophets [see Berlin 1980, 64]), Machiavelli indicates that we must transcend our usual pieties and look at the “effectual truth of the thing.”

Machiavelli provides, with chapter 7, “Of New Principalities That Are Acquired by Others’ Arms and Fortune,” the antistrophe to his discussion of princes who acquired through their own virtue and arms. Cesare Borgia serves as his primary example. “Those who become princes from private individual solely by fortune become so with little trouble,” Machiavelli begins the chapter, “but maintain themselves with much” (p. 25). We see then that new principalities acquired by fortune are like France, which is easy to enter but difficult to hold, and, as we might expect, those acquired by virtue are like the Turk: those “who become princes by the paths of virtue, acquire their principality with difficulty but hold it with ease” (p. 23). We are reminded at the outset of the chapter concerned with Cesare Borgia of the discussion in chapter 4 of how Alexander’s successors succeeded in holding the state he acquired.¹³ Machiavelli briefly adduces Francesco Sforza as an example of a prince who acquired “with a great virtue of his own” but passes straightaway to Duke Valentino, so-called “by the vulgar” (thus reminding us of chapter 3). Machiavelli introduces Cesare by saying that he “acquired his state through the fortune of his father and lost it through the same, notwithstanding the fact that he made use of every deed and did all those things that should be done by a prudent and virtuous man to put his roots in the states that the arms and fortune of others had given him.” Machiavelli claims, “I do not know what better teaching I could give to a new prince than the example of his actions” (pp. 26–27). Cesare is presented as an example but not one of the greatest kind. Again we are faced with the question of what “deed” Cesare omitted or what he could have done to raise himself to Machiavelli’s highest rank.

Cesare’s career flourished under the sponsorship

of his father, who "decided to make his son the duke great." By facilitating the entry of the French into Italy, Alexander upset the existing "orders" and created the "disorder" necessary for his undertaking. Cesare thus acquired the Romagna, which served as the base for his subsequent acquisitions. Machiavelli praises in particular the Duke's decision "to depend no longer on the arms and fortune of others," thus dispensing with "auxiliary arms" (the French) and then mercenary ones (the Orsini) in favor of his own (pp. 27–28, see also p. 55). In this connection Machiavelli praises Cesare's turn to deceit to eliminate those on whom he had formerly depended and savors the Duke's elimination of these "heads" at Sinigaglia, the action that also "gained all those peoples to himself since they had begun to taste well-being."¹⁴ He points to this action as "deserving of notice and of being imitated by others" and admires in particular the manner in which Cesare brought order to the Romagna through his minister, "Messer Remirro de Orco, a cruel and ready man, to whom he gave the fullest power." After Remirro succeeded in reducing the province to peace "with the very greatest reputation for himself," Machiavelli claims that Cesare judged that such excessive authority might become "hateful," and "in order to gain [the people] entirely to himself, he wished to show that if any cruelty had been committed, this had not come from him but from the harsh nature of his minister." Cesare therefore had Remirro killed in such a way that "the ferocity of this spectacle," Machiavelli comments, "left the people at once satisfied and stupefied" (pp. 28–30). Cesare was thus able to avoid being hated while retaining the people's love and fear, in accordance with Machiavelli's advice in chapter 19 of *The Prince*.

Machiavelli relates the Duke's deeds admiringly, but when he comes to Cesare's plans to maintain his acquisitions, the account becomes critical. Cesare's ultimate failure was that despite his resolve, he never dispensed with his reliance on the fortune of others. Machiavelli notes that Cesare had foremost to fear "that a new successor in the Church might not be friendly to him and might seek to take away what Alexander had given him" and speaks of the four "modes" in which Cesare sought to secure himself against this: eliminating the blood lines of those he had despoiled, winning over the gentlemen in Rome to keep the pope in check, making "the College of Cardinals as much his as he could," and acquiring sufficient "empire before the pope died that he could resist a first attack on his own." He almost succeeded in these plans, according to Machiavelli, and then "would no longer have depended on the fortune and force of someone else, but on his own power and virtue." His fatal mistake was that he used his influence in the College of Cardinals to make Julius II pope (pp. 30–32). Machiavelli's discussion reveals generally that Cesare erred by continuing to rely on his alliance with the Church. He relates in his legations that Cesare supported Julius, despite the injuries he had done him, because of Julius' assurance

that he would appoint him as papal general, continuing the relationship with the papacy that he enjoyed under his father (1989, 1:155; see Guicciardini 1969, 174–6). Cesare kept faith with Julius, but according to Machiavelli, Cesare not only again relied upon the fortune of others but deceived himself (p. 33; see *Discourses* 3.4).

