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The Recovery of Virtù: Imitation and Political Practices in the Works of Niccolò  
Machiavelli

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction for the requirements of the degree  
Doctor in Philosophy

in

Political Science

by

Aaron Cotkin

Committee in Charge:

Professor Tracy B Strong, Chair  
Professor Harvey Goldman, Co-Chair  
Professor Fonna Forman  
Professor Marcel Hénaff  
Professor Peter Stacey

2017

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The Dissertation of Aaron Cotkin is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Co-Chair

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2017

## DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my father, Spencer Cotkin, in recognition of his constant support, encouragement, and enthusiasm for my academic pursuits. Thank you, Dad!

## EPIGRAPH

How different practice is from theory!  
Many are those who understand things  
well, who either do not remember them  
or do not know how to put them into  
action! And they who do that, their  
intelligence is useless; because it is like  
having a treasure stored in an ark with the  
obligation that it can never be taken out.

*Francesco Guicciardini*

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## NOTE ON MACHIAVELLI'S TEXTS USED

All translations are my own unless otherwise noted. My main source for Machiavelli's text in Italian is *Tutte le opera toriche, politiche, e litterarie*. Edited by Alessandro Capata. Rome: Newton & Compton. 1998. Second Edition 2011. Capata's text is taken from *Tutte le opera*. Edited by Mario Martelli, Firenze: Sansoni. 1971, with the exception of *il Principe*, which is taken from *De principatibus*. Edited by Giorgio Inglese. Roma: Insituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo. 1994.

I use the following abbreviations of Machiavelli's work in citations: P = *il Principe* (*The Prince*), D = *Discorsi Sopra la Prima Deca di Tito Livio* (*Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livy*), AG = *dell'Arte della Guerra* (*The Art of War*), IF = *Istorie Fiorentine* (*Florentine Histories*), and CC = *La Vita di Castruccio Castracanni da Lucca* (*The Life of Castruccio Castracani of Lucca*).

Citations to P are to Chapter Number.

Citations to D and IF are to Book Number: Chapter Number.

AG citations are reported as Book number: Wood page numbers/Capata page numbers.

CC citations are reported as Constantine Page Number/ Capata Page Number.

I consulted a number of other English translations of Machiavelli's works while producing my own. I reference these translations in order of my reliance on them.

All of Machiavelli's writings cited in the dissertation are translated into English in Allan Gilbert's monumental *Machiavelli: The Chief Works and Others*. 3 Volumes. Trans. Allan Gilbert. Durham and London: Duke University Press. 1989.

*il Principe*

Italian: *il Principe*. Ed. Laurence Arthur Burd. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press. 1968 (1891). Reprinted by Nabu Public Domain Reprints.

English: *The Prince; A Bilingual Edition*. Trans. and Ed. Mark Musa. New York: St. Martin's Press. 1964.

*The Prince*, in *Selected Political Writings*. Ed. And Trans. David Wootton. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 1994.

*The Prince*. Trans. Harvey Mansfield. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press. 1998.

*The Prince*. Eds. Quentin Skinner and Russell Price, Trans. Russell Price. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1988.

*Discorsi Sopra la Prima Deca di Tito Livio*

Italian: *Discorsi Sopra la Prima Deca di Tito Livio*. Ed. Giorgio Inglese. BUR Rizzoli. 1984.

English: *Discourses on Livy*. Trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press. 1996.

*Dell'Arte della Guerra*

English: *The Art of War*. Trans. Ellis Farnsworth. Revised and Ed. Neal Wood. Cambridge MA: Da Capo Press. 1965.

*Art of War*. Trans. and Ed. Christopher Lynch. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press. 2003.

*Istorie Fiorentine*

English: *Florentine Histories*. Trans. Laura F. Banfield and Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 1988.

*La Vita di Castruccio Castracani da Lucca*

English: *The Life of Castruccio Castracani of Lucca in The Essential Writings of Machiavelli*. Trans. and ed. Peter Constantine. New York: The Modern Library. 2007. Pages 403-431.

*Descrizione del modo tenuto dal duca Valentino nello ammazzare Vitellozzo*

*Vitellil, Oliverotto da Fermo, il signor Pagolo e il duca di Gravina Orsini*

English: *How Duke Valentino Killed the Generals Who Conspired Against Him in The Essential Writings of Machiavelli*. Trans. and Ed. Peter Constantine. New York: The Modern Library. 2007. Pages 365 – 372.

Correspondence

James B. Atkinson and David Sices, Trans. and Eds., *Machiavelli and His Friends: Their Personal Correspondence*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press. 1996.

## GLOSSARY OF TECHNICAL ITALIAN WORDS

I avoid translating words that Machiavelli uses technically and that I am not satisfied have an adequate English translation.

By *animo*, Machiavelli intends a range of meanings that include “mind”, “soul”, “heart”, and “intellect”. *Animo* is used as the opposite of meanings such as “body”, “flesh”, and “appetite”.

By *fortuna*, Machiavelli means something akin to the contemporary English usage of “fortune” in the sense of “luck” and sometimes seems additionally to mean the connotation of wealth, which can be in the Italian as well as in the English words. However, Machiavelli also personifies *Fortuna* in ways both reminiscent of the Roman Goddess and of medieval iconography.

By *modo* (pl: *modi*) Machiavelli means the mode, manner, means, or method of proceeding or of conduct that can either be peculiar to an individual or habitual for a people. Following convention, I translate this as the English “mode”.

By *occasione*, Machiavelli means something along the lines of occasion or opportunity to accomplish some great thing. Here he invokes the medieval notion (expressed in the iconography) that *Occasione* is the daughter of *Fortune* and as *Occasione* approaches she is difficult to recognize, but she passes she is easy to recognize but impossible to seize.

By *ordine* (pl: *ordini*), Machiavelli means the ordering, rules, and institutions of an organization such as a republic, a monarchy, a guild, or a legion. Following convention, I translate this as the English “order”.

By *stato* Machiavelli does not quite mean “the state” in the modern sense of the world. Instead it means 1. the state of being (as “*stato*” is the past participle of the verb “to be”), 2. possession of rule or status, or 3. the political structures over which one could rule and in which one can have status. I refrain from translating the noun but I do translate the verb into English.

*Virtù* is the principal quality that Machiavelli finds in politically successful individuals and peoples. *Virtù* is the specifically human and specifically political response to, and orientation toward, political life conditioned by the contingency and unpredictability of plurality, which the pre-moderns called *fortuna*.

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My thanks go to all of the members of the Political Theory Workshop at University of California, San Diego who have read and commented on earlier drafts of chapters in this dissertation. Your suggestions helped me clarify my own thinking and helped me express my thoughts more clearly to theorists unfamiliar with the Italian Renaissance or even uninterested in the history of political thought.

Finally, thank you Ike Sharpless, Kyle Haines, and Alan Ward for being friendly fellow travelers on what would otherwise have been an intellectually lonely journey.

## VITA

- 2009 Bachelor of Arts, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, Summa Cum Laude with Honors
- 2009-2012 Teaching Assistant, Department of Political Science, University of California, San Diego
- 2011 Master of Political Science, University of California, San Diego
- 2012-2017 Research Assistant, Department of Political Science, University of California, San Diego
- 2013 Reader, Department of History, University of California, San Diego
- 2013-2016 Associate In, Department of Political Science, University of California, San Diego
- 2016-2017 Visiting Scholar, Department of Political Science, Johns Hopkins University
- 2017 Adjunct Professor in Philosophy, Department of Arts and Humanities, Community College of Baltimore County
- 2017 Doctor of Philosophy, University of California, San Diego

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Recovery of Virtù: Imitation and Political Practices in the Works of Niccolò Machiavelli

by

Aaron Cotkin

Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science

University of California, San Diego, 2017

Professor Tracy B. Strong, Chair

Professor Harvey Goldman, Co-Chair

As scholars we fail to meet the challenge to speak about politics as occurring in what Hannah Arendt called the condition of plurality when we speak about politics in ways which either, on the one hand, focus on the structural or cultural laws of political change while minimizing the ability of human agency to have an effect at the societal level (e.g. Marxists) or, on the other hand, focuses on the role of individuals but analytically assumes they are identical (e.g. liberals). I confront this challenge by

engaging with the work of Niccolò Machiavelli on the question of why and how it is that some political actors are better at politics than others: on their political skill. I present a new interpretation of Machiavelli's concept of *virtù*, which is the principal quality he finds in politically successful individuals and states. In the introduction, I show that previous accounts of Machiavelli's concept of *virtù* focus on reading carefully to determine his esoteric meaning of *virtù*, on the gendered implications of his contrast of masculine *virtù* to feminine *fortuna*, on his relationship with his political and intellectual contexts, and on a systematic analysis of the various "senses" in which Machiavelli uses *virtù*. In contrast, I provide a systematic examination of how Machiavelli deploys exemplars of *virtù* throughout his major political, historical, and military writings. In Chapter 1, I argue that Machiavelli exhorts his readers to learn from political history and to imitate the virtuous practices of successful individuals and states. Chapter 2 identifies variations in how Machiavelli talks about *virtù* between individuals and peoples and between principalities and republics. Chapter 3 examines the relationship between *virtù* and the political ends of staying in power and maintaining liberty. I present in depth analyses of all Machiavelli's examples of *virtù* in the appendices. I demonstrate that using Machiavelli's language of *virtù* allows us to meet Arendt's challenge to speak of politics in the condition of plurality because it forces us to engage with the unique identity of each individual person or polity whose actions are studied.

## Introduction

Action would be an unnecessary luxury, a capricious interference with general laws of behavior, if men were endlessly reproducible repetitions of the same model, whose nature or essence was the same for all and as predictable as the nature or essence of any other thing. Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live.

*Hannah Arendt*<sup>1</sup>

Central to Arendt's call for us to "think what we are doing" is for us to think about politics as occurring under the condition of plurality. As scholars, we often fail to meet Arendt's challenge to understand politics as taking place in the condition of plurality because we often lack a language appropriate to speak (and think) in these terms. It may be appropriate for those who study the realm of the social (economics, culture, or society writ large) to speak of human behavior, of the nature of Man, as predictable because individual people, navigating the realm of necessity, may seem like repetitions of each other. But Arendt believes that applying such logic to the study of politics, as characterized by behavior rather than by action, is inappropriate. When we theorize, our challenge is to speak of politics using *political* categories and words. To discuss action in the condition of plurality requires a language distinct from that used to discuss the social in other social sciences.

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<sup>1</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958. Page 8.

We fail to meet this challenge when we speak about politics in ways that either, on the one hand, focus on the structural or cultural laws of political change while minimizing the ability of human agency to have an effect at the societal level (e.g., Marxists) or, on the other hand, focus on the role of individuals but analytically assumes they are identical (e.g., liberals). Thinking of politics as occurring in the condition of plurality means taking into account that political actors are individuals with unique names, biographies, and talents that affect how each of us participates and means that I am not an effective substitute for you. This way of thinking about the relationship between people and politics is distinct from those who speak of politics as occurring among ‘reproducible repetitions’ such as Hobbes, who attempted to make men legible to each other by instructing them to “...read in himself, not this or that particular man, but mankind...” (*Leviathan*, Introduction §4).<sup>2</sup> *Leviathan* is Hobbes’s performance of this act of seeing Man in general in himself.

Such theories of Man in general use a language to talk about politics that transforms political *behavior* into observations and data. These theories are often considered useful only to the extent that they can predict future behavior. This scientific language misses something fundamental about political action because, “It is the function, however, of all action as distinguished from mere behavior to interrupt what otherwise would have proceeded automatically and therefore predictably”

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: Or the Matter, Forme, and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil*. In *Leviathan: with selected variants from the Latin edition of 1668*. Trans. and Ed. Edwin Curley. Indianapolis/ Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 1994 (1651). See also Tracy B. Strong, “How to Write Scripture” *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 20, No. 1. (Autumn, 1993): 129 – 159.

(Arendt, *On Violence*, 30-31).<sup>3</sup> What is special about politics, the human activity of action, is its relationship to the human capacity to collectively bring totally new and unpredictable things into the world. That is, insofar as we are thinking about politics, there is the potential for the unexpected or even the unexpectable to occur. Insofar as we are political actors and want to achieve the immortality that is the promise of politics, we must manifest in ourselves an orientation toward the contingent plurality of persons in which we act so as to allow us to successfully respond to it as it presents itself to us. And insofar as we are political theorists, we need a language with which to talk about politics that both allows us to speak of politics as action in the condition of plurality, and which allows us to learn from experience in order to better understand how to successfully respond to the contingent plurality of persons. When speaking about politics, it is important to be able to talk about the success or failure of political actors' political projects and the causes of these successes and failures. We need a vocabulary that allows us to speak about this in order to satisfy Arendt's challenge to speak of politics as existing in the condition of plurality. To a greater extent than is present in contemporary political science, the pre-modern tradition of political theory spoke about politics using such a language.

I work toward recovering this language by focusing on why and how it is that some political actors are better at politics than others; that is, I focus on their political skill. I develop a vocabulary to speak about politics that focuses on the techniques and practices that politicians and peoples use that tend to lead to their success, how they

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<sup>3</sup> Hannah Arendt. *On Violence*. Orlando: Harcourt, Inc. 1970, 1969.

discover and learn these practices, and what it looks like to engage in them. I argue that this vocabulary allows us to meet Arendt's challenge to speak of politics in the condition of plurality because it forces us to engage with the unique identity of each individual or people whose actions are studied. I develop this language by recovering it through an extensive engagement with the works of Niccolò Machiavelli.

Machiavelli is the optimal thinker to use in developing a conception of political skill because he, more than any other thinker in the political theory canon, is concerned with a theory of how to succeed in politics. In what follows, I present a new interpretation of Machiavelli's concept of *virtù*.

*Virtù* is the principal quality that Machiavelli finds in politically successful individuals and peoples.<sup>4</sup> *Virtù* is the specifically human and specifically political response to, and orientation toward, political life conditioned by the contingency and unpredictability of plurality, which the pre-moderns called *fortuna*.<sup>5</sup> *Virtù* is specifically human because the potential to display *virtù* exists within all humans. This potential is innate to them, rather than being the gift of a god or other superhuman entity. *Virtù* is specifically political because it guides our political actions in response to our political situation. And it guides our judgment of political things in evaluating whether they further the political ends of power, liberty, and glory. *Virtù* is a response

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<sup>4</sup> I use the term "peoples" because it widely encompasses all of the groups that Machiavelli discusses, including multinational empires (e.g. the Roman and Parthian Empires), kingdoms (France and Spain), city states (Florence and Sparta), tribal confederations (the Goths and the Samnites), and cultural and linguistic groupings that do not have a strictly unified political identity (the Italians and the Germans).

<sup>5</sup> By *fortuna*, Machiavelli means something akin to the contemporary English usage for "fortune" in the sense of "luck" and sometimes seems to additionally mean the connotations of wealth, which can also be implied in the Italian as well as in the English words. However, Machiavelli also personifies *Fortuna* in ways both reminiscent of the Roman Goddess and of medieval iconography.

to political life because our political context precedes our capacity to act within it. Although the potential for exhibiting virtù exists in all humans, it must be cultivated in order for it to be available to respond to *fortuna*. Virtù, in both individuals and peoples, is most often cultivated when it must be out of necessity, or is produced by the modes<sup>6</sup> and orders<sup>7</sup> of a society, and is most often cultivated through the imitation of virtuoso exemplars. With few exceptions, the more time and resources spent cultivating virtù, the more virtù an individual or people will possess. Virtù is the specifically political orientation to politics because, whereas other orientations towards politics rely on god, on *fortuna*, or on others to act, virtù causes individuals and people to face *fortuna* by relying on their own abilities and their own strength. Though possessing virtù is neither necessary nor sufficient for political success, virtù tends to successfully meet the challenges of *fortuna* and secure power, liberty, and glory.<sup>8</sup>

Machiavelli never defines virtù, but he does give numerous examples of what is and what is not virtù and of what virtù can accomplish. I argue that understanding Machiavelli's examples of individuals and states with virtù is the key to understanding the concept itself. Well over half the time that Machiavelli uses the word virtù it is in the context of providing an historical or contemporary example. Machiavelli dwells particularly on those whom he calls the 'grandest examples' — exemplars whose

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<sup>6</sup> By *modo* (pl: *modi*) Machiavelli means the mode, manner, means, or method of proceeding or of conduct that can either be peculiar to an individual or habitual for a people. Following convention, I translate this as the English "mode".

<sup>7</sup> By *ordine* (pl: *ordini*), Machiavelli means the ordering, rules, and institutions of an organization such as a republic, a monarchy, a guild, or a legion. Following convention, I translate this as the English "order".

<sup>8</sup> I thank Sean Morgan for suggesting this formulation.

actions should be imitated — and, alternatively, on mediocrities whose examples should be avoided. The strength of my interpretive method is that it reconstructs Machiavelli's concept of *virtù* on his own terms: through analysis of the examples that Machiavelli uses to illustrate what *virtù* is and what it looks like in action.

Machiavelli's examples of *virtù* break down into two categories: examples of individuals (e.g., Romulus or Agathocles) and examples of peoples (e.g., the Romans or the Florentines).

Although *virtù* in individuals can come from either a sort of self cultivation or from living in a society that trains its citizens to be virtuous, the *virtù* of a state comes from laws, orders, and modes that combine the *virtù* of its citizens into a cohesive *virtù* of the state. The focus on Machiavelli's use of exemplars allows me to make the novel claim that the *virtù* of individuals is less important to Machiavelli's theory of statecraft than the *virtù* of states. Additionally, this interpretive method allows me to intervene in the debate over whether Machiavelli prefers a republican form of government to principalities: I demonstrate that even if Machiavelli did not prefer republics because of deeply held republican principals, Machiavelli prefers republics to principalities because republics better preserve the *virtù* of the state.

Over the course of his major works, Machiavelli names at least 85 individuals and 21 peoples as examples of *virtù*. The wide array of individuals and peoples Machiavelli describes as having *virtù* in his writings allows us to say another thing about the conditions for action: that although *virtù* is the same in everyone, it is so in such a way that preserves the human condition of plurality. Whatever else it may mean

for us to ‘think what we are doing’ politically, it means developing a language with which to examine our capacity to respond to the unpredictable results of others’ actions with our own political qualities. Machiavelli’s concept of virtù provides the basis of a language to speak about politics that both allows us to speak about particular individuals or peoples as acting in the context of plurality, which thus allows us to learn from experience to better understand how to be successful in political action.

### **The Need for Examples**

Machiavelli is one of the most important figures in the political theory canon. As Harvey Mansfield writes, “Anyone who picks up Machiavelli’s *The Prince* hold in his hands the most famous book on politics ever written” (“Introduction”, vii).<sup>9</sup> And in justifying Machiavelli’s inclusion in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Cary Nederman writes that though Machiavelli is not a philosopher, “succeeding thinkers who more easily qualify as philosophers of the first rank did (and do) feel compelled to engage with his ideas, either to dispute them or to incorporate his insights into their own teachings. Machiavelli may have grazed at the fringes of philosophy, but the impact of his musings has been widespread and lasting” (“Niccolò Machiavelli”).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Harvey Mansfield, “Introduction” in Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*. Trans. Harvey Mansfield. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press. 1998.

<sup>10</sup> Cary Nederman, “Niccolò Machiavelli”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/machiavelli/>>. I should note that Machiavelli’s status as *not* a philosopher is not necessarily the consensus opinion among scholars. See Harvey Mansfield, Jr., *Machiavelli’s New Modes and Orders*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979. Page 11.

Whether only at the fringes of philosophy or not, Machiavelli's contributions to political theory have been of central importance. Thinkers as varied as Guicciardini, Montesquieu, Harrington, and Gramsci drew extensively on Machiavelli's work. Perhaps more important to Machiavelli, such politicians as the Earl of Shaftesbury<sup>11</sup> and the "Country" party in England; John Adams, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and many of the other founders of the American Republic;<sup>12</sup> and Frederick the Great, and the figures of the Italian Risorgimento, and Benito Mussolini have all drawn on Machiavelli's insights in advancing their political careers.

Machiavelli's central significance for political theory is further attested by the fact that many of the most important figures in the study of the history of political thought in the last century have seriously engaged with his thinking. There are many accounts of the inspiration, content, and impact of Machiavelli's theory of statecraft that contain accounts of Machiavelli's concept of *virtù*. My contribution to this crowded field is that my account of *virtù* focuses on Machiavelli's use of examples in elaborating his account of *virtù*. Unlike previous readings of Machiavelli's use of *virtù*, which either do not take into account his use of examples, which do not examine any of the examples in sufficient depth, or which only focus on a few of Machiavelli's examples of *virtù*, I analyze *all* of Machiavelli's examples of *virtù* contained in his major works.

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<sup>11</sup> Who was also the patron on John Locke. See J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*. Princeton: The Princeton University Press, 1975. Page 406.

<sup>12</sup> See Pocock pages 317, 395, 522, 531-532. See also David Wootton, "Introduction" in *The Essential Federalist and Anti-Federalist Papers*. Ed. David Wootton. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 2003. Pages xxi – xii.

## The Question of the ‘Originality of Machiavelli’

Ever since Machiavelli himself claimed that “to find new modes and orders...I decided to go onto a path, which, not having even been traveled by anyone...”<sup>13</sup> allowed him to find new ideas and to present these new ideas despite the danger to himself (D 1:Proemio), Machiavelli’s originality has been more or less assumed. Historically, if speaking about Machiavelli’s originality, authors have either claimed that it led to his evil endorsement of *Machiavellian* political techniques or, conversely, in his subversively republican satire of tyrannical methods. Contemporary historians of political thought tend to ascribe the originality of Machiavelli to his defense of the political realm as independent from the categories used to judge private or religious life and as independently valuable.

The originality of Machiavelli’s defense of the political is interpreted in two ways, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive. But for both, as in Arendt, the gulf between the private and the public is substantial and that Machiavelli, “in an extraordinary effort to restore its old dignity to politics, perceived the gulf and understood some of the courage needed to cross it...” (*The Human Condition*, 35).

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<sup>13</sup> “trovare modi ed ordini nuovi...ho deliberato entrare per una via, la quale, non essendo sutata ancora da alcuno trita...” This is the first sentence of the first paragraph of the Preface to Book 1. Harvey Mansfield, in his translation of the *Discorsi*, cautions that “This first paragraph of the proemium does not appear in the first two editions of the *Discourses* but can be found in polished form in Machiavelli’s hand, the only surviving autograph fragment of the *Discourses*. Opinion is divided as to whether it is provisional or definitive” (Page 5. n.2). Giorgio Inglese’s edition presents two versions of the Proemio, one with the first paragraph and one without, which were drawn from different versions of the text (Page 39). Following Inglese’s lead, Julia Conway Bondanella’s and Peter Bondanella’s translation (which I do not reference nor consult) also presents two versions of the Proemio (Page 360).

Both strains of interpretation recognize Machiavelli as conceptualizing the political realm as independent from, and more dangerous than, the private realm.

The first way in which Machiavelli's defense of the political is interpreted as original is to make the claim that Machiavelli separates the private sphere, where people ought to have moral virtù, from the public sphere, in which they need to have political virtù. This is specifically the claim that Isaiah Berlin makes in his essay "The Originality of Machiavelli", where he claims that Machiavelli's chief contribution is this idea of separate realms with separate ethical criteria.<sup>14</sup> For Berlin, the originality of the idea of separate ethical realms of human life was so shocking to Machiavelli's contemporaries that it goes a long way towards explaining the scandalized reactions of his early readers.

In the same vein, Arendt claimed that Machiavelli taught people how "not to be good"<sup>15</sup> and Leo Strauss, famously, said that "...Machiavelli was a teacher of evil" (*Thoughts on Machiavelli*, 9).<sup>16</sup> That is, for both Arendt and Strauss, Machiavelli scandalously taught that politicians ought to act against the constraints of private (Christian) morality in order to succeed. Quentin Skinner concurs, adding that, in *il Principe*, "Machiavelli dissociates himself as sharply as possible" from the more conventional mirror of princes literature where "the possession of *virtus* can be

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<sup>14</sup> Isaiah Berlin, "The Originality of Machiavelli" in *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001[1972]:25-79.

<sup>15</sup> Hannah Arendt, Courses---University of California, Berkeley, Calif.---"History of Political Theory," lectures---Machiavelli, Niccolò---1955 (Series: Subject File, 1949-1975, n.d.), Hannah Arendt Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mharendt&fileName=04/040580/040580page.db&recNum=0&itemLink=/ammem/arendthtml/mharendtFolderP04.html&linkText=7>. Page 024015.