What should Cesare have done? Machiavelli indicates a more promising strategy in his relation of Cesare's failure. First, Machiavelli states of Cesare that "if he could not make pope whomever he wanted, at least it would not be someone he did not want" (p. 32). Initially, it appears that Machiavelli indicts him merely for his choice, but his restatement of Cesare's position a page later reveals another dimension: "One could only indict him in the creation of Julius as pontiff, in which he made a bad choice; for, as was said, . . . he could have kept anyone from being pope" (p. 33). Sasso notices that this is *not* what Machiavelli had said initially and concludes that the difference between the statements lies in the second's emphasis on the poor use Borgia actually made of his influence (1966, 147). Sasso is correct in characterizing the second as more negative; however, as we have argued, it also reveals what, in Machiavelli's view, Cesare should have done. Machiavelli says that Cesare could have kept *anyone* from being pope. This sentence can obviously be interpreted to mean that he could have kept any one candidate from being pope, but on another reading it signifies that Cesare could have ended the papacy altogether.

Machiavelli continues to reveal his plot in chapters 8 and 9, which parallel chapters 6 and 7, respectively. Chapter 8 concerns those who have attained a principality through "crimes," although Machiavelli equivocates on whether these "crimes" are actually acts of virtue. For instance, his first example in the chapter is Agathocles of Sicily, about whom Machiavelli says that "whoever might consider the actions and virtue of this man will see nothing or little that can be attributed to fortune," much like the greatest examples of chapter 6. Having spoken of Agathocles' virtue, Machiavelli retracts his attribution—"Yet one cannot *call* it virtue to kill one's citizens, betray one's friends, to be without faith, without mercy, without religion; these modes can enable one to acquire empire, but not glory"—only to grant it again: "For, if one considers the virtue of Agathocles . . ." (p. 35; emphasis added). Machiavelli later distinguishes what are "called" virtues and what virtue actually requires, with particular emphasis on keeping faith (pp. 61–62 and chap. 18, esp. 70–71).

Numerous scholars have taken Machiavelli's temporary refusal to call Agathocles virtuous to be his final opinion and have thus palliated or obscured the full force of the revolution he proposes in morality (see Pitkin 1984, 60–61; Skinner 1978, 1:137–38; see also Tarcov 1982, esp. 705–7). Machiavelli neither divorces politics from morality (as suggested by, e.g. Chabod 1964, esp. 243–55; Croce 1945, 250–56; Figgis 1960, 94–121) nor embraces half-heartedly or com-

pletely a political morality in tension with an un-rejected Christian morality (as suggested by Berlin 1980), nor proposes an "economy of violence" (as suggested by Wolin 1960, chap. 7; see also Orwin 1978, 1225). His ultimate objection to Agathocles would appear to be to what he calls "his savage cruelty and inhumanity," his failure to employ necessarily violent means toward ultimately humane ends (p. 35). There are "cruelties badly used or well used," Machiavelli comments later on concerning Agathocles: "Those can be called well used," (if it is permissible to speak well of evil) that are done at a stroke [*a uno tratto*], out of the necessity to secure oneself" and are "turned to as much utility for the subjects as one can" (pp. 37–38 [Machiavelli 1971, 270]). He later praises Cesare for such cruelty as was actually "merciful" (p. 65). Machiavelli does indeed speak well of "evil." He announces at the beginning of his discussion of virtues, "I depart from the orders of others" (p. 61), and his departure entails a wholesale revision in the concept of virtue (see, esp., Orwin 1978; see also F. Gilbert 1977, chap. 2). When we appreciate the magnitude of his project, we are in a position to take seriously the claim that the "crimes" of Agathocles and others may potentially be acts of virtue.