<sup>16</sup> Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.

equated with the possession of two particular groups of the conventional virtues...the leading Christian virtues as well as the ‘cardinal’ virtues singled out by the moralists of antiquity” (Skinner, *Foundations*, 126).<sup>17</sup> Skinner (*Foundations*, 129-138) and Felix Gilbert (*Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, 154, 165)<sup>18</sup> note that Machiavelli’s criticisms of Humanism undercut its naïve belief that political success can be had through methods that conform to conventional morality.

However, the claim that Machiavelli’s originality can be based solely on claims that he was the first to advocate for an ‘amoral’ evaluation of politics and virtù must be qualified. Russell Price, in his magnificent “The Senses of Virtù in Machiavelli”,<sup>19</sup> demonstrates that Machiavelli wrote in a context in which there were already well known instances of the ‘amoral,’ political virtù in Italian, French, and English.<sup>20</sup> This means that however shocked readers were by Machiavelli’s bold subversion of Christian and cardinal virtues, they were probably not shocked because they had never seen those virtues subverted before.

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<sup>17</sup> Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998 [1978]. Although Machiavelli clearly does not use the cardinal virtues in the same way as the ancient moralists or contemporary Humanists, I am not convinced that he abandons them altogether.

<sup>18</sup> Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth-Century Florence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965.

<sup>19</sup> Russell Price, “The Senses of Virtù in Machiavelli” *European History Quarterly*. No 3. (1973): 315-345.

<sup>20</sup> See Price’s notes 20, 21, and 22 for Italian, French, and English, respectively (pages 320-322; each footnote is nearly a page long) in his “Senses of Virtù.” Price cites Bruno Migliorini’s *Storia della lingua italiana* (Florence: Sansoni 1960; page 298) as using virtù as an example of a word that, in the fifteenth century, reverted to its original Latin meaning. Price includes the examples of Giovanni Villani’s *Cronica* (I 38) and Petrarch’s *Italia Mia*, a passage from which Machiavelli uses to close *il Principe*. Thus, it seems reasonable that Machiavelli’s contemporaries would not have been as puzzled by his use of “virtù” as we are today.

The shocked indignation of Machiavelli's Renaissance readers may have come instead because he wrote from a new point of view: he was not an optimate, a member of the wealthy ruling classes of one of the cities or a member of the aristocracy. Most Renaissance writers were members of this class or sought its patronage and adopted its point of view. According to Pocock, "Machiavelli's lack of optimate status...set him free from optimate concerns...and his mind was liberated to explore the absorbing topic of the new prince's relations with his environment. It is this which gives *il Principe* the standing of an act of intellectual revolution: a breakthrough into new field of theoretic relevance" (*The Machiavellian Moment*, 154-155).<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, unlike other non-optimate authors seeking optimate patronage, Machiavelli did not adopt the optimate point of view. Rather, he claims that his independent point of view is actually useful for his princely readers because, just as a painter must be in a valley in order to paint a mountain, "to know well the nature of princes, it is fitting to be of the people" (P Dedicata).<sup>22</sup> Machiavelli was neither an optimate nor did he write from their position; more radical still, he did not even empathize with their aims. John McCormick, pushes off from Pocock's position to claim that Machiavelli was almost alone in forming the 'left wing' of republican political thought. He writes that "Before significant numbers of European and colonial intellectuals began to champion progressive and radical democratic movements in the nineteenth century, Machiavelli was arguably the only

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<sup>21</sup> See also Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, page 160.

<sup>22</sup> "...a conoscere bene la natura de' principi, conviene essere popolare." From the dedicatory letter to *il Principe* titled "Niccolò Machiavelli greets the Magnificent Lorenzo Medici the younger/Nicolaus Maclavellus Magnifico Laurention Medici iuniori salute". This Lorenzo il Magnifico is not the famous Medici who ruled Florence until his death in 1492, but rather that Lorenzo's grandson, who ruled Florence (though really in the name of his uncle, Pope Leo X) from 1513-1516 and was Duke of Urbino from 1516 until his death in 1519.

major intellectual advocate of republics in which people vigorously contest and constrain the behavior of political and economic elites by extra electoral means” (*Machiavellian Democracy*, viii).<sup>23</sup>

In this telling, the surprise, disdain, and revulsion with which Machiavelli’s work was met had less to do with Machiavelli’s break with Humanism and more to do with Machiavelli’s use of Humanist forms to help the people resist the optimates rather than helping the optimates control the people. But, even here, and unlike many of the nineteenth century radicals and democrats, Machiavelli’s argument for why people need to effectively resist the optimates is political rather than moral, religious, or economic. For Machiavelli, states that enfranchise their masses are stronger and freer than those that only make use of their upper classes.

The second way of interpreting the originality of Machiavelli’s defense of the political is to claim that he defends analysis of politics as distinct from philosophical analysis. Machiavelli’s project is to formulate a political theory of statecraft (*l’arte dello stato*<sup>24</sup>) that is useful for practitioners of statecraft. Machiavelli does not find the methods of philosophy useful in this endeavor.

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<sup>23</sup> John McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Compare to Wolin (page 181), who admits that Machiavelli’s disdain for the *grandi* was partially due to his republicanism, but claims that it was mostly due to his belief that simpler societies would be more susceptible to being shaped by his new science of politics. Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press) 2004 [1960]. See especially chapter seven, “Machiavelli: Politics and the Economy of Violence” pages 175-214.

<sup>24</sup> By *stato* Machiavelli does not quite mean “the state” in the modern sense of the word. Instead it means 1. the state of being (as “stato” is the past participle of the verb “to be”), 2. possession of rule or status, or 3. the political structures over which one could rule and in which one can have status. I refrain from translating the noun but I do translate the verb into English.

The reason that Cary Nederman felt the need to justify Machiavelli's inclusion in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* is because, while Machiavelli's importance in the western canon of political thinkers is not in any doubt, his status as a *philosopher* is doubtful indeed. Machiavelli's "writings are maddeningly and notoriously unsystematic, inconsistent and sometimes self-contradictory. He tends to appeal to experience and example in the place of rigorous logical analysis" (Nederman, "Niccolò Machiavelli"). Furthermore, Machiavelli lacks the credentials to fit "comfortably into standard models of academic philosophy" and "he often overtly rejected philosophical inquiry as beside the point" (Nederman, "Niccolò Machiavelli"). Nederman's claim that Machiavelli lacked 'credentials' is clearly wrong if Nederman means by it that Machiavelli lacked the education or knowledge of previous political thinkers necessary to be a political philosopher. Machiavelli clearly had an excellent Humanist education and was fluent in all of the historical, rhetorical, and philosophical sources on politics available in Latin or Italian.<sup>25</sup> But Machiavelli does reject at least some types of philosophy as besides the point (P 15) and as an alternative and inferior form of life to political engagement (IF 5.1; Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, 162).<sup>26</sup>

Machiavelli rejects philosophy as beside the point because he is interested in analyzing politics from the perspective of a politician. By the time he was banished

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<sup>25</sup> See Skinner's *Foundations and Machiavelli*, Pocock's *The Machiavellian Moment*, and Peter Stacey, *Roman Monarchy and the Renaissance Prince*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2007.

<sup>26</sup> For views dissenting from my claim that Machiavelli was not a philosopher and did not value philosophical inquiry as a useful means of discovering political insight or knowledge see Strauss's *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, Mansfield's *New Modes and Orders*, and Harvey Mansfield, *Machiavelli's Virtue*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press. 1996.

from Florentine political circles in 1512, Machiavelli had spent the previous 13 years as a politician and diplomat in the service of Florence. Machiavelli was appointed head of the Second Chancery (responsible for the administration of the territories of Florence) in 1498 at the age of 29, and was soon after assigned as the secretary to “the Ten of War, the committee responsible for the foreign and diplomatic relations of the republic” (Skinner, *Machiavelli*, 7).<sup>27</sup> Machiavelli combined this “long experience of modern things and a continuous reading of the ancients” (P Dedicata)<sup>28</sup> into his study of *l'arte dello stato*,<sup>29</sup> which he wanted to be of practical use for those who read it (P 15).

Because of his desire for his writing to be more practically useful than philosophically interesting, Machiavelli’s writings are the “first great experiment in a “pure” political theory” (Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 178).<sup>30</sup> According to Wolin, Machiavelli condemned the great political philosophers of the past (especially medieval ones), not on philosophical grounds, but on “the belief that the concepts inherited by political thought had ceased to be meaningful because they no longer dealt with phenomena that were truly political” (*Politics and Vision*, 178). To replace these, Machiavelli created “a truly “political” philosophy which concentrated solely on political issues and single-mindedly explored the range of phenomena relevant to it” (Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 189), which resulted in “the exploration of a pragmatic

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<sup>27</sup> Quentin Skinner, *Machiavelli: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000. [1981].

<sup>28</sup> “...lunga esperienza delle cose moderne e una continua lezione delle antiche...”

<sup>29</sup> See also Machiavelli’s famous letter to Francesco Vettori of 10 December 1513. (In Capata’s edition it is letter 216, in Atkinson and Sices it is letter 224.)

<sup>30</sup> Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press) 2004 [1960]. See especially chapter seven, “Machiavelli: Politics and the Economy of Violence” p. 175-214.

method of analysis concentrating almost exclusively on questions of power” (Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 179).

However, Wolin errs in pushing this line of reasoning further to claim that Machiavelli, as a sort of precursor to Hobbes, founded a new science of politics in which, when the conditions were right, “men could be analyzed as entities possessed of similar capabilities and outlooks” (*Politics and Vision*, 181). Wolin’s error here is twofold. First, Wolin abandons his insight that Machiavelli finds philosophy to be of dubious use when he claims that Machiavelli wanted to replace philosophy with science because, as Hobbes makes explicit, science and philosophy are at root the same enterprise (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Ch IX §3, Table).<sup>31</sup> Second, Machiavelli, as a politician and scholar who wanted to write something useful, was imitating the scholar politicians he admires: Thucydides, Polybius, Sallust, Cicero, Seneca, and more recently Dante Alighieri and Leonardo Bruni. These men were, like Machiavelli, politicians first and writers only in their spare time or when exiled from politics.

For Machiavelli, imitating these men was what he claimed was the path as yet untraveled, which allowed him to discover new modes and orders. This imitation was innovative because Machiavelli planned to demonstrate how imitating ancient politicians was possible “not in the way that law and medicine are imitated, that is, in obedience to ancient precepts or ancient science, but in the way that fragments of

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<sup>31</sup> See the table “SCIENCE, that is the knowledge of consequences; which is called also PHILOSOPHY”. See also the OL (Latin edition of 1688) variant of Chapter IX, translated by Curley, §1 “There are two kinds of knowledge. One is fact, and is the knowledge proper to witnesses, the record of which is *history*...The other is of consequences, and is called science, the record of which is usually called *philosophy*” (Italics in original).

ancient statues are represented” (Mansfield, *Machiavelli’s New Modes and Orders*, 27). In law and medicine, the ancients were authorities not to be questioned but to be copied. In sculpture (and other visual arts) the ancients were to be imitated in order to learn the techniques needed to achieve their excellent results. According to Mansfield, “in Machiavelli’s day...honoring the ancients to the extent of imitating them had a subversive effect on the established modes and orders...” (*Machiavelli’s New Modes and Orders*, 26) because imitating ancient modes and orders would allow Machiavelli to demonstrate how to learn the *virtù* with which the ancients managed their great political achievements. That is, Machiavelli believed that his innovation was to teach individuals and peoples how to acquire *virtù* through the imitation of the virtuous.

### **Interpretations of Virtù**

*Virtù* is the centerpiece of Machiavelli’s *arte dello stato*. Arendt articulates something of a consensus position when she writes that *virtù*, “according to Machiavelli is the specifically human political quality” (Arendt, “What is Authority”, 137)<sup>32</sup> because “Freedom as inherent in action is perhaps best illustrated by Machiavelli’s concept of *virtù*, the excellence with which man answers the opportunities the world opens before him in the guise of *fortuna*” (Arendt, “What is Freedom”, 51).<sup>33</sup> However, although there is general consensus on this basic

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<sup>32</sup> Hannah Arendt, “What is Authority” in *Between Past and Future*. New York, New York: Penguin, 2006 [1961].

<sup>33</sup> Hannah Arendt, “What is Freedom” in *Between Past and Future*. New York, New York: Penguin, 2006 [1961].

interpretive claim that virtù is, for Machiavelli, the human political quality and that it has something to do with meeting the challenges of *fortuna*, there is disagreement about what more specifically constitutes virtù and over what interpretive strategies are best employed to make these claims.

The existing literature on Machiavelli's concept of virtù can be best organized by the preferred interpretive strategy of each school. This is because although the debates about interpretive strategy have relatively clear (and often well known) positions, there are often not correspondingly clear positions on what virtù means or the work it is doing in Machiavelli's writings. The various schools of thought on the best methodology for interpreting Machiavelli's concept of virtù unsurprisingly track some of the famous debates about interpretive strategy from the past seventy years, but they do not totally adhere to them. For the sake of clarity I will group authors with the interpretive strategy they primarily employ, bearing in mind that some authors make use of more than one of the interpretive strategies listed below.

Some accounts have deployed the strategy of reading carefully to determine Machiavelli's esoteric meaning of virtù (Strauss, *Thoughts*; Mansfield, *New Modes and Orders* and *Machiavelli's Virtue*; McCormick, "Enduring Ambiguity"<sup>34</sup>). Others have focused on the gendered implications of Machiavelli's opposition of the feminine

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<sup>34</sup> John McCormick, "The Enduring Ambiguity of Machiavellian Virtue: Cruelty, Crime, and Christianity in *The Prince*" *Social Research: An International Quarterly*. Vol. 81 No. 1 (Spring 2014): 133-164.

*fortuna* and the masculine virtù (Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman*<sup>35</sup>) and the extent to which Machiavelli believed woman can possess virtù (Clarke, “On the Woman Question”<sup>36</sup>). Another school focuses its interpretation of virtù on Machiavelli’s relationship with his political and intellectual contexts (Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*), focusing on his use of ancient Roman sources and humanist rhetoric (Pocock *Machiavellian Moment*; Skinner, *Foundations and Machiavelli*; Kahn, “Virtù and the Example of Agathocles”<sup>37</sup> and *Machiavellian Rhetoric*<sup>38</sup>). Finally, there are those who focus on the alleged multiplicity of meanings Machiavelli has for virtù (Whitfield, *Machiavelli*<sup>39</sup>), which they attempt to refine by looking at Machiavelli’s examples of those with virtù (Wood, “Virtù Reconsidered”<sup>40</sup>) and by considering a systematic analysis of the various “senses” in which Machiavelli uses virtù (Price, “Senses of Virtù”).

In contrast, I provide a systematic examination of how Machiavelli deploys exemplars of political virtù throughout his major political, historical, and military writings. I present an in depth analysis of the most important of his examples that focuses on the lessons about virtù Machiavelli wanted his readers to draw from each example. Through this account, I argue that Machiavelli exhorts his readers to learn

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<sup>35</sup> Hanna F. Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press. 1984.

<sup>36</sup> Michelle T. Clarke, “On the Woman Question in Machiavelli” *Review of Politics* 67, no. 2 (2005): 229 – 256.

<sup>37</sup> Victoria Kahn, “Virtù and the Example of Agathocles in Machiavelli’s *Prince*” *Representations*, No. 13 (Winter, 1986), pp. 63-83.

<sup>38</sup> Victoria Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric: From the Counter-Reformation to Milton*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1994.

<sup>39</sup> J. H. Whitfield, *Machiavelli*. New York: Russell & Russell 1965 [1947].

<sup>40</sup> Neal Wood, “Machiavelli’s Concept of *Virtù Reconsidered*”, *Political Studies*, Vol. XV, No. 2, 1967. Pages 159-172.

from political history and to imitate the virtuous practices of successful individuals and states as the means of acquiring virtù for themselves.

*Reading through esoteric meanings.* Those who find in Machiavelli an esoteric meaning of virtù tend to do so by strongly prioritizing some parts of Machiavelli's writings over others and by saying (or implying) that Machiavelli did not mean some of the things that he said. Leo Strauss and Harvey Mansfield Jr. employ this strategy to read Machiavelli as a type of aristocratic loving neo-Platonist, while John McCormick employs this strategy to advance the precise opposite claim: that Machiavelli is more a defender of the poor than of republicanism.

For Strauss and Mansfield,<sup>41</sup> the two main keys to Machiavelli's true, esoteric meaning are his "meaningful" silence on topics that his readers would think important (Strauss, *Thoughts*, 30 and 104) and his outrageous and exaggerated sense of humor (Strauss, *Thoughts*, 82; Mansfield, *New Modes and Orders*, 10, 12). In their reading, Machiavelli intentionally uses virtù ambiguously because the reader is meant to "ascend" from the common use of the term to Machiavelli's meaning (Strauss, *Thoughts*, 47). Because Machiavelli judges virtù by the *verità effettuale* (effectual truth) of its ability to produce political results, "When Machiavelli praises virtue, it would seem necessary to make the ability to do evil a *part* or virtue. At the same time,

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<sup>41</sup> I am comfortable claiming that Mansfield endorses all of Strauss's opinions on Machiavelli because Mansfield basically says as much in his introduction to Harvey Mansfield Jr. "Strauss's Machiavelli" *Political Theory*. Vol. 3, No. 4 (Nov., 1975): 372-384.

however, such vicious virtue achieves its effect only in contrast with what people usually expect from virtue, that it not include vice” (Mansfield, *Machiavelli’s Virtue*, 19). Machiavelli’s readers are to learn from him how to alternate between virtue and vice “guided by prudence and sustained by strength of mind, will or temper” but that prudence and strength of mind “are the only generally recognized virtues” because, unlike the moral virtues, only “they themselves are always salutary” (Strauss, *Thoughts*, 242). But, while prudence can “be understood as a virtue itself” it “is also a critic of virtue, reminding it of necessity” (Mansfield, *Machiavelli’s Virtue*, 39). But, because perfect prudence can only come from nature, “Virtue in the highest sense, “extraordinary virtue”, grandeur of mind and will, the pre-moral or trans-moral quality which distinguishes the great men from the rest of mankind, is a gift of nature” (Strauss, *Thoughts*, 246) and may even allow the great to work outside the normal bounds of prudence because “The rules of prudence apply to lesser men, and restrict only what they can do” (Mansfield, *New Modes and Orders*, 162).

Politicized virtue is distinguished from prudence because it must be public and impressive for it to work. According to Mansfield, one of Machiavelli’s main distinctions from Aristotle is that “for Machiavelli, the virtues are social without qualification or exception” and that virtue must be understood by its political effects (*Machiavelli’s Virtue*, 20). Thus, for it to work, virtù must be impressive: “Virtue must show and must be recognized. The virtuous prince must appear virtuous and so his very virtue tells him that he cannot afford to be unconcerned with his recognition” (Mansfield, *Machiavelli’s Virtue*, 17). Thus, the need to alternate between virtue and

vice stems from virtue's political role in managing the prince's relationship with his subjects. This 'doctrine of virtue' has two goals, acquisition and opposition to fortune, which are really the same: the prince acquires to have sufficient resources to confront hostile fortune; however, the prince must not rely on fortune so as to be able "to acquire without limit" (Mansfield, *Machiavelli's Virtue*, 47-48). Strauss notes that the virtue of the Prince, being good at acquiring wealth and glory, is distinct from moral virtue and from republican virtue (Strauss, *Thoughts*, 269).

For Strauss and Mansfield, in republics, "Virtue in the true sense is patriotism, full dedication to the well being of one's society, a dedication which extinguishes or absorbs all private ambition in favor of the ambition of the republic" (Strauss, *Thoughts*, 256). This virtue is the good effect of a good order (Mansfield, *New Modes and Orders*, 43) but that the virtue of one man is needed to create good orders because republican virtue cannot (Mansfield, *New Modes and Orders*, 84). Furthermore, in Rome, the tumults between the peoples and nobles generated virtue because they allowed the people to purge their ambition and were governed by orders to prevent harmful bloodshed and exile (Mansfield, *New Modes and Orders*, 43, 44, 56, 59-60). This analysis of ambition in republics leads Strauss to conclude that "true virtue" is ambition guided by prudence (*Thoughts on Machiavelli*, 264).

Strauss's and Mansfield's articulation of Machiavelli's concept of virtù is intentionally vague and confusing (Mansfield, "Strauss's Machiavelli" 372; *New Modes and Orders*, 13). They posit at least three different types of virtue: moral virtue,

princely virtue, and republican virtue,<sup>42</sup> frequently switching between them without clearly indicating this to their reader. However, Machiavelli rarely speaks of moral virtù, if he ever does, and he never differentiates between a republican virtù and a princely virtù.<sup>43</sup> However, the common thread throughout their interpretation of virtù is the presence of prudence. It is not particularly surprising to find prudence as the centerpiece of the interpretation of Machiavelli's virtù. Prudence is, after all (along with temperance, fortitude, and justice) one of the cardinal virtues and is particularly apt to be the focus of virtù for those who want to read Machiavelli as a kind of neo-Platonic philosopher primarily interested in dispensing knowledge of the truth and wisdom to his readers (Strauss, *Thoughts*, 54-55, 81, 283; Mansfield, *New Modes and Orders*, 8, 66, 129, 185, 205-206; *Machiavelli's Virtue*, 39, 51) and who actually possess the most virtue of all because he is capable of dispensing virtue and manipulating princes into do his bidding (Mansfield, *Machiavelli's Virtue*, 5,43)

When reading Strauss and Mansfield, one gets the sense that they are so interested in the esoteric text that they are entirely uninterested in the exoteric text. Perhaps it is besides the point, then, to say in objection that Machiavelli's rejection of philosophy is real (P 15, IF 5.1) or that Machiavelli never equates virtù and prudence. However, in contrast to Strauss and Mansfield, my interpretive methodology is to look at all the examples of virtù that Machiavelli provides and to not dismiss them with the

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<sup>42</sup> Though Mansfield later revises his position, saying that Machiavelli is not "as is often said, a partisan of "republican virtù" and that "Machiavelli never speaks of "republican virtue" (*Machiavelli's Virtue*, 23).

<sup>43</sup> Machiavelli does not use the phrases "princely virtù" or even "republican virtù". Instead he speaks of the "virtù of a prince" or the "virtù of a republic". There are some differences in how virtù is manifested in republics and principalities. I address these differences in detail in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

claim that ‘Machiavelli did not mean for us to take this example seriously’. This focus on prudence as the heart of virtù is one of the errors that my methodology prevents me from making. Virtù is as much an embodied, physical disposition as it is a mental and intellectual one: Strauss and Mansfield focus on the intellectual to the exclusion of the body, but the men who Machiavelli admires most – and those who he exhorts his readers to imitate – are not scholars or priests but soldiers.<sup>44</sup> Machiavelli exhorts his readers to train their bodies for fatigue (P 14) and focuses on the conditioning of the militia (AG Book 2) because he wants them to train as citizen soldiers in their republic’s militia. Indeed, we must keep in mind that Machiavelli gives his readers examples, whose actions they are to imitate, rather than merely ponder as intellectual curiosities.

For John McCormick, the key to interpreting Machiavelli’s meaning of virtù is to read Machiavelli as the ultimate defender of the people against the optimates, almost whatever the consequences. In a move to push back against the overly aristocratic interpretation of Machiavelli’s republicanism he sees in Pocock, Skinner, and Pettit,<sup>45</sup> McCormick interprets Machiavelli as the ultimate defender of the political aspirations of and political participation by the poor. Sometimes, McCormick does this by interpreting Machiavelli as the first real defender of mass democracy (*Machiavellian Democracy*) while at other times McCormick interprets Machiavelli as preferring Greek tyrants who favor the poor to optimate-controlled republics (“Subdue

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<sup>44</sup> See also Wood “Virtù Reconsidered”, pages 160-162 and Skinner, *Foundations*, page 122.

<sup>45</sup> Phillip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1997.

the Senate”;<sup>46</sup> “Greek Tyrant as Republican Reformer”<sup>47</sup>). But at all times, McCormick interprets Machiavelli as preferring those of humble origins to members of the optimates (“Inglorious Tyrants”<sup>48</sup>).