Machiavelli's other primary example in his chapter on those who attain a principality through crimes is Liverotto (or Oliverotto) da Fermo, and it is Liverotto who serves as a partial pattern for what Machiavelli implies Cesare ought to have done. Machiavelli begins his account of Liverotto's history by calling attention to the parallel he will establish between Liverotto and his "father" on the one hand and Cesare and Alexander on the other: "In our times, during the reign of Alexander VI, Liverotto da Fermo, having been left a fatherless child some years before, was brought up by a maternal uncle of his" (p. 35). Machiavelli specifies that the events he relates here took place during Alexander's reign even though most of the modern events recounted in *The Prince* take place during that same time without his calling attention to the fact. After becoming an accomplished *condottiero*, Liverotto returned to Fermo and there "he held a most solemn banquet to which he invited Giovanni Fogliani," his uncle, "and all the first men of Fermo." Seemingly recalling his description of Cesare's conspiracy at Sinigaglia, Machiavelli relates, "Liverotto, with cunning, opened serious discussions, speaking of the greatness of Pope Alexander and of Cesare Borgia, his son, and of their undertakings." Again, our attention is drawn to the parallel. Adjourning to a more secret place, Liverotto had his uncle and the others killed and then seized power in the city. Machiavelli at first calls this act a "homicide," but later speaks of "the parricide he committed," and he does so when relating how Liverotto was strangled one year after his crime by Cesare at Sinigaglia (pp. 35–37; see also Guicciardini 1970, 234). Machiavelli forces us to compare Liverotto and Cesare and thereby suggests that Cesare should have seized his patrimony through patricide (see also Pitkin 1984, 60–63).

Papacide and the College of Cardinals

In Cesare's case, however, Liverotto's example alone could not suffice. Patricide would result only in the election of a new pope. The cardinals must also be eliminated at the time of his father's death. The cardinals comprise a sort of nobility surrounding the pope. Machiavelli takes up the question of how to deal with the nobility in chapter 9 of *The Prince*, "Of the Civil Principality." Just as chapter 8 on crimes is parallel to chapter 5 on virtue, so Machiavelli indicates at the outset of chapter 9 that it is parallel to chapter 7 on fortune: in a civil principality, "neither all virtue nor all fortune is necessary to attain it, but rather a fortunate astuteness." The chief lesson of this chapter is that in every city there are two "diverse humors," the "great" and the people: "A prince can never secure himself against a hostile people, as they are too many; against the great, he can secure himself, as they are few." Similarly, "one cannot satisfy the great with decency and without injury to others, but one can satisfy the people" (p. 39). Machiavelli thus concludes that "when a prince who founds on the people knows how to command and is a man full of heart . . . and with his spirit and his orders keeps the generality of people inspired, he will never find himself deceived by them and he will see he has laid his foundations well" (p. 41). Machiavelli has already noted several times that Cesare was founding himself on the people and opines that "his foundations were good" (p. 32). One way to deal with nobles is to destroy them. For example, in the *Discourses* Machiavelli relates how Clearchus, "finding himself between the arrogance of the aristocrats, whom he could in no way satisfy or control, and the rage of the citizens," took a suitable opportunity to solve his problem "at one blow" (*a un tratto*): "He cut to pieces all the aristocrats—to the utter satisfaction of the people" (1.16 [Machiavelli 1971, 100]; see also Langton 1987, 1280). Cesare was accomplished at eliminating the great, as Machiavelli's macabre admiration of his exploits at Sinigaglia shows. What Cesare needed to do was to eliminate another group of "heads," the cardinals. Machiavelli does not, of course, specify that the destruction of the clerical aristocracy would, in this way, result in a more stable rule for a prince. Nevertheless, it appears justified to speculate that the destruction of a class of people "who without working [*oziosi*] live in luxury on the returns from their landed possessions" would satisfy the people (*Discourses* 1.55 [Machiavelli 1971, 138]).¹⁵ The elimination of the cardinals was the only way that Cesare could maintain his rule.

As the son of the pope on whom his father's ambitions were focused, Cesare had enviable access to the College of Cardinals. Indeed, Guicciardini reports that Alexander's death resulted from an accidental poisoning at a dinner that he and Cesare hosted for a number of cardinals. Alexander "had arranged a large garden party, at which he planned to poison a few cardinals so that he could then sell their offices and their benefices." Cesare and Alexander

arrived early and asked for some wine to relieve their thirst. They were served the poisoned wine inadvertently: "That this is true is attested by the fact that he died either the same night or the next day; and by the fact the Valentino and a few others who were there fell into a long and critical illness, with signs of poisoning" (Guicciardini 1970, 240–41; see also idem 1969, 165–6).¹⁶