McCormick’s main attempt to address Machiavelli’s concept of *virtù* appears in an attempt to demonstrate that Machiavelli “in fact, considers Agathocles fully virtuous, and in certain respects, esteems him more highly than he does [Cesare] Borgia” (“Enduring Ambiguity”, 134).<sup>49</sup> He begins by stating that, “As any reader of [*il Principe*] knows very well” Machiavelli advises princes to rely on their *virtù* rather than on *fortuna* (134). McCormick notes that Machiavelli praises Cesare Borgia’s *virtù*, despite the fact that he came to power through *fortuna*, while refraining from total praise of Agathocles, despite his lack of reliance on *fortuna* and that his political and military career was more successful than Cesare Borgia’s or Machiavelli’s (134-138).<sup>50</sup> Agathocles is said to have an unimpeachable military *virtù* and to have been comparably successful in domestic politics because of how well he used cruelty

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<sup>46</sup> John P. McCormick, “Subdue the Senate: Machiavelli’s “Way of Freedom” or Path to Tyranny” *Political Theory*. Vol. 40 No. 6 (2012). pp. 714-735.

<sup>47</sup> John McCormick, “Machiavelli’s Greek Tyrant as Republican Reformer” in *The Radical Machiavelli: Politics, Philosophy, and Language*. Filippo Del Lucchese, Fabio Frosini, and Vittorio Morfino eds. Leiden and Boston: Brill. 2015. Pages 337-348.

<sup>48</sup> John McCormick, “Machiavelli’s Inglorious Tyrants: On Agathocles, Scipio and Unmerited Glory” *History of Political Thought* XXXVI No. 1. (Spring 2015): 29-52.

<sup>49</sup> John McCormick, “The Enduring Ambiguity of Machiavellian Virtue: Cruelty, Crime, and Christianity in *The Prince*” *Social Research: An International Quarterly*. Vol. 81, No. 1 (Spring 2014): 133-164.

<sup>50</sup> McCormick also puts great emphasis on the claim that Agathocles and Cesare Borgia were the only examples “with whom Machiavelli directly affiliates himself textually in *The Prince*.” Agathocles is said to have overcome “hardships and dangers,” Borgia is said to have suffered a “malignity of fortune,” and Machiavelli describes himself as having done both of these in the Dedicatory letter to *il Principe* (“Enduring Ambiguity”, 137-138). I think it is to McCormick’s credit that he stops here with this claim, dubious though it is. A Strauss or a Mansfield would have pushed it further to claim that Machiavelli is revealing himself to be a villain or to have ambitions for (not military but spiritual) conquest.

("Enduring Ambiguity", 138-139). Quoting Machiavelli's claim that "One cannot call it virtue to kill one's fellow citizens, to betray one's friends, to be without faith, without compassion, without religion" (P 8),<sup>51</sup> McCormick attempts to argue that Machiavelli believed that Agathocles actually *had* all of these attributes (which he is quoted here as saying that Agathocles was *without*) in a greater degrees than Cesare Borgia ("Enduring Ambiguity", 141-147).

McCormick presents a good deal of evidence (much of which is inaccurate) and argument (much of which I consider spurious) over the next several pages of the article, but none of it can overcome the central methodological failing on which his claim is based: that we can ignore or disregard as false and misleading some things that an author clearly says because we can find a clever and sneaky interpretation that might suggest otherwise. Machiavelli tells us that Agathocles cannot be praised among the best of men and that, at least in his very bloody coupe to overthrow the republic and gain the tyranny of Syracuse, he does not use his *virtù* or rely on *fortuna* but on wickedness (P 8). McCormick does address what could be (and probably is) a relatively straight forward reason why Machiavelli might prefer Cesare Borgia to Agathocles: Cesare only conquered and overthrew principalities, whereas Agathocles overthrew a republic ("Enduring Ambiguity", 144).<sup>52</sup> However, McCormick then embarks on his well trodden path of claiming that Machiavelli did not particularly care for oligarchic republics (which Syracuse was) and preferred Greek style tyrants whose

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<sup>51</sup> I use McCormick's translation here because I am quoting his paper.

<sup>52</sup> Stacey, *Roman Monarchy*, 297.

base of power was the poor (145-147).<sup>53</sup> But, again, this argument has no real basis in Machiavelli's text. McCormick's final argument is that Agathocles was successful while Cesare Borgia was not. But as the examples of the many individuals Machiavelli claims had virtù (including Borgia), and whose political projects were unsuccessful, demonstrate that Machiavelli does not view virtù as a heuristic for success, nor does he think that failure demonstrates that virtù was lacking (as McCormick himself admits later on pages 156-157). In the end, despite McCormick's other insights (based on better evidence and interpretive methodologies), his arguments about Cesare Borgia's and Agathocles's virtù are unsupported by evidence and not at all useful to understanding Machiavelli's concept of virtù.

*Reading through the gendered lens.* Those who interpret Machiavelli's concept of virtù through gender tend to focus on the extent to which virtù represents masculinity and is opposed to femininity. The most important of these texts is Hanna F. Pitkin's *Fortune is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli*.<sup>54</sup> Pitkin's central claim is that, for Machiavelli, virtù and political participation are essentially masculine activities that can only be performed by (heterosexual) men. In Pitkin's account, "Though it can sometimes mean virtue, virtù tends mostly to connote energy, effectiveness, virtuosity" (*Fortune is a Woman*, 25). The word "virtù" derives from the Latin "vir" for "man". "Virtù is thus manliness,

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<sup>53</sup> See also, "Inglorious Tyrants", "Greek Tyrant as Republican Reformer", "Subdue the Senate".

<sup>54</sup> Hanna F. Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press. 1984.

those qualities found in a “real man.” Furthermore, if *virtù* is Machiavelli’s favorite quality, *effeminato* (effeminate) is one of his most frequent and scathing epithets” (Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman*, page 25). To call a political actor *effeminato* is an epithet because it calls them out on a lack of *virtù*: they lack the manly ability to conquer or resist the temptations of women (Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman*, 110-113), violently subdue *fortuna* (depicted as an old woman, 138-139, 147-149, 155), and to seize the *occasione* (depicted as a young woman 147). For Pitkin, Machiavelli is anxious about the need for masculinity (*Fortune is a Woman*, 5), and with good reason: the images of masculinity he presents fail because they are impossible to achieve and because they *a priori* exclude half of the population. Pitkin claims that, despite these failings, we can recover a “Machiavelli at his best” (*Fortune is a Woman*, 285-286), which strips Machiavelli’s political theory of all the masculine and feminine imagery (page 291) and leaves his political theory as something very much like that of Hannah Arendt, though Pitkin never actually mentions Arendt by name (*Fortune is a Woman*, 285-286, 297).

Pitkin’s understanding of *virtù* is that it consists of three images of masculinity: tricky foxes (*Fortuna is a Woman*, Chapter 2, see especially pages 29, 34), near-mythical founders (Chapter 3, see especially pages 53, 55), and idealized republican citizens (Chapter 4, see especially pages 80, 85-86). According to Pitkin “Each image is in certain respects superior to, more manly than, the other two; each is in significant ways unsatisfactory, inadequate, or unmanly” (105). Pitkin argues that,

in the end, the images conflict with each other more than help sustain each other and Machiavelli's whole project of conceptualizing *virtù* falls apart.

However, Pitkin's interpretation of *virtù* as divided into three images of masculinity simply lacks support from the text. The claims made by Machiavelli about founders (P6, D 1:19) and republican citizens (and princes who are not founders, an important set of Machiavelli's examples who do not appear in Pitkin's schema)<sup>55</sup> are not meant to be categorically separate; all are said to have *virtù* and Machiavelli does not state, or even imply, that they have different types of *virtù*. Machiavelli does not tell us that Romulus, Cyrus, Moses, and Theseus have a special *virtù* of founders that affords them the superhuman capability to give laws to a people, rather he tells us that they are the grandest examples of those who have acquired their principalities with their own arms and their own *virtù* (P 6). Indeed, Machiavelli closes this chapter with a discussion of Hiero of Syracuse, who is not a founder, but who Machiavelli claims owed nothing to *fortuna* but the *occasione*,<sup>56</sup> and in the next chapter Machiavelli mentions Francesco Sforza as an example of someone from Machiavelli's contemporary Italy who became a prince through his own *virtù* (P 7). Hiero and Sforza do not have a different or inferior type of *virtù* than that of the founders; rather, they are just not the greatest examples.

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<sup>55</sup> The image of the tricky fox only appears twice in Machiavelli's major works, both times in *il Principe*: in chapters 18 and 19. *La Mandragola*, Machiavelli's most famous play, could be thought of as a meditation on *furberia*, the trickiness of the fox figure. But, it is not a meditation on *virtù*; Machiavelli only uses the word "virtù" 4 times in the play, of which two are in the prologue. Furthermore, none of the characters are examples of individuals with *virtù*.

<sup>56</sup> By *occasione*, Machiavelli means something like the occasion or opportunity to accomplish some great thing. Here he invokes the medieval notion (expressed in the iconography) that *occasione* is the daughter of *Fortune* and as *occasione* approaches she is difficult to recognize, but as she passes she is easy to recognize but impossible to seize.

Michelle T. Clarke takes issue with Pitkin's fundamental assumption about Machiavelli's concept of *virtù*: Clarke argues that Machiavelli believes women can possess *virtù*, but that saying so would be "so transgressive of conventional standards of behavior that ...it cannot be called *virtù*" ("On the Woman Question", 233).<sup>57</sup> Clarke's argument rests on two pillars. First, that *virtù* comes from a "composite" of *animo*<sup>58</sup> and "well-constructed institutional arrangements capable of directing *animo* toward the common benefit" (237). In Clarke's reading, *virtù* comes about when *animo* is directed by instructional arrangements to serve the common good, but in pre-modern time, women's *animo* were often not so directed because they lived outside of their city's political institutions.

Second, drawing on Strauss's and Mansfield's method of esoteric textual interpretation, Clarke argues that Machiavelli's account of Agathocles serves as a model for places where he discusses *virtù* which he says cannot be called *virtù* in public because it is too transgressive of social norms. Clarke claims that Machiavelli dismisses Agathocles's *virtù* and then immediately goes on to extol it (P 8) and that those qualities that Machiavelli says prevent Agathocles from being said to have *virtù* are those that he calls *virtù* in chapters 15 – 23 ("On the Woman Question", 249 – 250). Clarke continues, "By warning that "one cannot call...virtue" what he elsewhere

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<sup>57</sup> Michelle T. Clarke, "On the Woman Question in Machiavelli" *Review of Politics* 67, no. 2 (2005): 229 – 256.

<sup>58</sup> Clarke defines *animo* as "spiritedness" or "strength of heart" (*animo*)" and claims it is fruitfully compared with the Greek concept of *thumos*, which when "Guided by reason, it becomes courage" (pages 237-238). This is similar to, but more specific than, the definition I use: "By *animo*, Machiavelli intends a range of meanings that include "mind", "soul", "heart", and "intellect". *Animo* is used as the opposite of meanings such as "body", "flesh", and "appetite"."

judges to be *virtù*, Machiavelli signals to his reader both that his ethics entail a fundamental break with the traditional, Christian conception of virtue and that the subversiveness of his teaching requires that he write about *virtù* in an ambiguous and elliptical way” (250).

By combining the claim that Machiavelli will not exoterically state that a woman has *virtù* if he thinks she does with her claim that great *animo* is a sort of formless *virtù*, Clarke searched *il Principe*, the *Discorsi*, and *Istorie Fiorentine* to compose a list of women Machiavelli says have great *animo* and who he therefore is secretly saying have *virtù*. These women are Epicharis (Clarke, “On the Woman Question”, 241: who attempted to kill the Emperor Nero, as described in D 3:6), Marcia (242: who did have the Emperor Commodus assassinated, as described in D 3:6), Caterina Sforza (242, 246-247 : who successfully defeated a coup attempt, as described in D 3:6, IF 8.34, P 20), Queen Giovanna II of Naples (243-244: who won both domestic and foreign power struggles, as described in IF 1.38-39), Eudoxia (244-245: who rebelled against being forced to marry below her station, as described in IF 1.3), Rosamund (245: who assassinated the king of the Vandals in response to his forcing her to marry him, as described in IF 1.8), and Annalena (246: who refused to remarry after her husband was killed, as described in IF 6.7). Clarke argues that Machiavelli describes these women as acting in the ways that men act when they have *virtù* and that they are described as having sufficient *animo* that a careful reader will understand Machiavelli as saying that they have *virtù* (250).

While Clarke is absolutely correct that Machiavelli believes that women can possess virtù, it is not for any of the reasons she gives and, what is more, her interpretation of virtù is incorrect. Clarke's definition of virtù as *animo* guided by institutions to serve the common good cannot be Machiavelli's definition. This, again, focuses too much on the mental aspects of virtù at the expense of the physical and embodied, which is wrong for the same reasons already enumerated above.

Furthermore, although the pursuit of the common good of a political society is central to Machiavelli's understanding of republicanism, it is not the case that Machiavelli believes that virtù is only produced in republican citizens. This is yet another pitfall that my methodology of looking at all Machiavelli's examples of virtù allows me to avoid: There are many examples of men with virtù who were not raised in societies with republican institutions, such as Romulus (P 6, D 1:2, D 1:19), Marcus Aurelius (P 19), and Septimius Severus (P 19). Furthermore, Agathocles (P 8), Oliverotto da Fermo (P 8), Julius Caesar (D 1:33), and Lorenzo (*il Magnifico*) de' Medici (IF 8:36) are all examples of leaders who Machiavelli describes as having virtù but does not say benefited their country; in fact, he strongly implies that they used their virtù to harm their country because they overthrew or corrupted republics. Additionally, Machiavelli in general claims that a tyrant who is virtuous would not benefit his people or make his city more powerful (D 2:2). Thus, the claim by Strauss, Mansfield, and Clarke that advancing the common good is, by definition, a part of Machiavelli's conception of virtù must be recognized as false.

However, we can deduce that Clarke is correct that Machiavelli believes women are capable of possessing virtù without having to employ her dubious esoteric reading of *animo* and Agathocles. This is because Machiavelli, exoterically, describes a woman as possessing virtù. In *Dell'Arte della Guerra*, when recounting the familiar scene of Caterina Sforza thwarting an attempted coup that Clarke cites Machiavelli as describing in his three other major works, Machiavelli has Fabrizio Colonna approvingly say that Caterina “received that honor which her virtù merited” (AG 7:355).<sup>59</sup> This both demonstrates that Machiavelli is willing to say that a woman can possess virtù and that Machiavelli is not worried about saying this publicly for fear of transgressing too far: *dell'Arte della Guerra* is the only of his major works that Machiavelli had published during his lifetime.

*Reading through the context.* Those who focus their interpretations of Machiavelli’s virtù on his political and intellectual contexts tend to focus on his relationship with renaissance republican politics, humanist rhetoric, and the Roman rhetoric and histories from which both drew inspiration. Machiavelli’s ideas are discussed in the context of his contemporaries to find his “distinctive contributions to the development of political and historical thought” (Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, 4) or else to situate Machiavelli within the sweeping history of ideologies of the West (Skinner, *Foundations*, x-xi), and always, through looking at the sorts of conversations in which Machiavelli participated and the sort of reaction his

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<sup>59</sup> “...riportò quello onore che aveva meritata la sua virtù.”

contemporaries had to his writings, to shed light on the correct interpretation of the texts (Skinner, “History of Ideas”).<sup>60</sup> As a result of this relational methodology of interpretation, these scholars usually focus not specifically on Machiavelli but on Machiavelli as he existed in his Florentine context (Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*), as he existed in the wider context of humanist rhetoric and its reaction to ancient Rome (Skinner, *Foundations*), or in so far as Machiavelli in this context influenced later Anglo-American republicanism (Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*) and rhetoric (Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric*).

Felix Gilbert claims that virtù “designated the strength and vigor from which all human action arose” and existed in those “who were inspired by single-minded will-power or by some indefinable inner force” (*Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, 179). Gilbert argues that Machiavelli developed this concept to explain why the Florentine republic had collapsed in 1512 despite it having the right sort of institutions: “the well being of any political society depends less on its institutions than on the spirit which stands behind them” (179), in this case virtù.<sup>61</sup> Gilbert, correctly, notes that, “according to Machiavelli, *virtù* could be possessed by a collective body as well as by individuals” (179). The institutions of a well ordered society, like the institutions of a well ordered military, interacted with the individuals in it to ensure that the society had virtù (179-180) and the best example of this was the ancient Roman republic (182). According to Gilbert, the Rome Machiavelli cites was a utopian vision to be imitated

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<sup>60</sup> Quentin Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas”, *History and Theory*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1969), pp. 3-53.

<sup>61</sup> In this reading, Machiavelli’s understanding of institutions is a forerunner of Montesquieu’s.

(191-192). “The ideal at which Machiavelli aimed in his recommendations for a perfect republic was the creation of a unified body, which, by acting instinctively, generated the strength, single-minded will power, and vitality necessary for political success. Such a republic possessed *virtù*” (191).

While Gilbert’s focus on Machiavelli’s political context has allowed him to understand that Machiavelli was concerned with the collective possession of *virtù* by a people, Gilbert’s understanding of the content of *virtù* is flawed. Like many of the interpreters I have discussed above, Gilbert incorrectly interprets *virtù* as a primarily intellectual or spiritual quality. Gilbert is unable to devote significant space to an interpretation of Machiavelli’s concept of *virtù*, so his interpretation tends as much towards the ‘undefined’ as it does to the ‘indefinable’. However, where Gilbert does err is in his claim that the republic that possesses *virtù* has the people act instinctually as a unified body. Machiavelli tells us that *virtù* is rarely innate in an individual (P 7) and it is never instinctive in a group. Rather, acquiring *virtù* requires training and for a people to possess *virtù* it requires that it be well ordered precisely to suppress the self-serving instincts of its individual members.

According to J. G. A. Pocock, there is a distinction between virtue and *virtù* in Machiavelli’s *arte dello stato*. In Pocock’s interpretation, *virtù* is the “exceptional and extraordinary qualities, standing outside the norm...that by which form was imposed on the matter of *fortuna* (Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 161) and to impose order upon its disordered “sequence of happenings” (184). Virtue, on the other hand, was republican virtue, and the republic “was a structure in which every citizen’s ability to

place the common good before his own was the precondition of every other's so that every man's virtue saved every other's from that corruption part of whose time-dimension was *fortuna*" (184). Thus, for Pocock, because *virtù* combated *fortuna* and virtue combated corruption, and because corruption and *fortuna* were related, so must be virtue and *virtù*, to the extent that "virtue in this sense [civic virtue] is not separable from the *virtù* that seeks to master *fortuna*" (193). Pocock notes that, in a republic, "*Virtù* must be constitutive of virtue" (194) and when discussing Cosimo de' Medici, Pocock allows his "Machiavellian ambiguities...to run on" and says of Cosimo, "it may be that his virtue is *virtù*, outside morality altogether" (98) and that "Military *virtù* necessitates political virtue because both can be presented in terms of the same end" (201).

Pocock dedicates many pages to trying to work out the relationship between *virtù* and virtue. However, this confusing and complicated relationship between "*virtù*" and "virtue" is unnecessary and unwarranted by the texts Pocock seeks to interpret. Machiavelli speaks of the *virtù* of a prince, the *virtù* of a citizen, and the *virtù* of a republic using the same word and it is unnecessarily confusing and (if unintentionally) misleading of Pocock to use the two words for a range of meanings and functions all of which Machiavelli ascribes to *virtù*. Machiavelli simply uses *virtù* to describe the qualities he finds admirable in republics, principalities, individuals, and peoples; for Machiavelli, it is the same quality, or set of qualities, that can be possessed and displayed by different subjects. Despite the many merits of Pocock's

otherwise enlightening interpretation of Machiavelli, his analysis of *virtù* is unsalvageably marred by the false distinction he employs.

For Quentin Skinner, *virtù* is a sort of moral flexibility, the willingness to do whatever it takes to succeed in achieving the political ends of *mantenere lo stato*, preserving liberty, and acquiring worldly glory. Skinner states

It is often complained that Machiavelli fails to provide any definition of *virtù*, and even that he is innocent of any systematic use of the word. But...he uses the term with complete consistency...he treats it as a quality which enables a prince to withstand the blows of Fortune, to attract the goddess's favor, and to rise in consequence to the heights of princely fame, winning honor and glory for himself and his government (Skinner, *Machiavelli*, 40).

Skinner continues that, for Machiavelli, the defining characteristic of *virtù* is the willingness to act according to necessity rather than according to moral dictates, which means that *virtù* is moral flexibility (*Machiavelli*, 44). In other words, for Skinner's Machiavelli, "the concept of *virtù* is simply used to refer to *whatever* range of qualities the prince may find it necessary to acquire in order to 'maintain his state' and 'achieve great things'" (*Foundations*, 138).<sup>62</sup> Thus, Skinner's Machiavelli "insists first of all that a man of true *virtù* can never be totally overwhelmed even by the most evil fortune" (*Foundations*, 121) because that man will have done what is necessary.

This interpretation of *virtù* as flexibility is not limited to the prince or political leaders: "The same willingness to place the good of the community above private interests and ordinary considerations of morality is held to be no less essential in the

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<sup>62</sup> Skinner here cites Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, pages 166, 177.

case of the rank-and-file citizens” (Skinner, *Machiavelli*, 61). Furthermore, Skinner claims that Machiavelli “is also interested in the more abstract and metaphorical suggestion that the commonwealth itself may be capable of *virtù* (*Foundations*, 176). Skinner writes that Machiavelli identifies two methods of instilling *virtù* into the whole body of the citizens: well used religious worship (*Machiavelli*, 70-71) and the imposition of *virtù* by laws that force citizens to put the common good above their individual good, the key to which is a mixed constitution (*Machiavelli*, 72-75). Also, Skinner rightly notes that Machiavelli is just as concerned with instilling *virtù* into the army (*Foundations*, 130-131; *Machiavelli*, 85), which is just as important for a principality as for a republic to achieve glory.

Skinner caps off his understanding of *virtù* as moral flexibility by claiming that

Machiavelli’s final sense of what it is to be a man of *virtù*, and his final advice to the prince, can thus be summarized by saying that he tells the prince to ensure above all that he becomes a man of ‘flexible disposition’: he must be capable of varying his conduct from good to evil and back against ‘as fortune and circumstances dictate’ (*Foundations*, 138).

This understanding of *virtù* as having a ‘flexible disposition’ or a ‘mobile personality’ is also discussed by Hanna F. Pitkin and Sheldon Wolin, though Wolin never calls it *virtù* when he writes about it. Because *fortuna* is always changing, then according to Pitkin (*Fortune is a Woman*, 151) and Wolin (*Politics and Vision*, 190-191), *virtù* consists in the ability to change one’s nature to match the times, because the *fortuna* of such a person would never go away (see P 25<sup>63</sup>). However, even as Pitkin speculates

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<sup>63</sup> See also Machiavelli’s poem “I Capitoli di Fortuna” (Translated as “Terecets on Fortune”).

that “[p]erhaps it is that virtù consists neither of prudence or boldness, but of the extraordinary, almost super human power to modify one’s character as the times change” (*Fortune is a Woman*, 138), she notes that Machiavelli immediately questions man’s ability to so change their character, and so this image of virtù is also an unattainable failure (151).<sup>64</sup> Though neither Wolin nor Machiavelli ever call this hypothetical ability virtù, it is worth discussing here, because if virtù is the human ability to respond to *fortuna*, then this mobile personality would seem to fill that role, and could perhaps, as Skinner and Pitkin claim, be thought of as virtù.

However, it would be a mistake to call the possession of the ‘mobile personality’ or the willingness to do what is necessary virtù. To interpret virtù as the ability to vary one’s personality with the times or as mere willingness is to make the same mistake that Strauss, Mansfield, Gilbert, and many others made: that is, focusing too much on the mental and not enough on the physical aspects of virtù. Furthermore, Skinner sometimes seems to ignore the aspects of virtù, such as self reliance and military capability, which Machiavelli believes are always useful no matter how *fortuna* varies and that are generally compatible with traditional moral virtues. However, Skinner’s interpretation of virtù errs most egregiously when he, like McCormick, suggests that virtù may be a heuristic for political success. Machiavelli’s many examples of individuals with virtù who failed but whom Machiavelli exhorts his readers to imitate belies this interpretation by Skinner and McCormick. Skinner’s interpretation of virtù is strongest when he dwells on Machiavelli’s account of virtù in

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<sup>64</sup> Though individuals lack this ability, republics can vary with the times through electing different leaders (D 3:9). I evaluate this and its significance at length in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

a republic. However, the limited space he is able to devote to explicating how Machiavelli understands how a people acquire, maintain, and use virtù means that much of the content of these processes is not fleshed out. In contrast, I endeavor to discuss these topics in detail in my sections on Machiavelli's examples of people with virtù (in Chapter 1) and how virtù is manifested in peoples and in republics (in Chapter 2).

One additional error that I find to one degree or another in Skinner (but also in Pocock, Pitkin, and McCormick) is that his analysis tends to focus on individuals with virtù, even if these individuals are within a republic. This is another pitfall that my method of focusing on Machiavelli's examples allows me to avoid. Though Machiavelli deploys many examples of individuals with virtù, his most frequently invoked example of virtù is of the Romans. Not individuals who are Romans, but the Roman people as a whole. That is, though in the *Discorsi*, for example, Machiavelli cites the virtù of Romulus, Marcus Furius Camillus, Scipio Africanus, and other individual Romans with some regularity, he cites the virtù of the Romans, the virtù of Rome, and Roman virtù with much greater frequency.<sup>65</sup> Machiavelli's works on virtuous republics — *Discorsi* and *dell'Arte della Guerra* — use examples of peoples with virtù far more often than in those works about principalities and about republics generally lacking in virtù — *il Principe*, *Istorie Fiorentine*, and *La Vita di Castruccio Castracani* — where examples of individuals with virtù occur more frequently. I

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<sup>65</sup> In *Discorsi*, Machiavelli uses virtù 23 times for all individual Roman examples (Marcus Furius Camillus is the individual with the most references to his virtù: 4), whereas he uses virtù about 56 times to speak of the virtù of the Romans more generally.

consider this problematic for Skinner, Pocock, Pitkin, and McCormick because they are primarily interested in Machiavelli for his contributions to republican thought.

Victoria Kahn interprets Machiavelli as offering a rhetorical way of thinking about politics, which, as such, is generally focused only on Machiavelli's context in humanist rhetoric and how his rhetoric influenced later writers. According to Kahn, "once we see that *virtù* revises the humanist concepts of imitation and prudential rhetoric, we understand why Machiavelli should not be chiefly read as a theorist of republicanism but rather as a proponent of a rhetorical politics, one that proceeds topically and dialectically, and that can be used by tyrant and republic alike (Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric*, 11).<sup>66</sup> What Kahn means by this is that Machiavelli imitates humanist rhetorical techniques. Most important of these techniques is the "argument on both sides of a question" that Machiavelli turns into "a mode of dialectical thinking, in which positive terms are logically implicated in and give rise to their opposites," which in turn allows him to include "within imitation and rhetoric that which the humanists would normally exclude: physical force, misrepresentation, and conflicting interests" (*Machiavellian Rhetoric*, 19).

Despite including physical force in her interpretation of what is allowed in Machiavellian rhetoric, Kahn's interpretation of *virtù* is primarily a faculty of the mind and of judgment. Kahn writes that "*virtù* is rhetorical because what counts as *virtù* is produced from within a rhetorical analysis of the circumstances at hand and varies

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<sup>66</sup> Victoria Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric: From the Counter-Reformation to Milton*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1994.

accordingly” (*Machiavellian Rhetoric*, 17) and that “the conditions of human life require the ruse of imitation and persuasion – and the amoral, flexible faculty of judgment – that Machiavelli calls *virtù*” (25). Kahn further claims that Machiavelli never defines *virtù* because “only a destabilized *virtù* can be effective in the destabilized world of political reality” (25).

Kahn’s interpretive methodology really begins to lead her astray here because she, perhaps unwittingly following Strauss and Mansfield, conflates Machiavelli’s suggestion that *virtù* includes the use of force and fraud with the claim that Machiavelli’s rhetoric in his writing makes extensive (and perhaps exclusive) use of force and fraud on the reader. Thus, when Machiavelli writes that Agathocles does not achieve glory and is not among the greatest of men, in Kahn’s reading “It would seem, then, that far from excluding Agathocles from the category of representative men of *virtù*, Machiavelli goes out of his way to stress his inclusion” (*Machiavellian Rhetoric*, 30) and that “neither in the case of Borgia nor in the case of Agathocles can crime be called *virtù*, because *virtù* cannot be *called* any one thing...the fact that crime cannot necessarily be called *virtù* means also that it can be called *virtù*” (31). This is because, for Kahn, *virtù* is not a thing but a “faculty of deliberation” (31); *virtù* is structurally the same as prudence (37), and is “essentially empty” (40).

Kahn is incorrect in her understanding of *virtù* as a prudence-like faculty of judgment that is basically empty of substantial content. Kahn falls to the same misconception that *virtù* is primarily a mental faculty that has misled so many other writers on Machiavelli. These authors think of politics as a primarily intellectual

enterprise like a game of chess. They fail to understand that, for Machiavelli, politics is an enterprise that is both entirely intellectual *and* physical. Politics is not a game of chess, but a sword fight. *Virtù* does not just consist in knowing the right moves, but in training one's body relentlessly such that those moves come as if they were part of the politician's nature and so as to be immune to the fatigue and hardships of the actual swordfight. Kahn's elaborate arguments for why *virtù* is a destabilized rhetorical understanding of the ever fluctuating nature of politics miss what for Machiavelli was the obvious hard core of politics and *virtù*: physical violence. Contrary to Kahn's claim that *virtù* is essentially empty of any permanent content, the sheer consistency of Machiavelli's examples of *virtù* demonstrate that he has a remarkably stable notion of what *virtù* is (see Wood "Virtù Reconsidered", 160-162).

Although Kahn's focus on rhetorical understandings of imitation of examples is, I argue, the right methodological move for interpreting Machiavelli's concept of *virtù*, her actual interpretation of those examples (Agathocles, Cesare Borgia) is sufficiently flawed as to call into question her entire interpretive enterprise. Moreover, in an earlier work Kahn writes that for Machiavelli, "Correct imitation accordingly involves imitating and realizing a flexible principle of prudential judgment or decorum" ("*Virtù* and the Example of Agathocles", 64).<sup>67</sup> If Kahn still holds this opinion, given her understanding of *virtù* as just such a faculty of judgment, she seems to believe that correct imitation requires *virtù*. This is problematic because, for Machiavelli, it is through imitation that we acquire *virtù*.

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<sup>67</sup> Kahn notes that this article is an earlier version of her material I site in her articulation of *virtù* (*Machiavellian Rhetoric*, page xiii).

*Reading through the various 'senses'*. Those who focus their interpretation on the various 'senses' in which Machiavelli uses *virtù* focus on the context in which the word appears in Machiavelli's texts. Outside of and prior to Machiavelli's writings, *virtù* (usually written by contemporary scholars as the English virtue or the Latin *virtus*) has a range of often overlapping meanings from which Machiavelli could be drawing when he writes the word in his own text. Such possibilities include Christian virtue, the cardinal virtues, moral virtue in general, military virtue, civic or republican virtue, and virtue as manliness. By focusing on the meaning of the passage as a whole, these authors seek to uncover which 'sense' of *virtù* Machiavelli is using in that passage.

J. H. Whitfield argues that Machiavelli does not have a single conception of *virtù*. He claims that "There is no doctrine of *virtù* in Machiavelli. If there were it would be easy to discover in his works; but Machiavelli was not given to such theorizing, and he himself would have been the first to be surprised at the stir the word has caused" (*Machiavelli*, 95). According to Whitfield, Machiavelli is much more concerned with "things than with words" that his words might inadequately convey his meanings (93). In Whitfield's account, Machiavelli was perfectly aware of virtue (in the moral sense) and that Machiavelli often, but not always, uses *virtù* to express virtue ("virtù" is the Italian word for "virtue") but that "his use of terms is imprecise" (*Machiavelli*, 95). Machiavelli also at times uses *virtù* in a medical sense (95-96), at times he uses "unmistakably plain virtue" to mean moral goodness (96), which is

especially clear when he uses “virtù” as the plural virtues or *virtutes* (98), at times it is “valor and bravery” that, according to Whitfield, is the sense found most often in Livy (97), and, finally, it can mean “an energy of the will, transcending mere force” (97). Whitfield observes that this multiplicity of meanings is identical to that found in the Latin writers multiplicity of meanings of *virtus* (97-98) and that, to the extent that Machiavelli touches on a consistent doctrine of virtù, it is commonly held by Cicero, Dante, and La Rouchefoucauld (99-103).

Neal Wood claims that Machiavelli understands virtù as the sort of characteristics that serve a commander well in the heat of battle. Though he agrees with Whitfield that “Machiavelli’s use of *virtù* is highly ambiguous”, Wood argues that through looking at Machiavelli’s examples of individuals with virtù, it is clear that “the very plurality of meaning suggests a special meaning” (“*Virtù Reconsidered*”, 160).<sup>68</sup> Wood constructs a list of the fifty-three men that Machiavelli refers to as virtuous in *il Principe* and the *Discorsi* (161). According to Wood, some of the examples – such as the founders (in P 6), Camillus, Hannibal, and Scipio Africanus – are said to have more virtù than the normal examples (162-163), whereas others – such as many of the ancient tyrants, the Roman kings Tarquinius Superbus and Numa, many despotic ancient princes, and finally the Romans who attempted to overthrow the republic – are said to have less virtù than normal examples (163-164).

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<sup>68</sup> Neal Wood, “Machiavelli’s Concept of *Virtù Reconsidered*”, *Political Studies*, Vol. XV, No. 2, 1967. Pages 159-172.

Based on who is on this list of those with *virtù*, Wood argues that (1) Machiavelli primarily admires the ancients; (2) of the ancients, he most admires the Romans; (3) of the Romans, he specifically admires Romans who lived prior to the first Punic War; and (4) that all of these men on the list “ancient and modern, are men of action, not philosophers or men of learning”, specifically they were all soldiers (“*Virtù Reconsidered*”, 161-162).<sup>69</sup> Thus Wood, proceeds to analyze *virtù* in terms of its relationship to war, discovering that *virtù* is produced by necessity (which can either be created by nature or artifice) and that “Machiavelli obviously identifies virtuous behavior with the vigorous and courageous action of men whose only alternative is death” (166). Furthermore, Wood correctly recognizes that such *virtù* can exist in an individual or a people (171). Because all soldiers are fundamentally “engaged in the same kind of activity under the same conditions”, in a well ordered army, all levels of the command structure will display *virtù* (171-172), just as in a well ordered republic “citizens at all levels as well as the civic leaders will have certain qualities in common, *virtù*” (172).

Though law can substitute for nature in creating the necessity that produces *virtù*, it is a far weaker substitute than the necessities created by warfare. Thus, Machiavelli believes that *virtù* is more prevalent when there are many states frequently at war with each other (Wood, “*Virtù Reconsidered*”, 167-168). Even when Machiavelli is not specifically discussing warfare, Woods states that “The model of

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<sup>69</sup>Wood’s claim is weakened because he excludes Leo X, Numa, and Savonarola from the list of Machiavelli’s examples of men with *virtù*, even though Machiavelli describes them as having *virtù* (page 160 note 1).

civic life is always military life, the model of civic leadership is always military leadership” (170). Thus, Wood is able to argue for his ‘special sense’ of virtù in Machiavelli’s thought: “*Virtù*, therefore, is a set of qualities, or a pattern of behavior, most distinctively exhibited under what may be described as battlefield conditions, whether actual war or politics provide the context” and that standards of excellence for politicians and warriors are not that different (“*Virtù Reconsidered*”, 171).

Russell Price objects to Wood’s claim that there is one ‘special sense’ of virtù while simultaneously rejecting Whitfield’s claim that Machiavelli uses virtù in so many senses that he cannot be said to have a coherent conception of virtù. Price finds three “senses” in which Machiavelli uses the concept of virtù. First, is a Christian or moral sense that appears when Machiavelli contrasts virtù to vice (“Senses of *Virtù*”, 317).<sup>70</sup> Second are the political and military senses, which are what mostly concern Machiavelli (and comprise Wood’s ‘special sense’). And third are “other senses of virtù,” which include senses of virtù as natural power, faculty, efficacy, or talent and as a vital force and as a hidden power (of both spirits and the masses) to see into the future (335-337), as what doctors use to cure patients (338), the strength and range of a bow (339), and virtù in reference to arts or crafts and writing (339-341). Price’s ‘senses’ of virtù are less problematic than Whitfield’s, partially because Price provides better textual evidence, but also because, from Price’s analysis, it is clear that out of these ‘senses’ of virtù emerges the beginnings of the coherent conception of virtù that

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<sup>70</sup> I take Price as not entirely correct here. I think he misreads the main passage he uses to support this claim, on ‘that which appears to be virtù compared to that which appears to be vice’ (P15). Additionally, elsewhere Machiavelli contrasts virtù and vice of men and republics where he clearly is using the political and military sense of virtù (D 3:31).

Machiavelli had all along (see Skinner, *Machiavelli*, 40 quoted above). This is because the first and third senses form a small minority of Machiavelli's uses of the concept of *virtù* and virtually none of Machiavelli's examples of *virtù* fall into either of those senses.

Price recognizes this, because he concludes that although Machiavelli has multiple senses of the meaning of *virtù*, the most important senses are those that most writers focus on in interpreting Machiavelli: the political and military sense of *virtù* ("Senses of *Virtù*", 345). For Price, Machiavelli's use of political *virtù* means "skill or ability in founding or ruling States, in short, statecraft" (325), whereas military *virtù* means "preparing for war in a sensible and skillful way, fighting strongly or courageously" (331). Price notes that Machiavelli most often uses political and military *virtù* in conjunction with one another (326) and it is in these senses of *virtù* that are contrasted with and linked to *fortuna* (322). Though Price, in order to differentiate himself, claims that Wood's 'special sense' is too narrowly focused on the military, Price's combined 'political and military sense' of *virtù* and Wood's 'special sense' of *virtù* are basically identical.

This agreement between Price and Wood stems from their systematic evaluation of Machiavelli's examples of *virtù*. The efforts of Price and Wood along these lines was more thorough than any of the commentators discussed above. When discussing political *virtù*, Price employs Machiavelli's use of Rome, Epaminondas, Francesco da Savona, Lorenzo de' Medici, and the kings of France and Spain ("Senses of *Virtù*", 325-326). When discussing political and military *virtù* combined, Price

employs Machiavelli's examples of Italian princes who generally lack *virtù*, and those with *virtù* such as Francesco Sforza, King David, Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great, Romulus, Tullus, Epaminondas and Pelopidas, Septimius Severus, and Theodoric the King of the Ostrogoths (327-328). In his discussion of this 'sense' of *virtù*, Price draws out the four men Machiavelli claims have *virtù* of *animo* and of body: Castruccio Castracani, Baldaccio di Anghiari, Manlius Capitolinus, and Agathocles (329-331). When discussing military *virtù*, Price employs Machiavelli's use of the examples of the Italians lack of military *virtù* (and their potential for acquiring it), the Romans possession of military *virtù*, the *virtù* of Crassus and Mark Anthony, and of Horatius, Antonius Primus, Gonsalvo de Cordova, and Marcus Furius Camillus (332-334). Price is right to invoke these instances of Machiavelli's use of these examples as they demonstrate that Machiavelli is mostly concerned with *virtù* in the political, military, and combined political-military senses of *virtù*.

However, Price's treatment of Machiavelli's examples, like Wood's treatment discussed above, does not stray far from demonstrating their support for his claims about the existence of 'senses of *virtù* in Machiavelli.'<sup>71</sup> Price's demonstration, because his treatment of each example is so brief, does not satisfactorily extend into the content or meaning of the political and military sense of *virtù*. There is generally no attention paid to how each individual or people acquired or maintained their *virtù*. Wood's analysis of how the necessities of war produce *virtù* in soldiers and peoples

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<sup>71</sup> Perhaps this is because, as Price says "I am at present engaged on a comprehensive survey of the idea of *virtù* in Machiavelli, of which the present article forms the first section" (page 315, note 2). To my knowledge, unfortunately, no other parts of the project are publicly available.

goes some way to explaining the genesis and maintenance of virtù, but does not furnish a complete reconstruction of Machiavelli's understanding of how and why some individuals and peoples come to possess virtù. Understanding the actions, customs, and modes of Machiavelli's examples is important for an understanding of Machiavelli's project. Machiavelli was not only interested in showing his readers what virtù is and what it can accomplish. He was also interested in putting before them the grandest examples of virtù to allow his readers to acquire virtù of their own. These examples exist for Machiavelli's readers to imitate, and through this imitation cultivate their own virtù. A full explication of how the virtù of these examples worked through their actions is necessary to understand how Machiavelli's readers were to acquire virtù. This understanding takes a more in-depth analysis of the examples than Price or Wood (or any of the authors above) provide. I endeavor to present just such an analysis in dissertation.

## **The Recovery of Virtù**

In this dissertation, I argue that Machiavelli is remarkably consistent throughout his political and historical works in at least this respect: he presents examples of individuals and peoples with virtù whose actions are to be imitated and individuals and peoples who conspicuously lack virtù whose actions are to be avoided. Because Machiavelli is concerned with producing work that is actually useful for

political actors, it is in evaluating the actions of the exemplary individuals and peoples with virtù that Machiavelli's conception of virtù will be found.

While previous interpreters have given notice of Machiavelli's reliance on examples in expounding his teachings on virtù, they have either done little with this realization or attempted to analyze his use of exemplars. Of those who have presented an analysis of Machiavelli's exemplars they have, like Wood or Price, discussed many of Machiavelli's examples but with little supporting detail, or they have, like Kahn or McCormick, picked one or two of Machiavelli's examples to discuss in detail but have no systematic analysis of how Machiavelli uses examples because of the narrowness of their focus. In contrast, I present an account of Machiavelli's use of exemplars which is both detailed in its discussion of each one and systematically presents all of Machiavelli's examples.

Chapter 1 of the dissertation discusses Machiavelli's examples of individuals and peoples with virtù and how they are to be imitated. Chapter 2 identifies variations in how Machiavelli discusses virtù between individuals and peoples and between principalities and republics. Chapter 3 examines the relationship between virtù and the political ends of staying in power and maintaining liberty. I present in depth analyses of all Machiavelli's examples of virtù in the appendices. Appendix 1 discusses all 86 examples of individuals and Appendix 2 discusses all 21 examples of peoples which appear in *il Principe*, *Discorsi Sopra La Prima Deca di Tito Livio*, *dell'Arte della Guerra*, *Istorie Fiorentine*, and *La Vita di Castruccio Castracani da Lucca*. Because Machiavelli puts forward so many examples, it would significantly lengthen the main

text to analyze all of them in the chapters.<sup>72</sup> Those who are interested in lengthy analyses of Machiavelli's examples are encouraged to review the appendices.

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<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, Machiavelli often deploys multiple examples in different books in order to support similar arguments. Analysis of each of these in the main text would be repetitive. Also, many of Machiavelli's examples are not discussed in detail and so analysis of those in the main text would not shed additional light on his concept of *virtù* or how it is acquired through imitation.

## Chapter 1 “I Will Put Forward the Grandest Examples”

“None will marvel if, in the speech that I will make on principalities totally new both in the principality and in the stato, I will put forward the grandest examples. Because, men almost always walk by the paths beaten by others, and proceed in their actions by imitations, it is neither possible to totally hold to the paths of others nor to arrive at the virtù of those that you imitate, a prudent man ought to always embark upon the paths beaten by great men, and imitate those that were the most excellent, in order that, if his virtù does not reach theirs, at least it will render some of the scent; and just as do prudent archers, who, believing the target where they plan to hit too distant, and knowing how far the virtù of their bow goes, set the line of fire much higher than their intended target, not to reach with their arrow so much height, but to be able to, with the help of high aim to reach their plan” (P 6).<sup>73</sup>

### Introduction

Virtù is the centerpiece of Machiavelli’s theorizing on *l’arte dello stato*<sup>74</sup> (statecraft). It is the quality that Machiavelli finds in individuals and peoples who successfully secure power, liberty, and glory. Machiavelli attempts to teach his readers how to cultivate virtù in themselves and their patria through imitating the grandest

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<sup>73</sup> “Non si maravigli alcuno se, nel parlare che io farò de’ principati al tutto nuovi e di principate e di stato, io addurrò grandissimi esempi. Perché, camminando gli uomini quasi sempre per le vie battute da altri, e procedendo nelle azioni loro con le imitazioni, né si potendo le vie d’altri nè alla virtù di quelli che tu imiti aggiugnere, debbe uno uomo prudente entrare sempre per vie battute da uomini grandi, e quegli che sono stati eccellentissimi imitare, acciò che, se la sua virtù non vi arriva, almeno ne renda qualche odore; e fare come gli arcieri prudenti, a’ quali, parendo el luoco dove desegnano ferire troppo lontano, e conoscendo fino a quanto va la virtù del loro arco, pongono la mira assai più alta che il luogo destinato, non per aggiugnere con la loco freccia a tanta altezza, ma per potere, con lo aiuto di sì alta mira pervenire al disegno loro.”

<sup>74</sup> By *stato* Machiavelli does not quite mean “the state” in the modern sense of the word. Instead it means 1. the state of being (as “stato” is the past participle of the verb “to be”), 2. possession of rule or status, or 3. the political structures over which one could rule and in which one can have status. I refrain from translating the noun but I do translate the verb into English.

examples that he places before them. Although much has been written on Machiavelli's conception of virtù, no existing account is fully satisfactory because no account reconstructs Machiavelli's argument on his own terms: Machiavelli learned from and taught through examples. Though some accounts do analyze Machiavelli's use of examples, as I demonstrated in the Introduction, they either focus on just one or two examples without giving a systematic account of Machiavelli's use of examples or they give a systematic account but lack an in depth analysis of particular examples. The first approach interprets Machiavelli's conception of virtù using only a small subset of the available 'data' while the second approach interprets virtù only with the most basic of generalizations about the 'data'. I aim to break this pattern by presenting an analysis of Machiavelli's most important examples of individuals and peoples with virtù that is simultaneously systematic and in depth.

In developing his theory of statecraft, Machiavelli learned from the ancient histories he read and from the contemporary Italian politics in which he was a participant. Examples from these eras appear frequently in his writing. In Machiavelli's more theoretical works, he uses virtù in relationship to an example approximately one-half of the time he uses the word. In his more historical works, examples comprise a considerably greater proportion.<sup>75</sup> These examples often take the

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<sup>75</sup> In *il Principe* I count 71 uses of which 35 were in examples, in *Discorsi* I count 241 uses of which 140 were in examples, in *dell'Arte della Guerra* I count 60 uses of which 30 were in examples, in *Istorie Fiorentine* I count 98 uses of which 76 were in examples, and in *La Vita di Castruccio Castracani da Lucca* I find 12 uses of which 10 are in examples. I am not certain why my count differs from Price's (1973) of 70 in *il Principe*, 248 in *Discorsi*, 63 in *dell'Arte della Guerra*, 101 in *Istorie Fiorentine*, and 10 in *Castruccio Castracani*. Both Price (page 316) and I include the adjective virtuoso and adverb virtuosamente in our counts. See Russell Price, "The Senses of Virtù in Machiavelli." *European History Quarterly*. No 3. (1973): 315-345.

form of exemplars, examples that provide models of conduct and action to be imitated, or examples of those whose mode<sup>76</sup> of conduct and action err in some way, the imitation of which should be avoided. For Machiavelli, individuals have no choice but to model their conduct on examples, but they can choose which example to imitate. Thus, it is extremely important to pick the best and most appropriate example to imitate, to follow the path beaten by the great man who, given the circumstances, it is appropriate to imitate.

The role of examples of virtù in Machiavelli's writings is not merely to illustrate what virtù is — though they do that — but also to show his readers what virtù looks like in action. This demonstration of how an example's particular actions are guided by virtù in response to circumstance is what allows Machiavelli's readers to have that example available as a potential object of imitation. For Machiavelli, virtù is demonstrated;<sup>77</sup> it is a capacity displayed while acting, especially in a high-stakes context for the actor. It is possible to imitate the virtù displayed by an exemplar through imitating their actions and mode of proceeding. That is, by imitating the actions of an exemplar in comparable circumstance, we acquire for ourselves some of the virtù they used to act. Because, for Machiavelli, some political circumstances are always relevant, virtù is the self reliance and military ability demonstrated when political actors proceed down the paths necessary for success and glory and is the

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<sup>76</sup> By *modo* (pl: *modi*) Machiavelli means the mode, manner, means, or method of proceeding or of conduct that can either be peculiar to an individual or habitual for a people. Following convention, I translate this as the English "mode".

<sup>77</sup> Although this means that virtù is performed, in the sense that performance is the way in which one demonstrates that one is a virtuoso violinist, it does not mean that virtù is a performative in the sense that a linguistic philosopher would mean.

quality necessary for them to proceed down those paths. However, possessing virtù does not guarantee the acquisition of success or of glory; though virtù is not necessary for (and frequently not sufficient for) success, for Machiavelli, virtù is necessary but not sufficient for glory.<sup>78</sup>

Machiavelli's examples of virtù fall into two categories: individuals and peoples. Individuals, such as Romulus and Agathocles, and political entities consisting of many individuals (thus: peoples), such as the Romans and the Florentines, can be said to have virtù. For Machiavelli, the concept of virtù is the same whether it belongs to an individual or a people, though some of the specifics of how it is developed are different. In order to present an account of Machiavelli's examples of virtù that is systematic in its scope and in depth in its analysis, I analyze each of Machiavelli's examples in detail in the appendices.