Machiavelli attributes Cesare's downfall to "an extraordinary and extreme malignity of fortune." He relates that Cesare himself told him on the day that Julius II was created "that he had thought about what might happen when his father was dying, and had found a remedy for everything, except that he never thought that at this death he himself would also be on the point of dying" (pp. 27, 32). As it stands, Machiavelli's report of Cesare's comment is simply misleading (see Mattingly 1958, 488). He in fact lived another three years and died in battle! Furthermore, after the college's first choice as pope, Pius III, died only a month after his election, Cesare was vigorous enough to exert his influence with the Spanish cardinals to assure Julius's ascendancy (Machiavelli, 1989, 1:143, 149; see also Guicciardini 1970, 245).¹⁷ According to Machiavelli's analysis, for Cesare to succeed he had to exert independence not only from his father but from the Church. Machiavelli appears to acknowledge the impossibility of Cesare's coexistence with a new pope: "He could not make a pope to suit himself" (p. 33). The lamentation that Machiavelli ascribes to Cesare appears to be his own analysis, rather than that of the historical Cesare, for in his legations, written contemporaneously with these events, Machiavelli characterizes the Duke as incapable, at the time of Julius' ascension, of the astuteness required for this insight (1989, 1:146). Only because Cesare had tied his fortune to that of his father can he be said to be "on the point of dying" at that time. Cesare deceived himself not only about Julius' faith but also about himself. Ultimately, like Baglioni, Cesare is to be censured because he lacked the insight to capitalize on his criminal character and thus to become truly great.

The Prince constitutes an assault on the power of the Church and of Christianity generally. The Church of Machiavelli's time did appear "secure and prosperous;" and indeed, he notes that it is upheld "by superior causes" and claims that "it would be the office of a presumptuous and foolhardy man to discourse on them" before doing just that (p. 45). Machiavelli's departure from the orders of others requires overcoming "the incredulity of men, who do not truly believe in new things unless they come to have a firm experience of them" (pp. 23–24). In tempting his readers to unravel the plot featuring Cesare Borgia, Machiavelli induces them to acquire the knowledge that the ecclesiastical power is vulnerable as well as inimical. The plot of *The Prince*, then, is itself the inspiration to wage the necessary assault on that power.

WHAT MACHIAVELLI RENDERS UNTO CESARE

Machiavelli's criticism of Cesare Borgia's reliance on the fortune of others is related to his treatment of fortune and virtue more generally. If Guicciardini can celebrate the downfall of the Borgias by acknowledging the ultimate "justice and power of God, whose boundless might cannot be contained within the narrow limits of the present" (1969, 166), Machiavelli's interest lies elsewhere. He opposes the opinion that "worldly things are so governed by fortune and by God, that men cannot correct them with their prudence" (p. 98). Machiavelli's ultimate intention is to manage—if not to conquer—fortune through the power of virtue. Christianity has made the world weak, Machiavelli claims (*Discourses* 2.2). His project requires reasserting human autonomy by cutting a chain of instrumentality that is seen by Christian eyes to stretch from God through earthly powers to all people.

The case of Cesare Borgia presents both the power of the chain of dependence Machiavelli would break and the possibility of doing so. Cesare himself gave his minister, Remirro, "the fullest power" to pacify the Romagna.¹⁸ When Remirro became dangerous Cesare had him eliminated, leaving him "one morning in the piazza at Cesena in two pieces, with a piece of wood and a bloody knife beside him" (pp. 29–30; see Machiavelli 1989, 1:141–42). In recounting this harrowing tale, Machiavelli imparts a lesson regarding instrumentality. Cesare did well in this instance by manipulating his minister. Machiavelli makes it clear that Remirro's deeds in fact belonged to Cesare. However, later we find that according to Machiavelli's analysis, Cesare is not the master manipulator but is himself manipulated. Just as Remirro's deeds belonged to Cesare, ultimately Cesare's deeds belonged to his father. Later Machiavelli clarifies Cesare's position when delineating Alexander's deeds: "With Duke Valentino as his instrument and with the invasion of the French as the opportunity, he did all the things I discussed above in the actions of the duke" (p. 46). Alexander, not Cesare, is the actor.

Machiavelli's analysis does not end there, however, for it is revealed that Alexander too was an instrument: "Though his intent might not have been to make the Church great, but rather the duke, nonetheless what he did redounded to the greatness of the Church. After his death, the duke being eliminated, the Church fell heir to his labors" (pp. 46–47). As Pocock recognizes, Cesare's power "remains wholly dependent on papal and curial politics and Machiavelli was unable to assert convincingly that it does not" (1975, 174). However, according to our interpretation, Machiavelli did not want to establish Cesare's independence from the Church, because Cesare's failure in this regard provides the very basis of Machiavelli's dissatisfaction with Cesare's actions.

Machiavelli's chain of instrumentality does not end with the terrestrial Church. Machiavelli claims that

ecclesiastical principalities "subsist by superior causes" and "are exalted and maintained by God" (p. 45). Ultimately, then, God stands at the head of this chain of instrumentality. Cesare finds himself near the bottom of a rather considerable chain of instruments, and as a result he ends in a position no better than that of his own minister. As Machiavelli writes in his first *Decennale*, "When Alexander was slain by Heaven [ciel], the state of his Duke of Valence was broken and divided into many pieces" (1989, 3:1455 [Machiavelli 1971, 948]). The debate over the relative power of the temporal and spiritual powers that so occupied his immediate predecessors was certainly pernicious, as Machiavelli makes clear in his account of the tumult in Florence due to the struggle between the Guelfs and Ghibellines (see *Florentine Histories*, esp. bks. 2–3). For Machiavelli, however, this debate is ultimately strictly secondary in importance. The positions of both the spiritual and the secular powers, as well as those who would mediate them, all ultimately founded themselves on a theory that power is derived from God (see Gierke 1987, esp. 7–20, 30–32). As long as one is forced to render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's, human beings cannot enjoy a true civil life. Machiavelli ushers in modern politics by suggesting that a new prince break the chain of instrumentality through his own arms and virtue. Cesare Borgia had the opportunity to do just that, and Machiavelli offers him as an example to one who would not omit the necessary acts. Fortune must be broken on virtue's wheel.

MACHIAVELLI'S POLITICAL VISION

After Machiavelli divulges the last crucial elements of his plot in chapter 11 of *The Prince*, the theme of Italy emerges in the succeeding chapter when he informs us that the Church has disarmed the country and made it weak. Italy's fate depends on the plunderous whims of others. *The Prince* concludes with the stirring exhortation for the redemption of Italy from its humiliation at the hands of foreigners: "Left as if lifeless, she awaits whoever it can be that will heal her . . . of her sores that have festered now for a long time. One may see how she prays God to send her someone to redeem her from these barbarous cruelties and insults" (p. 102). In the *Discourses*, Machiavelli argues that it is the Church that "keeps this region divided" and adds that "truly no region is ever united or happy if all of it is not under the sway of one republic or one prince, as happened to France and to Spain" (1.12). We have seen that the same line of reasoning informs his considerations in *The Prince*. The redemption of Italy requires its unification and therefore the destruction of the Church.

So great do some commentators find the disjunction between the impassioned patriotic plea of chapter 26 and the analytic ruthlessness of the treatise's previous chapters that they conclude that the last chapter is not in fact a part of the original work (e.g., Baron 1991). Others note this disparity but claim that

this apparent gulf must be bridged: his overt immorality must be read in light of his patriotism. Now, having unraveled its plot, we see precisely what Machiavelli's patriotism must serve to forgive (see Strauss 1958, 81): the rectification of Cesare's errors would require the commission of unspeakable crimes.

If the theme of the ruinous effects of the Church on temporal affairs unites *The Prince* and the *Discourses*, what are we to make of the more general and intractable problem of Machiavelli's declared preference for republics on the one hand and his willingness to advise princes on the other? Viroli, for example, presses the division between the two works to the point where he denies that *The Prince* is even about politics: "Princely rule, be it hereditary or newly founded, cannot in any sense be equated with the *civitas*, and the art of preserving princely rule does not coincide with the art of instituting or preserving a *vivere politico*;" in *The Prince*, he claims, Machiavelli "was not writing about politics as he understood the term" (1990, 161). This position is simply too extreme. For example, in his work supposedly on republics, Machiavelli confirms that Romulus—a single man and a king—established a *vivere civile* ("civil life," *Discourses* 1.9). Machiavelli does not limit the term *vivere civile* to republics, for Romulus introduced kingship, not republican government, to Rome. A *vivere politico* can occur "by way of republic or by kingdom" (1.25 [Machiavelli 1971, 109]; see 1.55). Machiavelli thus does not preclude the possibility of a political life emerging from a state with a single head. Indeed, many scholars have paid heed to Machiavelli's claim that it is necessary to be alone to found a republic (e.g., Wolin 1960, 231–32).