Over the course of his major political and historical works, Machiavelli discusses the virtù of 86 specific individuals. The majority of these individual examples (approximately 47 in number) are only discussed with reference to their virtù in a single place in Machiavelli's corpus, and the depth of analysis about their virtù is quite limited.<sup>79</sup> Unlike his examples of a people, who are frequently invoked

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<sup>78</sup> See Russell Price "The Theme of *Gloria* in Machiavelli," *Renaissance Quarterly* 30. (1977): 588-631. See also David Owen. "Machiavelli's *il Principe* and the Politics of Glory" *European Journal of Political Thought*. Vol. 16, No. 1. 2015. Published on-line before print January 18, 2015. doi:10.1177/1474885114567346

<sup>79</sup> To clarify: I exclude Agathocles from this count of 47 because, even though P 8 is the only place where Machiavelli discusses Agathocles' virtù, Machiavelli devotes some space to the topic. I include Michele di Lando (example 46 in the appendices) in this number because Machiavelli only mentions his virtù in IF 3:17 and does not devote a prolonged analysis to it. I classify something as an 'example of virtù' if Machiavelli discusses its possession or lack of virtù.

negatively to demonstrate what damage a *lack* of virtù causes, Machiavelli's examples of individuals almost always possess virtù.<sup>80</sup> With only a few exceptions, Machiavelli's examples of individuals with virtù are men who are actively involved in politics and generally also are or have been in the military; Machiavelli almost always discusses political and military virtù.<sup>81</sup> This is not to say that Machiavelli does not believe that virtù exists in other areas of human life, but it is to say that Machiavelli is not interested in other aspects of human life, for he rarely invokes individuals who display virtù outside of the realm of war and politics.<sup>82</sup>

In the next section, I present a discussion of how Machiavelli understood imitating exemplars to work. In the two sections following, I evaluate Machiavelli's accounts of the examples of Romulus and Agathocles, and of the Romans and the Florentines to demonstrate how Machiavelli uses examples of virtù. In the conclusion, I claim that it would be reasonable for Machiavelli to have believed that his audience could use his accounts of exemplars in order to imitate their virtù.

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<sup>80</sup> Perhaps this is because an individual with no virtù is not worth remembering.

<sup>81</sup> See also Neal Wood, "Machiavelli's Concept of *Virtù Reconsidered*", *Political Studies*, Vol. XV, No. 2 (1967): 159-172. Wood claims that virtù is military in nature. However, Wood *prima fascia* discounts Machiavelli's examples that run counter to his claim.

<sup>82</sup> But see Price, "Senses of Virtù", pages 315-345. Price's article, which I take to be the best treatment of Machiavelli's use of virtù to date, divides Machiavelli's uses into 1. Christian/moral virtù, 2. Political and military virtù, and 3. "Other senses" of virtù.

## 1.1 Imitation of Examples

One of Machiavelli's goals in writing is to present his readers with examples of virtù which they can imitate. However, Machiavelli's understanding of the nature of both examples and imitation differs from our own common usage of these terms. Example and imitation are technical terms and techniques from classical rhetoric, and Machiavelli deploys both with the skill of a master. As Peter Stacey demonstrates, Machiavelli had expert knowledge of Quintilian's *Institutes* and, as Stacey demonstrates, *il Principe* is structured according to the rules of a classical Quintilian oration (*Roman Monarchy*, 211-230).<sup>83</sup>

In classical rhetoric, an example is a kind of argument. As Stacey puts it, of the "types of artificial proof discussed by Quintilian" on which Machiavelli relies, "The most prominent is the example", which in Stacey's reading of Quintilian, is a form of proof "brought to bear on one's argument from outside the *materia* of the case itself" (*Roman Monarchy*, 242). For any reader of Machiavelli, that he uses examples in this way should be intuitive: Machiavelli makes his claims by drawing on a wide array of examples as decisively supporting his interpretations of politics and how to best practice *l'arte dello stato*. Indeed, Machiavelli bases his claims to possess political knowledge on his ability to produce examples from ancient history and from recent political experience (P Dedicà; "Letter to Vettori"). Beyond an argument, an example, in the form of an exemplar, is intended to be both a guide "for practical political

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<sup>83</sup> Peter Stacey, *Roman Monarchy and the Renaissance Prince*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

action” and “a model of excellence, an icon after which the reader is to be formed” (Hampton, *Writing From History*, xi).<sup>84</sup> For examples to work as exemplars requires imitation.

In the Renaissance, imitation was a constantly deployed and hotly contested technique in writing. G. W. Pigman III identifies three version of imitation operative in the Renaissance, which originated in classical texts: “following, imitation, and emulation” (Pigman, “Imitation in the Renaissance”, 32).<sup>85</sup> Following mostly entails a gathering and transcription of the models without transforming them more than that minimally accomplished by putting them into a new context (32). Imitation implies a greater degree of transformation such that the model and the text are at least as different as they are similar (32), this transformation can often be a means to dissimulation, the hiding of the relationship between text and model (10-15). Emulation is almost totally transformative and implies criticism of the model, usually based on “an awareness of the historical distance between present and past” (32) and often takes the form of competition with the model (16-22). Because the transformation implied in emulation is so complete, the writer often has to specify which work he emulates so that the reader can understand the successful emulation; this is the opposite of dissimulation (26).

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<sup>84</sup> Timothy Hampton, *Writing From History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990.

<sup>85</sup> G. W. Pigman III, “Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance” *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (Spring, 1980): 1-32. Pigman places front and center the sheer level of disagreement in both classical and Renaissance sources about what each of the three versions of imitation means and about which is superior. Machiavelli was probably knowledgeable of these debates, but does not, to my recollection, enter into them.

Machiavelli makes use of all three versions of imitation in his writing. In terms of following, in at least two occasions he compiles a list of quotes or precepts written by others but attributed to Machiavelli's characters (AG 7:362-363, CC 464).<sup>86</sup> In terms of imitation, *Mandragola* and *Clizia*, Machiavelli's comedies, are essentially Roman comedies translated into Italian, *il Principe* imitates the forms of the mirror of princes literature and Quintilian oratory, the *Discorsi* imitates the familiar form of a commentary on a classic text, *dell'Arte della Guerra* imitates the classic form of a dialogue, and *Istorie Fiorentine* imitates the classical tropes of Renaissance humanist history. Pointing out where Machiavelli practices emulation is slightly trickier because Machiavelli rarely follows the standard practice of the emulator to identify the texts with which he is in competition. However, I think it is safe to say that *il Principe* emulates Seneca's *De Clementia* (see Stacey, *Roman Monarchy*, 3-4, 207-209) and the *Discorsi* emulates its Roman sources, especially Livy, (McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy*, 78-79).<sup>87</sup> Though Machiavelli uses all three forms of imitation posited by Pigman, I will continue to use the general term 'imitation' from this point forward because Machiavelli does not, to my knowledge, distinguish between them.

However, Machiavelli does not intend for the imitation of examples to stop with his imitation of literary examples in his writing. The political examples Machiavelli puts forward in his writing are those to be imitated or avoided. According to Hampton, the need to imitate exemplars in action "shifts the problem of imitation,

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<sup>86</sup> These he takes from Vegetius and from Diogenes Laertius respectively. (See notes in Capata edition and Gilbert for CC and Wood for AG).

<sup>87</sup> John McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

much discussed by recent critics as a corner stone of *writing* in the Renaissance, to the level of *reading*” (*Writing From History*, 5). This is because Renaissance authors (especially Machiavelli) do not want their readers to imitate them or the examples they cite through writing, but through action. Thus, “The imitation of an exemplar involves what hermeneutic theory calls *applicatio*, the application of a text to action in the world” which takes place through an appropriation of the actions of the past, “raised to a momentary universality” which can work “to guide practical action” (Hampton, *Writing From History*, 10-11). Thus, Machiavelli understands himself as imitating the ancients in a novel way in his writing (D1:Proemio; Mansfield, *New Modes and Orders*, 27)<sup>88</sup> that demonstrates to his readers that it is possible to imitate the virtù of the ancients in political action (D1:Proemio, P 6; Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, 86).<sup>89</sup>

Machiavelli is remarkably consistent throughout his political and historical works in at least this respect: he presents examples of individuals and peoples with virtù whose actions are to be imitated and individuals and peoples who conspicuously lack virtù whose actions are to be avoided. Because Machiavelli is concerned with producing work that is actually useful for political actors, it is in evaluating the actions

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<sup>88</sup> Harvey Mansfield, Jr., *Machiavelli's New Modes and Orders*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979.

<sup>89</sup> Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958. Machiavelli's friend Francesco Guicciardini was not convinced and wrote in his *Ricordi*, “How mistaken are those who with every word put forward the Romans! It would need to have a city conditioned such as theirs was, and further to govern it according to that example; that for whom has disproportionate qualities is too disproportionate, so much that it would be to want for an ass to run the race of a horse. /*Quatio si ingannono coloro che a ogni parola allegano e' romani! Bisognerebbe avere una città condizionata come era loro, e poi governarsi secondo quello esempio; el quale a chi had le qualità disproporsionate è tanto disproporzionato, quanto sarebbe volere che uno assino facessi el corso di uno cavallo*” (Series C 110).

of the exemplary individuals and peoples with virtù that Machiavelli's conception of virtù will be found. In contrast to previous interpreters who have given notice of Machiavelli's reliance on examples in expounding his teachings on virtù, but have either done little with this realization, have discussed many of Machiavelli's examples but in almost no detail, or have picked one or two of Machiavelli's examples to discuss in detail but have no systematic analysis of how Machiavelli uses examples, I have systematically examined all of Machiavelli's examples of individuals and peoples with virtù. In the next two sections, I present four of Machiavelli's most important examples in detail. The next section will analyze two individuals (Romulus and Agathocles) and the section following that will analyze two peoples (the Romans and the Florentines).<sup>90</sup> Through this analysis of Machiavelli's use of these examples, I elucidate how what precisely it is Machiavelli thought ought to be imitated in order to cultivate virtù.

## 1.2 Individuals

The virtù of an individual can be imitated by imitating their modes and actions. Throughout his many works, Machiavelli describes the modes and actions of many individuals both to defend his theoretical claims about politics and to lay out their

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<sup>90</sup> While I have analyzed all of Machiavelli's examples of virtù in *il Principe*, *Discorsi Sopra La Prima Deca di Tito Livio*, *dell'Arte della Guerra*, *Istorie Fiorentine*, and *La Vita di Castruccio Castracani da Lucca*, I will only present a few in this chapter, the remaining examples can be found in the Appendices. I do this so that those interested in reading analyses of more examples can do so while not cluttering the narrative of the argument with too much evidence.

example to be available for his readers to imitate. Romulus and Agathocles are both politicians who Machiavelli describes as having virtù, but Romulus is an exemplar to be imitated while Agathocles sets an example to be avoided. I select Romulus and Agathocles as my two individuals to examine because Machiavelli discusses each in depth and his analysis of them is different enough to give some sense of the scope of virtù as it manifests in individuals. Romulus is Machiavelli's main example of a founder (who acquired his principality with his own arms and virtù) while Agathocles is the main example of those who came to power his wickedness rather than through *fortuna*<sup>91</sup> or his own virtù. After discussing what Machiavelli has to say about each individually, I will discuss his reasons for approving of Romulus while denigrating Agathocles.

### 1.2.1 Romulus

Romulus<sup>92</sup> appears as an example of virtù in Machiavelli's two major discussions of examples of founders: *il Principe* 6, where he discusses how Romulus came to power, *Discorsi* 1:19, where he discusses what Romulus did with that power. In *il Principe*, Romulus is listed amongst the "grandest examples" Machiavelli puts forward of the "most excellent" men because he was one of those "that through their

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<sup>91</sup> By *fortuna*, Machiavelli means something akin to the contemporary English usage for "fortune" in the sense of "luck" and sometimes seems to additionally mean the connotations of wealth which can be in the Italian as well as in the English words. However, Machiavelli also personifies *Fortuna* in ways both reminiscent of the Roman Goddess and of medieval iconography.

<sup>92</sup> Romulus is example number 4 in the appendices. See his entry in Appendix 1 below for a more thorough discussion of Romulus in the context of Machiavelli's examples of founders.

own virtù, and not through *fortuna*, became princes”<sup>93</sup> and received nothing “from *fortuna* but the *occasione*”<sup>94</sup> to seize power (P 6). This *occasione*, for Romulus, was that he and his brother were able to found a city on the spot where they had been exposed as infants. Leaving Alba allowed Romulus to found a new city to rule rather than inheriting Alba from his grandfather. It is the case that, for those like Romulus, “without that *occasione* their virtù of *animo* would have burnt out, and without that virtù the *occasione* would have come in vain” (P 6).<sup>95</sup> Through overcoming difficulties with his virtù and arms, Romulus was able to found Rome, establish himself as its sole prince, and secure his power.

In *Discorsi*, Romulus is discussed in terms of the effects on his successors of the laws and orders<sup>96</sup> he established in Rome. Romulus established the monarchy, the senate, and the first assembly of Rome; however the most important order he established was the Legion. For Machiavelli, that the Romans kept all of Romulus’s political orders except for the monarchy, which they replaced with the consuls, demonstrates that “all the first orders of that city were more adapted for a civil and

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<sup>93</sup> “...che per propria virtù, e non per fortuna, sono diventati principi...”

<sup>94</sup> “...altro dalla fortuna che la occasione...” By *occasione*, Machiavelli means something like the occasion or opportunity to accomplish some great thing. Here he invokes the medieval notion (expressed in the iconography) that *Occasione* is the daughter of *Fortune* and as *Occasione* approaches she is difficult to recognize, but she passes she is easy to recognize but impossible to seize.

<sup>95</sup> “...sanza quella occasione la virtù dello animo loro si sarebbe spenta, e senza quella virtù la occasione sarebbe venuta invano.” By *animo*, Machiavelli intends a range of meanings which include “spirit”, “mind”, “soul”, “heart”, and “intellect”. *Animo* is used as the opposite of meanings like “body”, “flesh”, and “appetite”.

<sup>96</sup> By *ordine* (pl: *ordini*) Machiavelli means the ordering, rules, and institutions of an organization such as a republic, a monarchy, a guild, or a legion. Following convention, I translate this as the English “order”.

free life, than an absolute and tyrannical one” (D 1:9).<sup>97</sup> And so, while Machiavelli claims that Romulus’s laws were updated and improved after his death and perfected with the institution of the office of Tribune of the Plebs (D 1:3), he also points out that the basic orders laid out by Romulus were the foundations for the Roman Republic.

Machiavelli claims that the establishment of Rome’s religious orders by Numa, Romulus’s immediate successor, was more important to Rome than Romulus’s orders (D 1:11). However, Numa owed to Romulus the peace and stability of Rome necessary to establish his religious orders. This is because “the virtù of Romulus was so great that it could give space to Numa Pompilius to be able to rule Rome for many years with the art of peace ...”<sup>98</sup> without which Numa could never have accomplished his reforms (D 1:19). That is, according to Machiavelli, without Romulus’s bellicose reign preceding Numa’s, Numa’s attempt to rule Rome through the art of peace would have left it exposed to its warlike neighbors and would have left Numa, literally, an unarmed prophet. However, after the death of Numa, it “was good and necessary that the other kings recovered the virtù of Romulus; otherwise that city would have become effeminate, and prey to its neighbors” (D 1:19).<sup>99</sup> Machiavelli believed Numa’s introduction of religious orders to Rome was essential to its future greatness, but the long period of peace which Numa required to implement these reforms was, of necessity, a deviation from the usually martial virtù of its leaders.

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<sup>97</sup> “...tutti gli ordini primi di quella città essere stati più conformi a uno vivere civile e libero, che a uno assoluto e tirannico.”

<sup>98</sup> “...la virtù di Romolo fu tanta che la potette dare spazio a Numa Pompilio di potere molti anni con l’arte della pace reggere Roma...”

<sup>99</sup> “...era bene poi necessario che gli altri re ripigliassero la virtù di Romolo; altrimenti quella città sarebbe diventata effeminate, e preda de’suoi vicini.”

### 1.2.2 Agathocles

Agathocles<sup>100</sup> famously appears as Machiavelli's main example of rulers who come to power through wickedness in *il Principe* 8. Machiavelli's consideration of Agathocles at least appears to oscillate between attributing virtù to him and denying him that attribution. Machiavelli tells us that, though Agathocles lived a wicked life, "nonetheless, he accompanied his wickedness with so much virtù of *animo* and of body"<sup>101</sup> that he quickly rose from abject poverty to the highest ranks of the Syracusan military (P 8). Later, we are told that "having considered, therefore, the actions and virtù of him, you will not see things, or few, which could be attributed to *fortuna*..." (P 8).<sup>102</sup> However, Machiavelli continues,

Yet one cannot call it virtù to massacre one's citizens, betray one's friends, be without faith, without pity, without religion: these modes can acquire imperium, but not glory. Because if one considers the virtù of Agathocles in the entering and in the exiting of perils and the greatness of his *animo* in sustaining and in overcoming adverse things, one does not see why he has to be judged inferior to any of the most excellent captains: nonetheless his brutal cruelty and inhumanity with infinite wickedness does not permit that he be celebrated amongst the most excellent men. One cannot therefore attribute to fortuna or to virtù that which he achieved without the one or the other (P8).<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Example number 38 in the appendices.

<sup>101</sup> "...nondimanco, accompagnò le sue scelleratezze con tanta virtù di animo e di corpo..."

<sup>102</sup> "...considerassi, adunque, le azioni e virtù di costui, non vedrà cose, o poche, le quali possa attribuire all fortuna..."

<sup>103</sup> "Non si può ancora chiamare virtù ammazzare e' sua cittadini, tradire gli amici, essere senza fede, senza pietà, senza religione: e' quali modi possono fare acquistare imperio, ma non gloria. Perché se si considerassi la virtù di Agatocle nello entrare e nello uscire de' pericoli e la grandessa dello animo suo nel sopportare e superare le cose avverse, non si vede perché egli abbia a essere iudicato inferiore a qualunque eccellentissimo capitano: nondimanco la sua efferata crudeltà e inumanità con infinite scelleratezze non consentono ch'e' sia infra gli eccellentissimi uomini celebrato. Non si può adunque attribuire alla fortuna o alla virtù quello che senza l'una e l'altra fu da lui conseguito."

Agathocles acquired his principality through wicked actions, which by their nature owe nothing to *fortuna* and are not virtuoso actions. But, though Agathocles did not acquire his principality with virtù, he still had virtù of *animo* and body that coexisted with his wickedness. And, it was his virtù, rather than his wickedness, that was the reason he was quickly promoted through the ranks when he joined the military. It was also his virtù that led him to be successful in his military campaigns against the Carthaginians, in which, Machiavelli tells us, he performed brilliantly. Where Agathocles acted with only wickedness, without virtù, was when he seized power, which he did by tricking the senate and people of Syracuse into coming to an assembly, and having his soldiers murder the entire senate and many of the wealthiest citizens.

### 1.2.3 Praise for Romulus, Blame for Agathocles

Based on my above description, it should not surprise us that Machiavelli does not praise Agathocles as “amongst the greatest of men,” even though he praises him as among “the most excellent of captains.” However, Leo Strauss suggests that Machiavelli’s distinction between these two categories is superficial or intentionally misleading (*Thoughts on Machiavelli*, 309-310).<sup>104</sup> The basis of Strauss’s claim here is

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<sup>104</sup> This claim comes in note 53 to chapter 2 (pages 309-310). Victoria Kahn and John McCormick both agree with Strauss’s interpretation of Agathocles. See Victoria Kahn, “*Virtù* and the Example of Agathocles in Machiavelli’s *Prince*” *Representations*, No. 13 (Winter, 1986), pp. 63-83 and *Machiavellian Rhetoric: From the Counter-Reformation to Milton*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1994; John P. McCormick, “The Enduring Ambiguity of Machiavellian Virtue: Cruelty, Crime,

threefold: First, that part of the traditional criticism of Agathocles is his low birth and that Machiavelli does not discriminate against the low born because he is himself lowborn. Second, the distinction melts away because “where there are good arms it is befitting for there to be good laws...” (P 12)<sup>105</sup> and, as Strauss points out, Agathocles certainly had good arms. And, third, that Machiavelli condones other inhumane men and criminal acts, including those of Romulus. Though Strauss’s arguments are weighty, in the end I do not find them persuasive because I think that they (perhaps intentionally) miss the point.<sup>106</sup>

Here, I think it is helpful to compare Agathocles with Romulus, who Machiavelli does praise as a most excellent man whose example should be followed. That Machiavelli praises Romulus more than Agathocles is no surprise given how Machiavelli lays out his hierarchy of the most laudable achievements: the most laudable is (1) ordering a new religion, followed by (2) founding a kingdom or republic, followed by (3) those who conquer new territory for their fatherland with arms, followed by, finally, (4) those with literary achievements (D 1:10). The most favorable reading of Agathocles, which focuses on his role as a successful captain of the Syracusan military, is that he was in the third rank, of those who conquered,<sup>107</sup>

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and Christianity in *The Prince*” *Social Research: An International Quarterly*. Vol. 81, No. 1, Spring 2014. Pages 133-164.

<sup>105</sup> “...dove sono buone arme conviene sieno buone legge...”

<sup>106</sup> See my discussions of Strauss and Mansfield in the Introduction.

<sup>107</sup> However, according to both Justin and Diodorus Siculus, Agathocles did not hold on to what he conquered. See Justin, *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus*. Trans. J. C. Yardley, ed. R. Develin. Atlanta, GA.: Scholar’s Press. 1994. and Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*. In *Volume IX, Books 18-19.65*. Trans. Russel M. Geer. (Loeb Classical Library No. 377). 1947. *Diodorus Siculus: Library of History, Volume X, Books 19.66-20*. Trans. Russel M Geer. (Loeb Classical Library No.

while Romulus was certainly in the second rank, of political founders. That Machiavelli prefers Romulus to Agathocles is unsurprising and consistent;<sup>108</sup> Machiavelli would have more praise for Romulus even if Agathocles was not wicked.

To explain why Machiavelli claims Agathocles came to power with blameworthy wickedness rather than praiseworthy virtù we must look at one of the deeds for which men are considered “infamous and detestable”:<sup>109</sup> squandering a republic (D 1:10). Agathocles acquired his principality by overthrowing the Syracusan republic and this means that in addition to whatever praise he is due to him for his military achievements, it must be weighed against his infamous and detestable destruction of the republic of which he was a citizen.<sup>110</sup>

I take part of the reason Machiavelli claims that Romulus acquired his principality with virtù while Agathocles did so with wicked actions has to do with the relationship between necessity and appropriateness. Here I draw on Sheldon Wolin’s famous claim that Machiavelli advocates an “economy of violence” (*Politics and Vision*, 198).<sup>111</sup> Some violence is necessary for a prince to secure power, but the prince should economize in the violence he employs: Agathocles, unlike Romulus, uses more violence than is necessary in acquiring his principality. Wolin develops this

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390). 1954. *Diodorus Siculus: Library of History, Volume XI, Books 21-32*. Trans. Francis R. Walton. (Loeb Classical Library No. 409). 1957.

<sup>108</sup> Further, that Machiavelli prefers Numa to Romulus also follows from this formulation: Numa was in the first rank of most laudable men because he ordered the Roman religion while Romulus merely founded Rome. But, Machiavelli does not want his contemporaries to only imitate Numa’s example because Numa was without arms.

<sup>109</sup> “infami e detestabili”

<sup>110</sup> See Stacey, *Roman Monarchy*, page 297.

<sup>111</sup> Sheldon S. Wolin, “Machiavelli: Politics and the Economy of Violence,” in *Politics and Vision*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press) 2004 [1960]. p. 175-214.

claim primarily based on Machiavelli's discussion of what constitutes using cruelty well: cruelty well used is used at a stroke such as to eliminate all enemies and, thus, all need to continually use cruelty, and Agathocles is Machiavelli's primary example (P 8). Indeed, so authoritative a commentator as Polybius says, in his *Histories*, that Agathocles was famous for the cruelty with which he seized the throne and the mildness with which he ruled later (9:23).<sup>112</sup> But, again, Agathocles is successful in acquiring empire, but not in acquiring glory. And though Polybius claims Agathocles must have had admirable qualities to have achieved all he did (12:15), Agathocles was still a tyrant and a bad man (8:12).