Dietz is skeptical about whether this princely rule, or "heroic politics," will "somehow 'give way' to mass politics" (1986, 780–81). She neglects considerations that would, while affirming her understanding of Machiavelli's pessimistic view of human nature, nonetheless lead to another conclusion. Even from the *Discourses* it is unclear that Machiavelli desires the emergence of "mass politics," as such. Although he favors the Roman republic, which expanded effectively because it allowed the plebeians a voice in the regime, Machiavelli is quite careful not to expunge princely or heroic rule from his depiction of this exemplary republic. For example, he includes among the benefits of a free way of life the knowledge that one's children "by means of their abilities . . . can become princes [*principi*]" (*Discourses* 2.2 [Machiavelli 1971, 150]). Not only does he insist upon calling the leading men of the Roman republic "princes," but he shows how the devious maneuverings of these leading men kept the mass of citizens from exercising control in the regime (1.47–48, 3.11). Moreover, he shows how a regime can overcome the problem endemic and dangerous to republics, that of slowness to act (1.59, 3.6), by infusing itself with the resoluteness, even the despotic character, of princely regimes (3.1). Machiavelli does not consider princes and republics to be completely separate or even contradictory in nature.

The deed of founding a republic need not be as altruistic an act as Dietz suggests. Machiavelli holds out the promise of fame to the one willing to undertake the travails of such a founding (1.9). The vigor of such a republic serves to exalt the memory of its original legislator. Machiavelli suggests that founding—and refounding—harnesses the tyrannical impulses of leading men. Further, the reflection that a founder of a free way of life must arrogate all authority to himself is far from unusual in political thought. Rousseau, whose credentials as a republican or democratic theorist are, to say the least, less assailable than those of Machiavelli, follows his Florentine predecessor in regarding the lone legislator as essential for the foundation of a free state. Like Machiavelli, the Citizen of Geneva holds out fame as the reward for legislators.

The notion informing much scholarship that Machiavelli's treatments of republics and of princes are analytically wholly distinct is simply incorrect and has placed unnecessary obstacles in the way of ascertaining Machiavelli's political vision. Machiavelli calls on a prince with both the virtue and fortune to remedy Italy's ills and thus to provide the conditions necessary for a reinvigorated political life in Italy and modern times more generally. Our interpretation of Machiavelli's more immediate intentions in *The Prince* is therefore also a first step needed for a consideration of his ultimate intentions.

If one needs one's own arms and virtue to establish a new principality, Machiavelli laments his fortune and his lack of arms. Yet armed with his pen he may address a virtuous prince who also possesses the opportunity and arms, whether an actual prince or those who deserve to be princes. Machiavelli is an "unarmed prophet" who unabashedly announces in *The Prince*, as well as in the *Discourses*, that he departs from the modes and orders of others (1985, 61; *Discourses* 1, pref.; see 1.55). *The Prince* contains his demand that someone with the virtue and fortune pick up the sword and do what Machiavelli is unable to complete (see *Discourses*, 2, pref.). He counsels another through his words to perform the deeds he cannot. Machiavelli will become a great teacher for the one who acts as his instrument, but in a fashion that will not derogate from the fame of that truly virtuous prince. Moses is Machiavelli's most outstanding example of a prince who founds a state and orders a religion through his own virtue. Moses' accomplishment required that he seize the opportunity to display his virtue, and Machiavelli explains, "He who reads the Bible intelligently [*sensatamente*] sees that if Moses was to put his laws and regulations [*ordini*] into effect, he was forced to kill countless men who, moved by nothing else than envy, were opposed to his plans" (*Discourses* 3.30 [Machiavelli 1971, 237]). Whoever reads Machiavelli's *Prince* in a similar manner and understands it will see that he too must arrange the deaths of a very great number of men. If their deaths will mean a reformation of political life, then we concur with Rousseau that *The Prince* is a work intended for "republicans."

Notes

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1. We shall cite *The Prince* (1985) by page, and the *Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livius* (1989) and the *Florentine Histories* (1988) by book and chapter. Where we cite the Italian, references are to Machiavelli 1971. All references in the text are to *The Prince* unless otherwise noted.

2. For a review of the literature on Machiavelli, see Berlin 1980, 25–39; Cochrane 1961; Geerken 1976. On Machiavelli's modernity, see, e.g., Figgis 1960, chap. 3; Mansfield 1981; Wolin 1960, chap. 7. For dissents, see A. Gilbert 1938; Parel 1992; Skinner 1978, 1:113–90; idem 1990).