Romulus, on the other hand, acquires both empire and glory. Machiavelli recognizes that Romulus engaged in limited, necessary violence against rivals: he kills his brother, Remus, and acquiesces to the killing of his co-monarch, Titus Tatius Sabinus (D 1:9). But, Romulus's killings were on a much smaller scale than Agathocles's, as two men are fewer than the Senate of Syracuse and many of the city's leading citizens, and tradition does not record a serious domestic challenge to Romulus's rule which would make us suspect that he erred in this.<sup>113</sup> Thus, to use Wolin's formula, we can say that Romulus used violence more economically than Agathocles, though both were able to secure their rule. One gets the sense that

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<sup>112</sup> Polybius, *Histories* Trans. Ian Scott-Kilvert, Ed. and abridged by F. W. Walbank. As *The Rise of the Roman Empire*. Penguin Books. 1979. While Justin's account largely agrees with this assessment, Diodorus Siculus presents an account of Agathocles as consistently cruel and as engaging in multiple massacres of his citizens and the citizens of allied cities after he first become prince of Syracuse.

<sup>113</sup> Machiavelli, Livy, and I all set aside the fact that Romulus was almost certainly legendary.

Agathocles is blood thirsty; that the violent and cruel massacre of so many of his fellow citizens was not something Agathocles had to do, but that he wanted to.

Further, according to Machiavelli, Romulus “merits pardon”<sup>114</sup> for these murders because Machiavelli claims that “they were for the common good, and not for his own ambition...” (D 1:9);<sup>115</sup> no one suggests that Agathocles had any good but his own in mind when he seized the *stato*. I am suggesting that the notion of the economy of violence must be expanded beyond the temporal dimension we find in Machiavelli’s account of cruelty well used to also include a spatial dimension in which only those who it is necessary to kill are killed. That is, when Machiavelli advises that “in taking a *stato*, the conqueror should consider all of the offenses that he are necessary to commit, and commit all of them at once” (P 8)<sup>116</sup> he is not suggesting that the conqueror should commit offenses that are not necessary to consolidating power nor is he suggesting that, if the conqueror does commit additionally unnecessary offenses, that they are excused just because they are all committed at once. A prince following the economy of violence would limit his use of violence to only those individuals whose deaths are necessary and the measure of necessity is more what is necessary to promote the common good of the polity than the individual good of the prince.

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<sup>114</sup> “...meritasse scusa...”

<sup>115</sup> “fusse per il bene comune, e non per ambizione propria...” Machiavelli says Romulus demonstrated this by forming the Senate and giving them a role in his government.

<sup>116</sup> “...nel pigliare uno stato, debbe lo occupatore d’esso discorrere tutte quelle offense che gli e necessario fare, e tutte farle a uno tratto...”

I think that for Machiavelli, it is not appropriate to kill one's fellow citizens unless it is necessary. As Machiavelli claims,

You ought therefore to know how there are two sorts of fighting: the one, with laws; the other, with force. The first is appropriate to man, the second, to beasts. But because many times the first is not enough, it is befitting to resort to the second: therefore for a prince it is necessary to know well to use the beast and the man (P 18).<sup>117</sup>

That is, to fight like a man is to fight using laws and legal methods, to fight like a beast is to use force and fraud. Romulus was able to use the man in domestic politics with fellow citizens for most of his reign and use the beast in defending his principality from foreign threats. Agathocles on the other hand, was only capable of fighting like a beast and so is viewed by Machiavelli and history as a brute and a criminal because he fought his fellow citizens with force when it would have been appropriate to have used laws. Both Romulus and Agathocles were excellent captains and soldiers because both knew well how to fight like a beast, but only Romulus was also an excellent statesman because he could confront his fellow citizens as a man. Therefore, in determining whether to imitate Romulus or Agathocles, for Machiavelli, one should imitate Romulus because he knew how to use both the beast and the man, while Agathocles only knew how to use the beast.

These examples demonstrate that Machiavelli's conception of virtù is related to political success, but that success is not defined solely by a prince's or a regime's

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<sup>117</sup> "Dovete adunque sapere come e' sono dua generazioni di combattere: l'uno, con le leggi; l'altro, con la forza. Quel primo è proprio dello uomo; quel secondo, delle bestie. Ma perché el primo molte volte non basta, conviene ricorrere al secondo: pertanto a uno principe è necessario sapere bene usare la bestia e lo uomo."

ability to *mantenere lo stato*. While Machiavelli stresses the importance of virtù in aiding princes in *mantenere lo stato*, he also stresses that there are other criteria for determining political success. One of these other criteria centers on the praise and blame earned by political actors: and virtù, for Machiavelli, should always be praiseworthy. Thus, we can praise Romulus as an excellent founder and Rome as an excellent polity. We would praise Agathocles's actions as a soldier and as captain of the Syracusan military, the capacities in which he acted with virtù, but blame him as a politician, the capacity in that he acted with wickedness. Indeed, as Machiavelli implies, the goal of *l'arte dello stato* is not merely the acquisition of empire, but also of glory. And glory at its root is based on the praise of others for one's actions both during one's life and after one's death, which in its ultimate sense invokes the respect and admiration even of one's enemies. And if an individual with virtù can cover himself in glory for accomplishing great things, a republic can be even more glorious if it is governed with virtuoso modes.

### **1.3 Peoples**

Just as the virtù of an individual can be imitated by imitating their modes and actions, the virtù of a people can be imitated by imitating their laws, modes, and orders. In contrast to Machiavelli's contemporaries who admired Roman virtù but did not think it possible or desirable to imitate it, Machiavelli proposed that imitation of

Roman virtù by his country was both possible and desirable (D 1:Proemio).<sup>118</sup>

Machiavelli not only wanted to convincingly demonstrate that Roman virtù would produce more political success than the Italians' current reliance on *fortuna* and foreign arms but also that Roman virtù could be imitated by the Italians. In order for contemporary Italians to imitate the Romans, they needed to be presented with the Roman modes, orders, and laws which were key to the development and maintenance of Roman virtù. This is why Machiavelli spends so much time presenting the exemplar of Roman virtù throughout his works, especially in the *Discorsi* and *dell'Arte della Guerra*. Machiavelli presents Roman modes and orders in fine grained detail so that they can be imitated by the Italians and especially by the Florentines. And, although Machiavelli does not propose that the Florentines imitate the Romans by copying their exact modes and orders, he does advocate adapting some of the Roman populism and military vigor into Florentine government.<sup>119</sup>

Rather than presenting Machiavelli's assessment of the Romans<sup>120</sup> and the Florentines<sup>121</sup> separately, I will concentrate on Machiavelli's comparison of Rome and Florence from his *Istorie Fiorentine* 3.1. Here he explores why the conflict of the orders had so different a result in Florence than it did in Rome. In the *Discorsi*,

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<sup>118</sup> See also Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, page 86.

<sup>119</sup> See Mark Jurdjevic, *A Great and Wretched City: Promise and Failure in Machiavelli's Florentine Political Thought*. Cambridge Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2014. Especially Chapter 1. Though, note, Jurdjevic disagrees with my claim that the Romans are the exemplar of virtù who Machiavelli wants the Florentines to imitate.

<sup>120</sup> Example number 87. See my entry for the Romans in Appendix 2 for a more thorough discussion of Roman virtù and Rome's modes and orders which could be imitated to follow in the path beaten by Rome.

<sup>121</sup> Example number 97. See my entry for the Florentines in Appendix 2 for a more thorough discussion of the lack of a Florentine virtù and the defects of its modes and orders which prevented it from acquiring a Florentine virtù.

Machiavelli had argued that the conflict between patrician and plebeian had served to increase Rome's virtù (D 1.4). However, it was clear that, in Florence, class conflict had been totally to the city's detriment. His discussion is worth quoting at length:

The grave and natural enmities that are between the men of the people and the nobles, are caused by the desire of the latter to command and of the former to not obey, these are the reason for all the evils born in cities...the enmities that were in the beginning in Rome between the people and the nobles, they resolved by disputing; those in Florence they resolved by fighting; those in Rome ended with a law, those in Florence ended with the exile and with the death of many citizens; those in Rome always increased military virtù, those in Florence totally extinguished it... From this again proceeded that in the victory of the people the city of Rome became more virtuoso; because, the men of the people were able to be in the administration accountable for the magistrates, for the armies and for the imperii with the nobles, they filled themselves of the same virtù, and that city, increasing its virtù, increased in power; but in Florence, when the people won, they deprived the nobles of the magistrates that they retained; and wanting to reacquire these, it was necessary for them, not only to be but to appear similar to the men of the people, with their rules, with their animo, and with their mode of living. Of this was born the variations of insignias, the mutations of the families' titles, that the nobles, made themselves, to appear as of the people; so much that that virtù of arms and generosity of animo that was in the nobility was extinguished, and in the people, where it never was, it could not be recovered, such that Florence became always more humble and more abject. And where Rome, having converted its virtù into arrogance, reduced itself to an end that without having a prince it could not maintain itself, Florence reached that degree, which a wise lawgiver would have easily reordered it in any form of government (IF 3:1).<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> “Le gravi e naturali inimicizie che sono intra gli uomini popolari e i nobili, causate da il volere questi comandare e quelli non ubbidire, sono cagione di tutti i mali che nascono nelle città... le inimicizie che furono nel principio in Roma intra il popolo e i nobili, disputando; quella di Firenze combattendo si diffinivano, quelle di Roma con una legge, quelle di Firenze con lo esilio e con la morte di molti cittadini terminavano; quelle di Roma sempre la virtù militare accrebbono, quelle di Firenze al tutto la spensono...Da questo ancora procedeva che nelle vittorie del popolo la città di Roma più virtusa diventava; perché potendo i popolani essere alla amministrazione de' magistrati, degli eserciti e degli imperii con i nobili preposti, di quella medesima virtù che erano quelli si riempievano, e quella città,

Machiavelli begins this passage by reiterating a claim that he has made in both *il Principe* and the *Discorsi*, that the nobles and the people — the patricians and the plebeians — will always be in conflict in any city. But, these conflicts do not always have the same results or proceed along the same path. This passage reveals two important differences in the conflicts which caused them to be the source of Roman virtù and the destruction of Florentine virtù.

First, the differences between Rome and Florence in the mode of how their class conflict was adjudicated partially explain the different outcomes. The conflicts were destructive in Florence because the Florentines did not know the appropriate way to resolve conflicts with fellow citizens. As discussed above, one needs to know how to fight both with laws, as befits a man, and with force, as befits a beast (P 16). Where Machiavelli says that the Romans domestic enmities “were resolved by disputing” and that these disputes produced “a law” (IF 3:1), he means that the “tumults” (D 1:4) between the plebs and patricians were resolved primarily through fighting each other as men, through and with laws. By contrast, the enmities between the people and the nobles in Florence were resolved through fighting and the Florentines fought each other as beasts, with weapons and violence. The stakes of domestic politics in Florence were death or exile, while in Rome they were losing elections, rights, and

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crescendovi la virtù, cresceva potenza; ma in Firenze, vincendo il popolo, i nobili privi de' magistrati rimanevano; e volendo racquistargli, era loro necessario, con i governi, con lo animo e con il modo del vivere, simili ai popolani non solamente essere ma parere. Di qui nasceva le variazioni delle insegne, le mutazioni de' titoli delle famiglie, che i nobili, per parere di popoli, facevano; tanto che quella virtù delle armi e generosità di animo che era nella nobiltà si spegneva, e nel popolo, dove la non era, no si poteva raccendere, tal che Firenze sempre più umile e più abietto divenne. E dove Roma, sendosi quella loro virtù convertita in superbia, si ridusse in termine che senza avere un principe non si poteva mantenere, Firenze a quel grado è pervenuta, che facilmente da uno savio datore di leggi potrebbe essere in qualunque forma di governo riordinata.”

privileges; stakes familiar to citizens of contemporary democratic republics. This is why it was possible for the conflicts within Rome, while the citizens fought as men, served to strengthen the city and why the conflicts within Florence weakened it.

Second, there was a critical difference in the goals of the Florentine and Roman peoples, in their conflicts with the nobles that harmed Florence. The goals of the Roman people were more just than those of the Florentine peoples. This can be seen because when the Roman people won, they shared the magistracies with the nobles, but when the Florentine people won, they excluded the nobles from holding magistracies. The Roman people wanted to be equals with the Roman nobility, while the Florentine people wanted to be superior to the Florentine nobility. This is why, when the people won, in Rome, the people were raised to the nobles' level while, in Florence, the nobles were forced to descend to the level of the people. By sharing the same offices with the nobles, the people of Rome acquired the virtù of the nobles. The Florentine people, by barring the nobles from holding office, extinguished the virtù of the nobility and, thus, could not acquire it. In both republics, many of these magistracies were specifically military in nature: the military tribunes, praetors, and consuls in Rome and the *Gonfalonieri* and membership in the Eight of War or Ten of War in Florence. Thus, in Rome, when the people served as magistrates alongside the nobles, they acquired military virtù and in Florence, the magistrates responsible for the military lacked military virtù.

There is one last difference between Rome and Florence to be drawn from this passage. According to Machiavelli, when Rome's virtù was converted into arrogance,

it could no longer maintain itself as a republic and had to become a principality; Florence, on the other hand, seemed to be open to being reformed into any type of government, as long as this was wisely done. Machiavelli has discussed elsewhere the causes for the fall of the Roman Republic: that once Rome no longer had an external enemy that posed a serious threat, the unity of the city broke down (see especially D 3:16). In the century between the falls of Carthage and Corinth and Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon, domestic politics became increasingly violent. Disputes that had previously been settled through arguments and legislation began to be settled with mob violence and, eventually, civil war. In Florence, on the other hand, and perhaps due to the city's weakness, the continual violence seems to have reduced the city to a substance easily molded into any form provided by a wise lawgiver. Machiavelli is specifically talking about the years around 1353, which had been preceded by years of civil strife and the Black Death (IF 2:42). However, he could just as easily be discussing his contemporary Florence of the post-Medici restoration, during which time he wrote at least two treatises on reforming the government of Florence, at least one at the request of the Medici themselves.<sup>123</sup> But, that Florence's government could be given any form is not praise for Florence over Rome. Rather, for Machiavelli, hundreds of years of mediocre republican government have left Florence as malleable to law giving as if it had never received laws at all.

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<sup>123</sup> "Minuta di provvisione per la Riforma dello Stato di Firenze l'anno 1522" (which was written during the period Machiavelli was composing *Istorie Fiorentine*) and "Discursus florentinarum rerum post mortem iunioris Laurentii Medices".

The Roman Republic was glorious, as was much of the Principate that followed; the Florentine Republic was a mediocrity so unimpressive that its government could be reshaped, almost as if it never existed. The ability to reorder the Florentine Republic might appear eerily similar to the ability of the virtually superhuman ability to change with the times. Drawing on Machiavelli's *Capitolo nella Fortuna*, Pitkin claims that “[p]erhaps it is that virtù consists neither of prudence or boldness, but of the extraordinary, almost super human power to modify one’s character as the times change” (*Fortune is a Woman*, 138).<sup>124</sup> And, Machiavelli claims that the ability to change one’s nature to match *fortuna* works better in a republic than in an individual because of the many individuals of diverse character in a republic who can be drawn on to lead as the times change (D 3:9). However, Machiavelli’s example of such a republic is not Florence, but Rome. The Romans were able to deploy Fabius Maximus Cunctatore against Hannibal (example 42) in Italy and, later, Cornelius Scipio Africanus (example 22) against him in Africa. Florence is not able to modify its character as the times change because that would take good orders for selecting the right candidates for the magistracies. The Roman Republic had these before it became corrupt because it elected consuls based on virtù (D 1:20) rather than wealth (D 3:25)<sup>125</sup> or blood and without regard to age (D 1:60).<sup>126</sup> Again, Florence cannot modify its character, but Machiavelli believes that “a wise lawgiver” can modify Florence’s character for it.

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<sup>124</sup> Machiavelli also says something to this effect in chapter 25 of *il Principe*. As I noted in the Introduction, Skinner at least partially concurs with Pitkin (see *Foundations*, page 138). Wolin does as well, but he never calls this ability virtù.

<sup>125</sup> See example 9 Lucius Quintius Cincinnatus.

<sup>126</sup> See example 12 Publius Valerius Corvinus.

There are six uses of *virtù* in the passage above. For the most part, they indicate that Machiavelli's usage of *virtù* often means at least military *virtù*. Machiavelli suggests that there was some sort of *virtù* of arms that is natural to the noble class in both Rome and Florence. In Rome, the people are able to acquire this *virtù* from serving in the various magistracies (often military in nature) alongside the nobles, and this serves to increase the *virtù* of Rome overall. This increase in Rome's military *virtù* leads to an increase in its power.<sup>127</sup> However, this reading, while not incorrect, is not sufficient. After all, the *virtù* that Rome converted into arrogance in the last century of the republican period was not Roman military *virtù*, which was still unrivaled. It seems to me that this *virtù* that Rome converted into arrogance is the sense of *virtù* that is closest to Pocock's "republican virtue" that he sees in the *Discorsi* and wants to separate from *virtù*.<sup>128</sup> This is the unity, patriotism, love of liberty, and the placing of the public above the private that is that foundation upon that republican government is built.

Due to the means in which Romans had fought each other until the decline of the republic, as men with laws, they were still able to think of themselves as parts of a greater whole that they would unify to defend if there was a threat. But, once there were no longer obvious existential outside threats to the Republic that demanded internal unity to beat, this *virtù* that allowed the Roman citizens to fight each other as men was converted into arrogance. Rome's military *virtù* was turned inward upon

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<sup>127</sup> Indeed, the Plebeians were finally allowed into the highest magistracies (the Consul, the Censor, and the Dictator) during the Samnite Wars. When Rome won those wars, they had mastery over virtually the entire Italian peninsula.

<sup>128</sup> See especially pages 184 and 194.

itself and the Romans fought as animals, with no holds barred. This created a vicious cycle of increasing domestic political violence that further destroyed the unity of the *stato* until virtually no one was loyal to the republic itself. This made the electoral institutions<sup>129</sup> that were the framework of the Republic impossible because the political conflicts between opposing candidates for office became running battles between armed supporters of each side. It also made the armies dangerous because their loyalties lay with their respective generals rather than with the central republican administration in the Senate and the popular assemblies: this is what allowed Sulla and Caesar to march on Rome with their legions. So while Rome maintained itself full of military virtù for another several hundred years, the republican virtù, which had sustained the republican institutions, was destroyed even before the republic itself finally committed suicide. The Florentine Republic never really had this kind of republican virtù, nor was it ever so full of military virtù, and so was consequently more malleable as it was less glorious.

While Machiavelli does not deal with the concept of imitation of exemplars in the above passage, we can read it into the passage: it is clear that in its mode of proceeding in mediating internal dissention, Rome is an exemplary case worthy of imitation while Florence is an example of modes of internal conflict to avoid.

Machiavelli actually finds many individual Florentines with virtù in his *Istorie Fiorentine*,<sup>130</sup> but the Florentine Republic is never able to convert this individual virtù

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<sup>129</sup> “Elections” to the traditional republican offices continued throughout the imperium, but they were closely supervised by the emperors; these were functionally appointments.

<sup>130</sup> See example numbers 44-53, 57-60.

into a unified Florentine virtù, as Machiavelli often speaks of Roman virtù in the *Discorsi*. Indeed, had the Florentines followed the Roman example in their mode of proceeding and fought their domestic disputes with words rather than with swords, perhaps they would have managed to achieve some of the scent of the republican virtù that made the Roman Republic possible and experienced that as Florentine virtù. As discussed above, for Machiavelli, it was not too late for Florence to turn down this exemplary path, though we know today that the Florentines never headed Machiavelli's exhortations to imitate this Roman virtù.

## Conclusion

Given his audience and the literary traditions of the Renaissance, it makes a good deal of sense that Machiavelli makes use of exemplars to demonstrate his teachings. Machiavelli and his audience would have been brought up on hagiography and biblical parables, and his fellow humanists would have been as familiar as Machiavelli was with Plutarch's and Diogenes Laertius's biographies.<sup>131</sup> Imitation of exemplars in artistic, architectural, and written works was widely practiced and understood (D 1:Proemio, see also Pigman III, "Imitation in the Renaissance") and Renaissance Italians would have understood what it was to imitate the actions and modes of moral exemplars through the familiar genres of hagiography and the mirror

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<sup>131</sup> Recall that most of the aphorisms that Machiavelli attributes to Castruccio Castracani in his *La Vita di Castruccio Castracani da Lucca* are from Diogenes Laertius's *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*.

of princes literature. Machiavelli only had to demonstrate how to imitate exemplars of virtù.

For Machiavelli, exemplars of the most admirable virtù, the inglorious wickedness, and the deplorable mediocrity are all useful to understand. The grandest examples of the most excellent men and glorious peoples and the mediocre examples of the cowardly or lazy princes and republics each play their role: “if the former excites liberal *animi* to follow them, the latter will excite them to avoid them and extinguish them” (IF 5:1).<sup>132</sup> In the epigraph to this chapter, Machiavelli argues that one should pick the most excellent example for imitation, because men will almost inevitably proceed by a path beaten by another and should therefore choose to follow in the path of an exemplar (P 6). Machiavelli deploys two metaphors in this passage to explain why it is the grandest examples who should be imitated. The first, is the metaphor of the hunt where, if the imitator is unable to stay on the path of the exemplar and “if his virtù does not reach theirs, at least it will render some of the scent” (P 6).<sup>133</sup> That is, the imitator is tracking the modes and actions of the exemplar in an attempt to reach his great virtù. Even if the imitator is unable to successfully reach the virtù of Romulus or the Romans, they will at least have found the right scent and gained the ability to imitate the correct modes and actions. The second metaphor is that of the archer who aims higher than the line of sight of their far off target in order to reach it with their arrow (P 6). That is, though the imitator does not need so

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<sup>132</sup> “...se quelli i liberali animi a seguitarle accendono, queste a fuggirle e spegnerle gli accenderanno.”

<sup>133</sup> “... se la sua virtù non vi arriva, almeno ne renda qualche odore...”

much virtù as Romulus or the Romans, but still ought to imitate those exemplars so as to acquire sufficient virtù to reach their own political and military goals.

For Machiavelli, most of the exemplars of virtù, the most excellent examples which should be imitated, are from ancient times. Machiavelli is constantly frustrated that his contemporaries, who avidly imitate ancient art, “are quicker to admire than imitate”<sup>134</sup> ancient politics and warfare, because they do not believe imitation of the ancient virtù is possible (D 1:Proemio).<sup>135</sup> Machiavelli aims to correct this, which is why Machiavelli is careful to describe the actions, customs, and modes of those exemplars of virtù — both individuals and peoples — who he wants his contemporary Italians to imitate. It is through this imitation that they can acquire the virtù necessary for Machiavelli’s *arte dello stato*.

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<sup>134</sup> “...essere più presto ammirate che imitate...”

<sup>135</sup> Machiavelli suggests in this Preface to book 1 of *Discorsi* that correcting this error is his reason for writing.

## Chapter 2 By that Same Virtù

This virtù and this vice that I say one finds in a single man, one still finds in a republic... (D 3:31)<sup>136</sup>

### Introduction

Machiavelli begins *il Principe* with the claim that “All states [*stati*], all dominions that have had and have imperium over men, have been and are either republics or principalities” (P 1).<sup>137</sup> Some modern commentators have used this typology to drive a wedge splitting Machiavelli’s statecraft and his conception of virtù in two. This claim is essentially that Machiavelli’s political theory of republics and his political theory of principalities are categorically different; that rule by one is categorically different than rule by all. This leads to an interpretation of Machiavelli much like that in Pocock (who I take to be the leading proponent of this position) where, when quoting Machiavelli, “virtù” is not translated into English except in reference to republican “virtue”.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> “Questa virtù e questo vizio che io dico trovarsi in un uomo solo, si truova ancora in una republica...”

<sup>137</sup> “Tutti gli stati, tutti e’ domini che hanno avuto e hanno imperio sopra gli uomini, sono stati e sono o repubbliche o principati.” By *stato* Machiavelli does not quite mean “the state” in the modern sense of the world. Instead it means 1. the state of being (as “stato” is the past participle of the verb “to be”), 2. possession of rule or status, or 3. the political structures over which one could rule and in which one can have status. I refrain from translating the noun but I do translate the verb.

<sup>138</sup> An example of this comes on page 194 where, when discussing how military virtù is essential for citizen virtue, Pocock says, “Virtù must be constitutive of virtue”. J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975.