3. Rousseau claims that Machiavelli's "hidden intention" is revealed by the contrast between the "maxims" of *The Prince* and those of his republican writings and says that "this profound political theorist has had only superficial or corrupt readers until now." Rousseau claims that Machiavelli was forced "to disguise his love of freedom" (*Social Contract* 3.6, n.). McKenzie examines Rousseau's rehabilitation of Machiavelli and concludes that he "found a way of coming to terms with *The Prince* but not with Machiavelli's republican theory . . . without first extracting those teeth which threatened to rend the fabric of his own republican theory" (1982, 226–28). McKenzie's analysis is helpful, but he at least underestimates the similarity of Rousseau's legislator to Machiavelli's prince. Rousseau cites Machiavelli in his chapter on the legislator in the *Social Contract* (2.7), and his examples of legislators here and elsewhere are the same individuals Machiavelli cites as princes by their own virtue in chapter 6 of *The Prince*. The kinship of Rousseau's legislator to Machiavelli's prince also brings our interpretation of Machiavelli closer to Rousseau's.

4. Felix Gilbert follows Meinecke in arguing that *The Prince* was composed in stages, the first stage being the first 11 chapters, the "little treatise" Machiavelli announces in the famous letter to Francesco Vettori (F. Gilbert 1977, 112–14; see Machiavelli 1989, 2:929). Whatever the merit of Gilbert's thesis, it at least suggests the coherence of the first half of the work and the need to read it with the discussion of the papacy in chapter 11 in mind. In contrast, Skinner (1981) does not discuss chapter 11 in his interpretation of *The Prince*.

5. Machiavelli appears to refer to Savonarola as the one who blamed Italy's invasion on its "sins," but he may also have Petrarch in mind. *The Prince* ends with the conclusion to Petrarch's patriotic poem "Italia Mia" but does not include Petrarch's lament over the divisions of Italy (divisions Machiavelli attributes primarily to the Church): "It is on account of our own sins, and not a natural thing that the slow northerners should conquer us in intellect" (Petrarch 1976, 260–61).

6. This application of Machiavelli's vituperation to the clergy is not intended to derogate from his obvious disgust for gentlemen conventionally understood (see *Discourses* 3.29; *Florentine Histories* 1.39).

7. Machiavelli is astonished that Baglioni, who possesses the heart of a criminal, could not commit this deed. As evidence of this criminality Machiavelli adduces the claims that Baglioni committed incest with his sister and killed his cousins and nephews in order to rule (*Discourses* 1.27). Machiavelli's characterization of Baglioni shares a striking kinship with the historical Cesare Borgia. Guicciardini reports that it was believed that Cesare had had an incestuous affair with his sister, Lucrezia (1970, 197). Burckhardt relates that in order to have his father's territorial ambitions redound solely to him, Cesare murdered his brother, brother-in-law, and other relations (1958, 129).

8. Machiavelli's account of Romulus' founding of Rome departs from that of Augustine, who views his fratricide as an indictment of politics in a fallen world (*De civitate Dei* 15.5, see also 3.6; cf. Livy, *De urbe condita* 1.6). In addition, Machiavelli appears to exaggerate Romulus' crimes in comparison to Livy. Whereas Livy says merely that Romulus declined to go to war with those responsible for his colleague's death (1.14), Machi-

avelli declares that Romulus was "a party to the death of Titus Tatius" (*Discourses* 1.9). Perhaps this emphasis derives from Machiavelli's recognition of the magnitude of the crime that is necessary to found a new Rome.

9. Although Machiavelli speaks in *The Prince* of the "dispersal" of the Athenians as the occasion for Theseus to show his virtue (p. 23), it was in fact upon his return from killing the Minotaur that Theseus actually seized the occasion: he failed to raise a white flag (as promised to herald his safe return), and his father, King Aegeus, leapt to his death. Plutarch relates the story in his *Life of Theseus*, Machiavelli's source, and says of Theseus that "after the death of his father Aegeus, forming in his mind a great and wonderful design, he gathered together all the inhabitants of Attica into one town, and made them one people of one city, whereas before they lived dispersed" (n.d., 13–15, 48). Pitkin claims that "the Founder saves and protects, rather than slays, his father," discussing in this context the actual or potential parricides we mention as well: Baglioni, Liverotto da Fermo, and Cesare (1984, 60–63; see also Strauss 1958, 258).

10. Actually, several of these provinces had been added to the kingdom only quite recently. Modern scholars have tended to overstate Machiavelli's view of France when they claim that he found there a model for Italy, for France was not yet a fully unified realm, much less a nation-state (see Rubinstein 1990, 24–28; Skinner 1981, 6–7). The process of France's consolidation, which necessitated control over previously independent "barons," is described by Machiavelli in his *Ritratti delle cose della francia* (1971, 56). Brittany, for example, was acquired only in 1491, when Louis XII obtained an annulment from his first wife to marry Anne of Brittany, who carried the dukedom as her dowry. The annulment was granted by Pope Alexander and delivered by Cesare, who in payment obtained the duchy of the Valentinois and the hand of Charlotte d'Albret, the king's niece (Machiavelli 1985, 15, 27–28; see Guicciardini 1970, 150). A similar arrangement was not forthcoming for Henry VIII of England not long thereafter.

11. Machiavelli seems to play on the fact that the names of the pope and his son replicate those of these great historical figures; hence, Cesare is both "Cesare" and "Caesar" in the scholarly literature. For example, in *The Prince*, in a context that clearly applies to Julius Caesar, Machiavelli claims that *e Cesare era uno di quelli che voleva pervenire al principato di Roma* (p. 64 [Machiavelli 1971, 281]). The original Italian, removed from its immediate context, might apply to either Borgia or Julius. Further, if Caesar aspired to a "principate," Cesare attempted to acquire an "empire" (*imperio*) before the pope died (p. 31 [Machiavelli 1971, 268]). Gentillet notes the possible ambiguity of this last citation and says of Cesare: "Either Ceasar [*Cesar*] or nothing: as though to say that he esteemed nothing less than being lord as was Julius Caesar [*Cesar*]" (1968, 340). See *Florentine Histories*: "Men too, once Caesars [*Cesari*] and Pompeys, have become Peters, Johns, and Matthews" (1.5 [Machiavelli 1971, 637]).

12. In the *Discourses*, Machiavelli notes that "Pope Alexander VI destroyed the lords who ruled" the Romagna, thus eliminating "the most wicked ways of living" (3.29). Here the author ascribes Cesare's actions to his father, a conclusion he also draws in *The Prince* in a passage we shall discuss.

13. Should we have missed his initial reference, Machiavelli appears to reenforce it immediately when he likens new princes who acquire by fortune to those who "were made princes by Darius" (p. 26)—though this Darius is not the Darius of chapter 4, as noted by Mansfield in his edition (Machiavelli 1985, 26).

14. For the details of Cesare's deception, see Machiavelli's "Description of the Method Used by Duke Valentino in Killing Vitellozzo Vitelli, Oliverotto da Fermo, and Others" (1989, 1:163–69).

15. At one point in the *Discourses*, Machiavelli says that the number of great in any state never exceeds 40 or 50. Because the number is so low, a prince can kill them or honor them according to their standing and thereby satisfy them for the most part (1.16). Why does Machiavelli place such a definite number on a class that surely varies according to the size of

the state? At least one body of nobles did satisfy this amount in Machiavelli's time—the College of Cardinals. Although the number of cardinals was set at 24 by the Councils of Constance (1418) and Basle (1436) (*Catholic Encyclopedia* s.v. "cardinal"), at least Popes Alexander and Julius disregarded the limit and raised money by selling additional cardinals' hats or sometimes by killing existing cardinals and selling their positions (Machiavelli 1985, 47; see Guicciardini 1970, 241). In 1503, 38 cardinals—the vast majority of them—convened to elect Pius III and then Julius II a month later (idem 1969, 170; idem 1970, 243).

16. The editor disputes this account and states that Alexander seems to have died of a malarial fever (Guicciardini 1970, 240). Frederick of Prussia accepts the account derived from Guicciardini, commenting of Alexander's death: "This is the prudence, wisdom, ability, and virtue that Machiavelli never tires of praising" (1981, 62). Burckhardt also accepts the account (1958, 128, 132). Whatever the validity of Guicciardini's account, Alexander and Cesare were widely known to have poisoned a great number of people, including cardinals. More importantly, Machiavelli appears to have been Guicciardini's source about Alexander and Cesare, since he repeats in his *History of Italy* (1969, 166) what Machiavelli relates in *The Prince* regarding Cesare's statement that he himself was "dying" at the same time as his father (p. 32), so that Machiavelli very likely accepted that Alexander had been accidentally poisoned.

17. Burckhardt seems to have been misled by Machiavelli's remark: "And what might not Cesare have achieved if, at the moment when his father died, he had not himself been laid upon a sick-bed! What a conclave would that have been, in which, armed with all his weapons, he had extorted his election from a college whose numbers he had judiciously reduced by poison—and this at a time when there was no French army at hand! In pursuing such an hypothesis the imagination loses itself in an abyss" (1958, 133).

18. Mansfield notes in his edition of Machiavelli's *Prince* (1985, 29) that Machiavelli's use of the term *pienissima potestà* in this context recalls the papal claim of *plenitudo potestatis*.

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