This translation choice creates a linguistic distinction that mirrors Pocock's conceptual distinction between *virtù* and virtue. However, neither the linguistic distinction nor the conceptual distinction exists in Machiavelli's writings. A different group of scholars, at least implicitly, take the opposite position: they treat Machiavelli's analysis of principalities and republics as if the two do not have conceptually important differences.<sup>139</sup> I argue that Machiavelli's position is somewhere in the middle of these two interpretations. Though *virtù* remains the same in both principalities and republics, it is displayed differently due to the differences between selecting rulers based on hereditary succession compared to election and having only one man rule compared to having a participatory ruling regime.

However, before analyzing the variance in the manifestation of *virtù* between republics and principalities, we need to understand the distinction between individuals and peoples (political entities consisting of many individuals). As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, Machiavelli's discussion of *virtù* is often carried out through a discussion of examples of *virtù* that break down into two categories: individual politicians and peoples.<sup>140</sup> That is, Machiavelli describes both individual persons, such as Francesco Sforza (example 71) and Marcus Furius Camillus (example 7), and

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<sup>139</sup> In my reading, these theorists take this position, but generally do not state it explicitly because it is not the emphasis of their work. Chief amongst these is Harvey Mansfield, Jr., *Machiavelli's New Modes and Orders*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979. I think that Leo Strauss also has a similar position. I take several of John McCormick's recent articles to be at least moving in this direction, though in a totally different way and for different reasons from Strauss and Mansfield. However, these interpretations tend not to deal extensively with Machiavelli's concept of *virtù*.

<sup>140</sup> I use the English term "peoples" here because it widely encompasses all of the groups which Machiavelli talks about, including multinational empires (e.g. the Roman and Parthian Empires), kingdoms (France and Spain), city states (Florence and Sparta), tribal confederations (the Goths and the Samnites), and cultural and linguistic groupings which do not have a strictly unified political identity (the Italians and the Germans).

political entities consisting of many individuals, such as the Romans (example 87) and the French (example 103), as having virtù. Just as with principalities and republics, virtù in individuals and in peoples is the same concept, but is manifested differently. This distinction is important for Machiavelli, but has received considerably less attention from the secondary literature.<sup>141</sup> Understanding the differences in how virtù is manifested in individuals compared to peoples will shed light on otherwise confusing phenomena, such as the existence of the Republic of Florence (example 97), many of whose citizens Machiavelli says had virtù, while he usually says the republic itself lacks virtù.

Therefore, in addition to rejecting the claim that Machiavelli's understanding of virtù can be split into separate concepts with distinct meanings, we must understand how virtù is differently manifested in individuals as opposed to peoples, and in principalities as opposed to republics. The chapter proceeds in three parts. First, I will examine what we might think of as the persistent characteristics of virtù, as Machiavelli uses it, that are always manifested in all individuals and states whom he claims have virtù. Second, I turn to the variation between individuals and peoples. Third, I explore the variation in the manifestation of virtù in republics compared to principalities. Through this analysis we can establish what is essential to virtù and the breadth of range its meanings have in Machiavelli, which, in turn, provides insight

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<sup>141</sup> Gilbert, Wood, Price, and Skinner all seem aware that Machiavelli believes that it is possible for a people to have virtù, but do not explain its significance or explore in depth what it looks like and how it occurs.

into what Machiavelli believes are the significant distinctions between principalities and republics.

## 2.1 Persistent Characteristics of Virtù

Machiavelli uses the word “virtù” or one of its variants hundreds of times in his major political works. The frequency with which he uses the term across his works can lead to a seeming plurality of meaning.<sup>142</sup> As noted previously, J. H. Whitfield has used this seeming plurality to claim that “There is no doctrine of *virtù* in Machiavelli” (*Machiavelli*, 95)<sup>143</sup> and Russell Price finds three “senses” in which Machiavelli uses the concept of virtù (“Senses of *Virtù*”)<sup>144</sup>. These are a Christian sense a Christian or moral sense which appears when Machiavelli contrasts virtù to vice (“Senses of *Virtù*”, 317),<sup>145</sup> the political and military senses, which are what mostly concern Machiavelli, and “other senses of virtù.”<sup>146</sup> But Machiavelli only gives two examples

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<sup>142</sup> I count 481 uses of “virtù” or the adjective or adverb variations across *il Principe*, *Discorsi*, *dell’Arte della Guerra*, *La Vita di Castruccio Castracani da Lucca*, and *Istorie Fiorentine*.

<sup>143</sup> J. H. Whitfield, *Machiavelli*. New York: Russell & Russell 1965 [1947].

<sup>144</sup> Russell Price, “The Senses of *Virtù* in Machiavelli,” *European Studies Review* 3 (1973). p. 315-345.

<sup>145</sup> I take Price to be not entirely correct here. I think he misreads the main passage he uses to support this claim that Machiavelli uses virtù in the Christian sense. His only citation for Christian virtù is the famous P15 where Machiavelli distinguished between ‘that which appears to be virtù’ (which is the Christian virtù) and ‘that which appears to be vice’ (which Machiavelli will promote as sound policy, if not always as virtù). I am skeptical that this use in P15 should be counted as Machiavelli using virtù to mean Christian virtù because he references Christian virtù as appearing to be virtù rather than actually being virtù. But, elsewhere Machiavelli contrasts virtù and vice of men and republics where he clearly is using the political and military sense of virtù (D 3:31).

<sup>146</sup> There are very few uses of the “other senses” of virtù, though unlike the Christian/moral sense of virtù, these certainly do exist. They include senses of virtù as natural power, faculty, efficacy, or talent, as a vital force, and as a hidden power (of both spirits and the masses) to see into the future (Price, “Senses of *Virtù*”, 335-337), as what doctors use to cure patients (338), the strength or range of a bow (339), and virtù in reference to arts or crafts and writing (339-341).

of individuals in his major works with *virtù* but no political and military career to speak of: Brunelleschi (IF 4:23) and Cosimo Rucellai (AG 1:8\*/271).

However, Price's first and third senses form a small minority of Machiavelli's uses of the concept. Price recognizes this and concludes (in partial concurrence with Neal Wood, "*Virtù Reconsidered*"<sup>147</sup>) that though Machiavelli uses *virtù* in multiple senses, the most important senses are those that most writers focus on in interpreting Machiavelli: the political and military sense of *virtù* (Price, "*Senses of Virtù*", 345). For Price, Machiavelli's use of political *virtù* means "skill or ability in founding or ruling States, in short, statecraft" (325) while military *virtù* means "preparing for war in a sensible and skilful way, fighting strongly or courageously" (331). Price notes that Machiavelli most often uses political and military *virtù* in conjunction with one another (326), and it is these senses of *virtù* which are contrasted and linked to *fortuna* (322). This largely agrees with Wood, who says that "*Virtù*, therefore, is a set of qualities, or a pattern of behavior most distinctively exhibited under what may be described as battlefield conditions, whether actual war or politics provide the context" ("*Virtù Reconsidered*", 171).

More than most commentators on Machiavelli's concept of *virtù*, Price and Wood deal with Machiavelli's extensive use of examples. Almost every time Machiavelli gives an example of an individual or a *stato* with *virtù*, it falls into Price's political or military categories. Indeed, virtually all of the examples fall into a

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<sup>147</sup> Neal Wood, "Machiavelli's Concept of *Virtù Reconsidered*", *Political Studies*, Vol. XV, No. 2 (1967):159-172.

combined political and military category. There are so few exceptions to this that Wood claims that the exceptions ought not even be counted. While this is not my position, I do believe that, even if Price is correct that Machiavelli occasionally uses the word “virtù” in one of the other senses (and there is good reason to be skeptical of many of the entries on Price’s list of these occasions), we will not be doing Machiavelli’s understanding of virtù violence if we constrain our analysis to the political and military spheres of human life.

In the remainder of this section, I will detail four complementary aspects of virtù that are essential. First, at its core, virtù in the political sense *is* also virtù in the military sense.<sup>148</sup> Military virtù in both individuals and peoples comes from necessity (AG 2:77/303; D 2:12, D 3:1, D 3:12; IF 5:1), from modes<sup>149</sup> and orders<sup>150</sup> designed to produce it (D 2:16, D 3:36; AG 3:85/307, AG 3:99/314, AG 7:203/362), from experience (P 14),<sup>151</sup> and — only occasionally and of the least importance — from innate talent or ability (P 7). Military virtù consists of fortitude, strength, endurance (P 14), and skill at arms (for soldiers; P 26) and in command (for captains; P 7, P 12). Second, but related, virtù is a form of self-help or self-reliance (P 24).<sup>152</sup> It is *not* being satisfied with relying on *fortuna* for everything, but in preparing for the inevitable

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<sup>148</sup> See Wood, “Virtù Reconsidered”.

<sup>149</sup> By *modo* (pl: *modi*) Machiavelli means the mode, manner, means or method of proceeding or of conduct that can either be peculiar to an individual or habitual for a people. Following convention, I translate this as the English “mode”.

<sup>150</sup> By *ordine* (pl: *ordini*) Machiavelli means the ordering, rules, and institutions of an organization such as a republic, a monarchy, a guild, or a legion. Following convention, I translate this as the English “order”.

<sup>151</sup> See AG Book 1 for Machiavelli’s discussion of what he means by this.

<sup>152</sup> See also Hanna F. Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press. 1984. See especially pages 7 and 55.

disasters when all is calm (P 25), in seizing the *occasione*<sup>153</sup> (P 6, P 26), and in raising one's own troops whether in a principality or a republic (P 13, AG 2:80/305, D 1:21).

Third, virtù is not success, nor is it a heuristic for political or military success, though for Machiavelli virtù is correlated with success and is often the cause of success. The example of Agathocles (see Chapter 1 and example 38 in the appendices) demonstrates that success might not be due to virtù (P 8).<sup>154</sup> And Machiavelli's examples of Cesare Borgia (example 77, P 7) and Hannibal Barca (example 42, P 17; D 2:27, D 3:31), both of whom were full of virtù but eventually failed nevertheless, demonstrate that possessing virtù does not guarantee success. And, given Machiavelli's discussion of hereditary princes, who usually need only "be of ordinary industry" to retain power (P 2), there are at least some circumstances in which virtù is not necessary for political success.

Fourth, virtù is a quality that is displayed. That is, for an individual or group to count as having virtù, they have to make use of it and need an opportunity to display it. This is part of what is at work in the interplay between the virtù and the *occasione*

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<sup>153</sup> By *occasione*, Machiavelli means something like the occasion or opportunity to accomplish some great thing. Here he invokes the medieval notion (expressed in the iconography) that *occasione* is the daughter of *Fortune* and as *occasione* approaches she is difficult to recognize, but she passes she is easy to recognize but impossible to seize.

<sup>154</sup> John McCormick disagrees with this assessment of Agathocles in his "The Enduring Ambiguity of Machiavellian Virtue: Cruelty, Crime, and Christianity in *The Prince*" *Social Research: An International Quarterly*. Vol. 81 No. 1 (Spring 2014): 133-164. And "Subdue the Senate: Machiavelli's "Way of Freedom" or Path to Tyranny" *Political Theory*. Vol 40 No. 6 (2012): 714-735. It is worth recalling that in Machiavelli's discussion of principalities, hereditary principalities are not acquired with virtù (P2), nor are those acquired through *fortuna* and the arms of others (P7), through wickedness (P8), or through the favor of one's fellow citizens (P9). That Machiavelli thought Agathocles became prince of Syracuse through his wickedness rather than through his virtù is clear, because he discusses Agathocles in P8 rather than in P6. (However, it does seem that Agathocles's success in military endeavors was due to his virtù.)

in Machiavelli's discussion of founders: "Theseus could not have displayed his virtù, if he had not found the Athenians dispersed,"<sup>155</sup> which provided Theseus (example 2) with the *occasione* to re-found Athens (P 6). The virtù of an army also needs the proper circumstances to be displayed. According to Machiavelli, the Romans knew this and avoided making war during winter or in difficult terrain such as mountains, because they knew it would prevent their legions from displaying their virtù (AG 6:182\*/353). Similarly, in a battle between the Guelfs and Ghibellines in Tuscany, Castruccio Castracani (example 64) was able to deploy his forces in such a way as to prevent the Florentine contingent of the Guelf army from having any chance of displaying its virtù (CC 410/454).<sup>156</sup>

These aspects of virtù which are always present – that is, are always manifested in those Machiavelli describes as having virtù – could probably be derived from reading *il Principe* alone. Having virtù means having military prowess, relying on one's self and one's own troops, which contributes to but does not guarantee success, and needs to be displayed through actions or outward signs in order for it to be effective. But, in *il Principe*, Machiavelli is mostly concerned with the virtù of individuals and how they can use it to seize and maintain a principality. In his other major works (*Discorsi, dell'Arte della Guerra, and Istorie Fiorentine*), Machiavelli mixes his concern with the virtù of individuals with a concern for the virtù of peoples, and his concern with the virtù of principalities with a concern with the virtù of

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<sup>155</sup> "Non posseva Teseo dimostrare la sua virtù, se non trovava gli Ateniesi dispersi."

<sup>156</sup> It is no matter that Machiavelli's account of the battle is largely fictional, that in the actual battle Castruccio was not the highest ranking Ghibelline general, and that the battle plans Machiavelli ascribes to him were those used by Scipio Africanus in a battle against the Carthaginians in Spain.

republics. While the next two sections explore the differences in how virtù is manifested across these different subjects, it is important to keep in mind that what virtù is remains constant and that this constancy is far more important to Machiavelli than are the variations in its manifestation.

## **2.2 Manifestation of Virtù in Individuals Compared to Peoples**

Individuals and peoples are not the same, though they can be analogous. In Machiavelli's writings, he describes both individuals and peoples as having virtù, but virtù is manifested by individuals differently from how it is manifested by peoples. Our discussion here will necessarily be somewhat tentative, because, to my knowledge, there is no place where Machiavelli specifically addresses this issue. Machiavelli rarely provides definitions in his work and is seldom interested in parsing the analytical differences between two subjects when the ramification of these differences are perfectly clear given how they work in his examples. To work around this problem of interpretation I look to Machiavelli's explanations of how his examples of individuals and peoples come to have virtù.

### **2.2.1 Individuals**

Machiavelli's discussion of how individuals come to have virtù takes place primarily in *il Principe*, but is importantly complemented in the *Discorsi*. The most

important way an individual can acquire virtù on his own initiative, as it were, is through the imitation of exemplars of virtù. Machiavelli famously begins *il Principe* 6 by explaining that he will “put forward the grandest examples,” because, though it is not possible to “arrive at the virtù of those you imitate, a prudent man ought to always embark upon the paths beaten by great men, and imitate those that were the most excellent, in order that, if his virtù does not reach theirs, at least it will earn some of the scent” (P 6).<sup>157</sup> Here the imagery is intentionally physical.<sup>158</sup> While Machiavelli does believe that reading the history of these greatest examples provides important knowledge (P 14) for those who would gain virtù, the knowledge of their actions is of little use if their example is not imitated. To acquire virtù in these modes require constant industry in times of peace to train the body and mind<sup>159</sup> for war (P 14).

It is also possible for individuals to acquire virtù through being part of a people with virtù. In *Discorsi*, where Machiavelli says that those who criticize Rome for being poorly ordered because of the tumults between the plebs and the nobles are mistaken: “One could not call it in that mode, with reason, a disorderly republic, where there were so many examples of virtù; because good examples are born from

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<sup>157</sup> “io addurrò grandissimi esempi”...“nè alla virtù di quelli che tu imiti aggiugnere, debbe uno uomo prudente entrare sempre per vie battute da uomini grandi, e quelli che sono stati eccellentissimi imitare, acciò che, se la sua virtù non vi arriva, almeno ne renda qualche odore...”

<sup>158</sup> Machiavelli’s use of “battute” for how the paths are formed invokes the language of giving *forma* to *materia* that pervades his discussion of founders. See Peter Stacey, *Roman Monarchy and the Renaissance Prince*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2007.

<sup>159</sup> Here Machiavelli uses “la mente” rather than “animo”, the concept he uses more frequently in contrast with and in connection to body “corpo” such as in his phrase “virtù of *animo* and body/*virtù di animo e di corpo*”.

good education, good education from good laws, and good laws from the tumults”<sup>160</sup> between the plebs and the nobles (D 1:4). For Machiavelli, one of the proofs that Rome was a well ordered republic was the sheer number of citizens who were excellent examples of virtù, which he here attributes more to their education in the laws of the city than to the mode in *il Principe* detailed above.<sup>161</sup> Further, in some circumstances, it may be impossible for an individual with virtù to display it if he is a member of a people lacking virtù. Individual soldiers in Machiavelli’s Italy cannot display virtù, because they are members of an army, which “lacking in virtù as a whole, it is not possible to demonstrate it in part.” (D 2:17).<sup>162</sup> In this way, the virtù of a people and of the individuals who make up that people will be linked, though this link is by no means simple.

### 2.2.2 Peoples

A people acquire virtù through their laws, modes, and orders. One of Machiavelli’s chief examples of this is the different orders practiced by different peoples for deploying troops in battle: the Romans (example 77), the Gauls (example 92), and contemporary Italians (example 98). Machiavelli gives no reason to believe

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<sup>160</sup> “Né si può chiamare in alcun modo, con ragione, una republica inordinata, dove siano tanti esempli di virtù; perché li buoni esempli nascono dalla buona educazione, la buona educazione dalle buone leggi, e le buone leggi da quelli tumulti...”

<sup>161</sup> Though, I must note that one of Machiavelli’s examples of imitation in the *Prince* is that Scipio Africanus took Cyrus the Great as his model (P 14).

<sup>162</sup> “...mancando di virtù nel tutto, non possono mostrare nella parte.” If this also applies to cities, it may be Machiavelli’s apology for why he was not able to better demonstrate his virtù as one of the leaders of the disordered Florentine Republic.

that the Gauls, as individuals, were less excellent as soldiers than the Romans, and he explicitly praises Italian soldiers taken as individuals (P 26). However, when looking at the virtù of their armies, only the Roman Legion had an “ordered [*ordinate*] virtù” (D 3:36).

The three lines of the maniple system<sup>163</sup> represent, for Machiavelli, the most important order of the Roman military on the battlefield. “[B]ecause from order is born fury and virtù”,<sup>164</sup> the order of the three lines allowed the Romans to “firmly and obstinately combat with the same *animo* and with the same virtù in the end [of a battle] as in the beginning”,<sup>165</sup> because Roman fury “was sustained by an ordered virtù” (D 3:36).<sup>166</sup> By maintaining this order, the Romans always had fresh troops to face the enemy, who were often worn out battling the *astati*, as generally was the case with the Gauls who lacked “ordered virtù” and relied purely on natural fury, which waned as the battle progressed (D 3:36).<sup>167</sup> Worse still than the Gauls are the Italian armies which lack either a “natural fury” or “accidental order” and so are “totally useless” (D 3:36) because their armies lack even a hint of virtù, when functioning as

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<sup>163</sup> To state briefly the order of the maniple: there were three lines ordered as the *astati*, *principi*, and *triari* which arrayed themselves in that order facing the enemy when battle was joined. They were spaced such that the *astati* could retreat into gaps within the line of the *principi* when pushed back and both could do the same with the *triari* if necessary (D 2:16). See also Livy 8.8, Polybius 6.19-24, and Mike Duncan, *The History of Rome Volume I: The Republic*. Ed. Peter D. Campbell. Herodotus Press. 2016. Pages 128-130.

<sup>164</sup> “[P]erché dall’ordine nasce il furore e la virtù...”

<sup>165</sup> “...fermi e ostinati combattevano col medesimo animo e con la medesima virtù nel fine che nel principio...”

<sup>166</sup> “...sostenuto da una virtù ordinata...” Machiavelli is actually talking about how Gaulic armies did not follow this practice in this sentence, but he is comparing them to Roman armies which did.

<sup>167</sup> I feel that though Machiavelli does not mention it, it is important to note that when the Marian reforms eliminated the maniple system in the late first century B.C.E. (in favor of the cohort system), Marius retained the three lines with their accustomed names.

an army, despite Machiavelli's claim that individual Italian soldiers often possessed virtù (P 26).

Just as an army might lack virtù despite being composed of soldiers with virtù, so a people despite having individuals with virtù, might not have virtù as a people. As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, the Roman Republic had many individuals with virtù and, was itself virtuoso, so it had a Roman virtù; the Florentine Republic (example 97) had many individuals with virtù but, in general, was unable to transform those individuals into a virtuoso people, thus failing to sustain a Florentine virtù. This aggregation of individual virtù into a people's virtù is accomplished through the laws, modes, and orders of that people. When this aggregation fails to occur, the fault is the political modes and orders which organize that people. Either it was founded poorly or, if founded well, needs to be brought back to its founding. In either case, this appears not be the fault of the people, but of its leaders.<sup>168</sup>

Rome was founded with good laws and good orders which allowed it to successfully aggregate the virtù of all its citizens into a Roman virtù (see example 87). The laws of its first three kings imposed necessities on the city which staved off corruption (D 1:1), and the orders they created were so suitable to a republic, that the only major changes were the replacement of a king for life with annually elected consuls (D 1:9) and the creation of the office of Tribune of the Plebs (D 1:3). The mode of the tumults between the plebs and the nobles caused the creating of many

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<sup>168</sup> In P 24, P 26, and AG 7:209/365, Machiavelli expresses a similar sentiment when he says that the ultramontane's occupation of Italy is the fault of the Italian princes and not the fault of the Italian people.

good laws and were, eventually, responsible for the many individuals with virtù (D 1:4). The combination of many citizens with virtù and the free election of offices ensured that the magistracies were almost always full of virtuoso men (D 1:20).

Indeed, in the *Discorsi* Machiavelli names at least 22 Romans to whom he attributes virtù.<sup>169</sup>

Similarly, Machiavelli's *Istorie Fiorentine* has at least 14 examples of individual Florentines to whom he attributes virtù.<sup>170</sup> Machiavelli begins the histories by praising of all these individual Florentines, saying that their virtù was great enough to exalt themselves and their city (IF Preface). However, he immediately continues,

“And without doubt, Florence had so much happiness that, after it had freed itself from the [Holy Roman] Empire, if it had a form of government that had maintained it united, I do not know of any republic, either ancient or modern, that would have been superior: it would have been full of so much virtù of arms and of industry” (IF Preface).<sup>171</sup>

Machiavelli ascribes the failure of the Florentines to become one of the great republics of history to their inability to amalgamate the virtù of all the individuals into a united

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<sup>169</sup> See Appendix One. The Romans are: 4 Romulus, 5 Numa Pompilius, and 6 Tullus Hostilius, 7 Marcus Furius Camillus, 8 Horatius, 9 Lucius Quintius Cincinnatus, 10 Tempanius (a centurion), 11 Manlius, Capitolinus, 12 Publius Valerius Corvinus, 13 Titus Manlius Torquatus, 14 Publius Decius Mus, 15 Horatius Coclus, 16 Scaevola, 17 Fabricius, 18 Publius Decius (son of 14 Publius Decius), 19 Marcus Regulus Attilius, 20 Cato the Elder, 21 Cato the Younger, 22 Cornelius Scipio Africanus, 23 Gaius Julius Caesar, 24 Marc Anthony, 25 Antonius Primus, and 27 Septimius Severus.

<sup>170</sup> See Appendix One. The Florentines are: 44 Messer Farinata degli Uberti, 45 Messer Corso Donati, 46 Michele di Lando, 47 Messer Maso degli Albizzi (then) Niccolò da Uzzano, 48 Messer Ringaldo degli Albizzi, 49 Bardo Amncini, 50 Brunelleschi (though not in relationship to his political life), 51 Niccolò da Pisa, 52 Neri di Gino Capponi, 53 Baldaccio di Anghiari, 57 Salvestro de' Medici, 58 Cosimo de' Medici, 59 Piero de' Medici, 60 Lorenzo (il magnifico) de' Medici, and 62 Giulio de' Medici. Unlike the Roman examples in *Discorsi*, some of these examples are more than a little half hearted.

<sup>171</sup> “E senza dubio, se Firenze avesse avuto tanta felicità che, poi che la si liberò dallo Imperio, ella avesse preso forma di governo che l'avesse mantenuta unita, io non so quale repubblica, o moderna o antica, le fusse stata superior: di tanta virtù d'arme e di industria sarebbe stata ripiena.”

Florentine virtù. Indeed, much of the narrative of *Istorie Fiorentine* is the story of the various divisions and factional conflicts which prevented the Florentines from unifying and kept the city weak despite all the great citizens it produced.<sup>172</sup> This claim is surprising for readers of the *Discorsi*, because, as we saw above, Machiavelli believes that the conflict between the plebs and the patricians contributed to the formation of Roman virtù, and he sharply criticizes those who claim that the Roman Republic was successful despite these tumults rather than because of them (D 1:4).<sup>173</sup>

Unlike the Romans, the Florentines were usually unable to aggregate the virtù of individual Florentines into a Florentine virtù because of deficiencies in their laws, modes, and orders. Though Machiavelli sings the praises of the virtù of the Florentine republic at its founding under the original *Gonfalon* in 1250 (IF 2:5), the unity which made this possible was short lived and sporadic. These occasional flashes of unity-induced virtù eventually ended; the last government of Florence Machiavelli praises for its virtù was that of the Eight of War in Florence's war (1375-1378) against Pope Gregory XI (IF 3:5).<sup>174</sup>

Unity was maintained in Rome during the tumults, but not so in Florence.

According to Machiavelli, this is because of the differences between the two cities in

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<sup>172</sup> See Mark Jurdjevic, *A Great and Wretched City: Promise and Failure in Machiavelli's Florentine Political Thought*. Cambridge Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2014.

<sup>173</sup> See Michelle T. Clarke. "Machiavelli and the Imagined Rome of Renaissance Humanism," *History of Political Thought* 36, no 3 (2015): 452-470. Clarke demonstrates that Machiavelli's claim here and in the preceding chapters is a direct rejoinder to Poggio Bracciolini's *Oration on Behalf of Venice*.

<sup>174</sup> It is these men whom Machiavelli praised "esteem[ing] their fatherland so much more than their soul" (IF 3:5). See example 97 Florentine in Appendix Two.

the modes in which the enmities between the people and nobles were resolved.<sup>175</sup> In Rome, these enmities were resolved through “disputing” which caused the disputes to end with new laws, while “those in Florence they resolved through fighting” and caused those fights to end with the exile or death of the losing party (IF 3:1).<sup>176</sup> The difference in these modes — between disputes resulting in laws and fights resulting in death or exile — made compromise and unity impossible in Florence: the fighting was just too bloody and the stakes of losing were just too high. By contrast, republican Rome is noteworthy, to Machiavelli, for the rarity in which the tumults resulted in exiles or the shedding of blood (D 1:4).<sup>177</sup>

Additionally, the goals of the people were different in each city. In Rome, the people wanted to be made equal to the nobles and be allowed to share in the magistracies;<sup>178</sup> in Florence, the people wanted to eliminate and replace the nobles and exclude them from the magistracies (IF 3:1). Thus, in Rome, “the men of the people were able to be in the administration accountable for the magistrates, for the armies and for the *imperii* with the nobles, they filled themselves with the same virtù, and that city, increasing its virtù, increased in power” (IF 3:1).<sup>179</sup> In Florence, because the

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<sup>175</sup> Machiavelli’s distinction between the modes of resolving the enmities between the people and the nobles, which he elaborates in IF 3:1, is dealt with at length in Chapter 1.

<sup>176</sup> Though I take Machiavelli to be speaking here of “the men of the people” who were the leaders of the popular faction, such as the Medici family.

<sup>177</sup> Machiavelli’s summary of Livy’s account of the Roman pleb’s mode of disputing includes demonstrations, strikes, refusing military service, and the occasional riot; the patricians countered with orations in the assembly (D 1:4). It is important to note that Machiavelli limits this claim to the time between the founding of the Republic and the tribunates of the Gracchi Brothers. This stands in stark contrast with the fighting using actual weapons which occurred in Florence with startling frequency.

<sup>178</sup> This is fairly clear from a reading of Livy’s accounts of these disputes in his first ten books.

<sup>179</sup> “... i popolani essere alla amministrazione de’ magistrati, degli eserciti e degli imperii con i nobili preposti, degli eserciti quelli si riempievano, e quella città, crescendovi la virtù, cresceva potenza...”

people had denied the right to hold office to those nobles they had not killed or exiled, they could not serve in the magistracies alongside them and could not fill themselves with the virtù of the nobles (IF 3:1). The people of Florence denied themselves examples of virtù which they could imitate in order to develop virtù in themselves.

### **2.2.3 Individuals Compared to Peoples**

This section has sketched out the ways in which Machiavelli says that individuals and peoples differently come to have virtù in order to gain an understanding of how virtù is differently manifested in them. Here the most obvious distinction between individuals and peoples is that virtù in peoples is manifested through the laws, modes, and orders, which organize the society, while virtù in individuals — though it can be generated by those features of society — is embodied within the individual in question. To state the distinction, perhaps too strongly, virtù in individuals is cultivated and trained while virtù in peoples is organized. I hope that, while I have demonstrated that this distinction in how virtù is manifested is significant and important, it is also clear that, though virtù is manifested differently, it remains the same concept. This distinction between individuals and peoples is retained, at least in part, as we move on to evaluate the differences in how virtù is manifested in principalities (peoples ruled by an individual) and republics (peoples ruled by a people).

### 2.3 Manifestation of Virtù in Republics Compared to in Principalities

Principalities and republics belong to the same class of things, because they are both types of states.<sup>180</sup> When Machiavelli speaks of the virtù of principalities or republics, he is generally speaking of virtù in relationship to the ruling government's ability to *mantenere lo stato*<sup>181</sup> against domestic and foreign threats. Just as with the distinction between individuals and peoples, the distinction between virtù in republics and principalities is one of different manifestations. In this, the most obvious distinctions are the modes and orders by which the two select leaders and maintain the duration of that leadership. But, in this, the distinction between a principality ruled by a prince and a republic ruled by magistrates is not always as clear as some argue.<sup>182</sup> Indeed, several times in the *Discorsi*, Machiavelli speaks of 'the princes of a republic,' (D 1:10, D 1:20)<sup>183</sup> which should lead us to conclude that principalities and republics cannot be so neatly divided in Machiavelli's thought. The division between virtù as it appears in principalities and in republics is also not so easy.

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<sup>180</sup> For Machiavelli this two part typology exhausts the possible subcategories of potential types of state: all states are either principalities or republics, there is no third type. See Peter Stacey "Free and Unfree States in Machiavelli's Political Philosophy", Quentin Skinner and Martin van Gelderen, eds. *Freedom and the Construction of Europe, Volume 1: Religious and Constitutional Liberties*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pages 176-194. See also, Miguel Vatter, "Republics are a Species of State: Machiavelli and the Genealogy of the Modern State", *Social Research*. Vol 81: No. 1(Spring 2014): 217-241.

<sup>181</sup> There is a more in depth discussion of *mantenere lo stato* in Chapter 3.

<sup>182</sup> I am referring again to Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*. I believe that Skinner also makes this move. Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1998 [1978]. As does, more recently, Peter Stacey in *Roman Monarchy*.

<sup>183</sup> Machiavelli also refers to the head of one of the Roman auguries which divined the future through ceremonially feeding chickens as "the Prince of the Chicken Men /*il principe de' pullarii*" (D 1:14).

The relevant divergences in modes and orders for comparing how republics and principalities select their leaders are twofold. First, for Machiavelli, in republics, the most important magistracies are filled by elections, while in (most) principalities they are filled by hereditary rules. Second, in republics, elections allow for multiple leaders to rotate through offices given fixed terms, while in principalities, the state relies on one man. It is in these differences, and in the differences in how *virtù* is manifested, that Machiavelli finds the most salient distinctions between republics and principalities.

Before that analysis, a comment on Machiavelli's method of comparing republics and principalities is in order. It is important to compare well-ordered republics to well-ordered principalities and poorly ordered republics to poorly ordered principalities in comparing their *virtù*, just as it is in comparing their wisdom and constancy (D 1:58). For Machiavelli, it is generally true that republics which are not corrupt and principalities ruled by good princes will have more *virtù* than corrupt republics and principalities ruled by weak or wicked princes. However, it does make sense for us to speak of the relative likelihood that a republic or principality will be of the sort that values or deprecates *virtù*.

### **2.3.1 Elections Compared to Hereditary Institutions**

Perhaps the most noteworthy distinction between a republic and a principality, for Machiavelli, is the difference in their modes for selecting new leaders. Republics

tend to hold elections to fill magistracies for terms of fixed duration while principalities tend to have some sort of rule of familial inheritance.<sup>184</sup> In a well-ordered republic, elections will select leaders based on virtù (D 1:20), but this is not guaranteed in a principality with a virtuoso prince, because virtù is not hereditary (D 3:34). *Fortuna* will always have a greater hold on well-ordered principalities than well-ordered republics, precisely because elections are always more likely to select leaders with virtù. For Machiavelli, this is one of the main reasons to prefer republics to principalities.

Machiavelli treats the benefits of having two virtuoso leaders in succession in his chapter, “Two continuous successions of virtuoso [*virtuosi*] princes produce great effects; and how well ordered republics have by necessity virtuoso [*virtuose*] successions, and nonetheless their acquisitions and augmentations are great” (D 1:20).<sup>185</sup> In this very short chapter, Machiavelli makes the claim that elections in the Roman Republic were so effective at selecting “very excellent men” that Rome rose to great heights under the republic, while under the kings it had remained little more than a powerful city-state. For Machiavelli, this is not surprising because they had “infinite very virtuoso [*virtuosissimi*] princes that had succeeded the one after the other: this virtuoso [*virtuosa*] succession always exists in every well ordered republic” (D

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<sup>184</sup> There are some obvious exceptions to this: the Venetian Republic elected its chief magistrate, the Doge, for life (and this was also the practice of the short lived Florentine Republic, when in 1502 it elected Machiavelli’s political patron, Piero Soderini, Gonfalonier for Life) and the Prince of the Papal States, the Pope, was — and is — elected. But in Machiavelli’s comparisons between republics and principalities in general, he does not seem to think exceptions like these important enough to merit mention.

<sup>185</sup> “Due continove successioni di principi virtuosi fanno grandi effetti; e come le reppubliche bene ordinate hanno di necessità virtuose successioni, e però gli acquisti ed augumenti loro sono grandi”

1:20).<sup>186</sup> And although it was not infrequent for the Romans to elect a man to a magistracy whose father had held that magistracy in his day, because the selection was by election, the son had to have virtù enough to impress the electors. This is not true in principalities where hereditary succession chooses the leadership, and the son succeeds the father whether or not he possesses virtù.

However, the succession of a prince with insufficient virtù or who is weak is not immediately a problem for the principality or even for the ruling dynasty. As Machiavelli points out, a prince who has inherited his principality and is of “ordinary industry” will normally be able to easily *mantenere lo stato* (P 2). However, the problem arises with the next generation. If a prince with virtù is succeeded by a weak prince, the third prince must be strong to *mantenere lo stato*. Machiavelli uses parallel lines of succession to demonstrate his point: the first three kings of Rome (Romulus, Numa Pompilius, and Tullus Hostilius) and David and his successors, the Kings of Israel (David, Solomon, and Rehoboam).<sup>187</sup>

Romulus and David were both strong kings who used their virtù to defeat their enemies in battle and protect their kingdoms (D 1:19). Numa and Solomon, though their religiosity and wisdom were revered, were weak militarily and allowed their kingdoms’ enemies to gain strength, though both were able to rule safely, because they could rely on the virtù of their predecessors (D 1:19). It is with the third kings, Tullus

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<sup>186</sup> “...infiniti principi virtuosissimi ch sono l’uno dell’altro successori: la quale virtuosa successione fia sempre in ogni republica bene ordinata.” This is one of the places where Machiavelli refers to the ‘princes of a republic’.

<sup>187</sup> See Appendix 1, examples 4-6, 31-33.

in Rome and Rehoboam in Israel where the patterns diverge, and with them the *fortuna* of their kingdoms. Tullus had virtù and was able to revitalize Rome's martial abilities and preserve the city in war, while Rehoboam did not have the virtù necessary to do so in Israel; Rehoboam was unable to preserve his kingdom and, according to Machiavelli, lost five-sixths of it (D 1:19).<sup>188</sup> Israel needed a king with virtù to defend it from foreign threats, but its mode of hereditary succession prevented it from being able to select one. (It is, perhaps, worth noting that, according to tradition, after Romulus's death, the next several kings of Rome were elected.<sup>189</sup>)

This is not to say that Machiavelli was not aware of examples of a virtuoso king being succeeded by a direct heir with virtù. Machiavelli cites as an example of how much could be accomplished when this occurs that Phillip of Macedon was succeeded by his son, Alexander the Great (D 1:20). But, this virtuoso succession is extraordinarily rare. So much so, that there is *not a single* example of it for Machiavelli to draw on in either the regal period of Rome or in the whole long history (c.500 years) of the Western Roman Empire.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Machiavelli is referring to the split of Israel into the Kingdoms of Israel (5/6ths) and Judah (1/6ths) where the House of David continued to rule Judah (see First Kings 12:16-24).

<sup>189</sup> See Book 1 of Livy. As noted above, the Popes were also elected, but they were seldom selected on the basis of their virtù.

<sup>190</sup> No Roman king was directly succeeded by his son. In the history of the Western Roman Empire, no good Roman emperor was succeeded by a son who was also a good emperor. The closest this came to occurring was that the Emperor Vespasian was succeeded by his son Titus. Titus was well liked and may well have been a good emperor, but he only ruled for a little over two years, which does not really give us enough data from which to draw conclusions. The other candidate for two good emperors in hereditary succession is Hadrian, who seems to have been the closest male relative to his predecessor, Trajan. But, it was far more common for hereditary succession to produce terrible emperors such as how Marcus Aurelius (example 26) was succeeded by his son Commodus or how Septimius Severus (example 27) was succeeded by his two sons Caracalla and Geta.

Well-ordered republics have a better mode for selecting new leaders with virtù than well ordered principalities. However, in corrupt republics, such as the later years of the Roman Republic, elections select leaders based on wealth, kinship, and favor, rather than virtù; this is especially true when the republic does not seem to face any significant external threats (D 3:16, D 1:18). Eventually, those with virtù abstained from running for office out of fear of the powerful (D 1:18). Machiavelli gives us no reason to believe that poorly ordered principalities will be any more or less likely to produce heirs with virtù than well ordered principalities.<sup>191</sup> But poorly ordered states, whether republic or principality, will face threats, both foreign and domestic, against which they will only be able to maintain their state with the aid of *fortuna*, due to the lack of virtù of their leaders (D 2:30).

This difference in the modes of selecting leaders causes republics to manifest virtù more consistently — either for good or ill — than principalities. A well-ordered republic can maintain itself as virtuoso for longer than a principality ruled by a virtuoso prince, and this sets the upper bound of republican virtù higher than that of a principality.

### 2.3.2 Elections Compared to One Man

After questions of succession, the other main difference in the modes and orders used by republics and principalities in the selection of leaders is that, in

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<sup>191</sup> Though, if it is easier to learn virtù from imitating examples that are nearby, there may be a relationship.

republics, elections allow for multiple leaders to rotate through offices with fixed terms while, in principalities, the state relies on one man in the person of the prince. Fundamentally, republics are better able to draw on any reserve group of virtuoso individuals than principalities are and, thus, they are less likely to be in the dangerous position of having the state rely on the virtù of one man. A prince often must fear other prominent men with virtù as potential competitors.

One of the themes of the early chapters of the *Discorsi* is the danger associated with a state, whether republic or principality, relying on the virtù of a single man. One of the chief reasons that Machiavelli praises Romulus and Numa is that they created orders which shared political power and responsibility with other individuals. According to Machiavelli, “those kingdoms that depend solely on the virtù of a single man, have little durability, because that virtù expires with his life...” (D 1:11).<sup>192</sup> Thus, Romulus is praised for creating the Senate and first popular assembly (D 1:9), and Numa is praised for founding the city’s religion, which Machiavelli credits as the source of the Romans’ respect for law of its other good orders (D 1:11).<sup>193</sup> But, it is here worth remembering that Machiavelli’s praise for Romulus and Numa is at least partially based on his understanding that the orders they founded were better suited to a republic than to a tyranny (D 1:9).<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> “...gli regni i quali dipendono solo dalla virtù d’uno uomo, sono poco durabili, perché nelle virtù manca con la vita di quello...”

<sup>193</sup> Numa did not appoint himself to the office of high priest (Pontifex Maximus) that he created.

<sup>194</sup> Though, I do not believe that Machiavelli fell into the trap of Whig history.

Similarly, Machiavelli claims that a corrupt republic can be kept free through the virtù of one man, but only during his life, with the examples of Dion and Timoleon in Syracuse (example 34, D 1:17) and Epaminondas and Pelopidas in Thebes (examples 35 and 36, D 1:17, D 1:21) to show that it is possible to hold corrupt cities as republics at least for a time. But in both of these cases, when the virtuoso leaders died, the republics fell back into their corruption, because they were either unwilling or unable to establish new orders which would have allowed their cities to maintain their republics into the next generation. Thus, it is important for both republics and principalities to establish orders which allow them to avoid relying on the virtù of a single man.

Republics are much more amenable to orders which allow the state to rely on many individuals with virtù than principalities. In fact, in a sense, it is imperative for the prince to make the principality rely on his virtù alone, because other individuals with virtù are domestic threats to his ability to *mantenere lo stato*. The main instance of this problem is what occurs when a prince sends a subordinate captain to lead an army in battle and that captain is victorious due to his virtù.<sup>195</sup> Rather than reward the captain, Machiavelli tells us that the prince will often find a way to protect himself against the captain because he is suspicious of him, and for good cause (D 1:29).<sup>196</sup>

Well-ordered and warlike republics, on the other hand, need not worry that the virtù of

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<sup>195</sup> This case is analogous to the problems with using mercenary or auxiliary troops: if they win, you are at their mercy because you have no arms of your own (P 12-13). The same is true for a prince who sends a subordinate captain to war and remains home: it is the captain and not the prince who has arms.

<sup>196</sup> Machiavelli's examples here are of Vespasian's poor treatment of Antonius Primus (example 25), who won the civil war for Vespasian that made him emperor (69 C.E.), and Ferdinand of Aragon's treatment of Gonsalvo Ferrante (example 79), who won the Kingdom of Naples for Ferdinand in a war against the French (1503).

a single captain will be turned against the state. When a republic is well-ordered, like Rome was when it was well-ordered, it will always select its magistrates based on virtù, rather than on age (D 1:60) or wealth (D 3:25).<sup>197</sup> The republic honored those who served it with their virtù with election to the highest magistracies and with other honors, such as triumphs and ovations. Additionally, because there were so many virtuoso men in Rome when the republic was not corrupt, the people never had to worry about any one of them as a threat to the state, because they all guarded against that in each other (D 1:30).

### 2.3.3 Conclusion of Republics Compared to Principalities

As I said above, I take republican governments' superior ability to foster virtù in its citizens and to select those with the most virtù to lead to be Machiavelli's chief reason for preferring republics to principalities. Further, a well ordered republic's vast reserve of men with virtù gives them an advantage over even a well ordered principality in resisting *fortuna*. Men succeed in what they attempt when they are able to match their mode of proceeding with the times (P 25).<sup>198</sup> But, men find it basically impossible to change with changing *fortuna*, and so fail when the times change, and they cannot change their nature. For Princes, Machiavelli's best advice is — famously

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<sup>197</sup> Machiavelli's example of electing consuls without regard to age is Publius Valerius Corvinus (example 12), who was elected at the age of 23 after displaying his virtù in battle. His example of electing leaders without regard for wealth is Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus (example 9), who was selected dictator despite being poor.

<sup>198</sup> Some surmise that this is the true meaning of virtù (Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman*, 132; Skinner, *Foundations*, 138; and though he does not explicitly say it, Wolin, *Politics and Vision*, 190-191). See my discussion of the 'mobile personality' in the Introduction and Chapter 1.

— to be bold (P 25). But republics can change with the times because they can elect different leaders who (though they as individuals cannot change their mode of proceeding to match the times) can be changed to match the times, so that the republic can change its mode of proceeding to match what is called for by the times, to combat *fortuna*, to seize the *occasione* to display its virtù (D 3:9).<sup>199</sup>

## Conclusion

I have demonstrated that the persistent characteristics of virtù are maintained in the individuals and the peoples, the principalities and the republics that Machiavelli says have virtù, but that how these characteristics are manifested varies. However, as much as these variances are important to Machiavelli, the possession of virtù is what is most essential. I began this paper by quoting Machiavelli as saying, “This virtù and this vice that I say one finds in a single man, one finds even in a republic...” (D 3:31).<sup>200</sup> Here Machiavelli claims that in matters of good and bad *fortuna*, a man with virtù and a republic with virtù will similarly maintain the same dignity while those without virtù will be insolent in good *fortuna* and cowardly in bad (D 3:31). Machiavelli claims that the Romans (example 87), who possessed virtù, maintained their dignity while the Venetians (example 99), who generally merely thought they

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<sup>199</sup> Machiavelli’s example of this is that Rome was able to fight Hannibal (example 42) with Fabius the delayer, when the times called for caution, and then fight him with the impetuous Scipio Africanus (example 22), when the times called for boldness.

<sup>200</sup> “Questa virtù e questo vizio che io dico trovarsi in un uomo solo, si truova ancora in una republica...”

possessed virtù, alternated between insolence and cowardliness as *fortuna* changed (D 3:31). Had Machiavelli cared to, he could have made the same claim about the distinction between the French (example 103), the Germans (example 104), and the Spanish (example 105), who had virtù, and the Florentines (example 97) and other Italians (example 98), who did not.

Though I agree with those who claim that Machiavelli had a distinct preference for republics over principalities, I do not agree with those who claim that this preference comes from an allegiance to republican values or republican liberty. (Although Machiavelli did have republican values and did love republican liberty, I do not find that these are decisive.) Rather, as I hope I have shown, Machiavelli's preference for republican government comes from its superior ability to select leaders with virtù and to order its individuals with virtù such that the state will have virtù as a people. This, for Machiavelli, is more durable and more reliable than what is possible to accomplish in a principality and means that a well ordered republic is better at maintaining its state than a well ordered principality.

## Chapter 3 Virtù and the Ends of Politics

“The principal foundations that all states [*stati*] have, thus new [states] just like old and mixed, are good laws and good arms. And because there cannot be good laws where there are not good arms, and where there are good arms it is befitting for there to be good laws, I shall leave behind the reasoning on laws and speak of arms (P 12).<sup>201</sup>

### Introduction

Although Machiavelli is the thinker in the western political thought canon most associated with a theory of how to succeed in politics, he wrote very little on what he believed counted as success in politics, at least not in a ‘larger’ sense. That is, Machiavelli did not address the Aristotelian question of whether politics has a *telos* or end, and what it might be. Machiavelli’s relative silence (compared to Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, J. S. Mill, Marx, Arendt, etc.) on what are the ends of politics has led to a diversity of opinions as to what, if any, principled political commitments Machiavelli’s thought is devoted to. Machiavelli’s friends (especially

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<sup>201</sup> “E principali fondamenti che abbino tutti li stati, così nuovi come vecchi o misti, sono buone legge e le buone arme. E perché e’ non può essere buone legge dove non sono buone arme, e dove sono buone arme conviene sieno buone legge, io lascerò indriet io il ragionare delle legge e parlerò delle arme.” J. H. Hexter interprets this passage to suggest that the ‘good laws’ are good for the prince and not necessarily for the people. See J. H. Hexter, “*Il principe and lo stato*” *Studies in the Renaissance* Vol. 4(1957), page 129.

Vettori and Guicciardini), of course, seemed to think he was a loyal citizen of Florence and an astute observer of politics.<sup>202</sup>

Subsequent scholars' opinions about what Machiavelli thinks are the ends of politics are can be roughly divided into two camps. The first camp interprets Machiavelli as a counselor to tyrants (most famously articulated by Shakespeare<sup>203</sup>), as the formulator of 'reason of state' (Meinecke, *Machiavellism*)<sup>204</sup>, or as a 'teacher of evil' (Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*).<sup>205</sup> This Machiavelli teaches political actors to engage in an 'economy of violence' (Wolin, *Politics and Vision*,)<sup>206</sup> linked to securing rule and to possess a certain form of patriotic political maturity (Weber "Politics as a Vocation").<sup>207</sup> These thinkers' interpretations of Machiavelli's ends of politics focus on his claim to teach new princes how to *mantenere lo stato*<sup>208</sup> and take him as basically focused on individual political success. They tend to focus on *il Principe* and certain elements of the *Discorsi*, while downplaying or ignoring the

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<sup>202</sup>James B. Atkinson and David Sices, Trans. and Eds., *Machiavelli and His Friends: Their Personal Correspondence*. (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press) 1996.

<sup>203</sup>William Shakespeare, *Henry IV Part III*. Act 3, Scene 2. Richard of Gloucester (the future Richard III) says he will "Change shapes with Proteus for advantages, /And set the murderous Machiavel to school. /Can I do this, and cannot get a crown? /Tut, were it farther off, I'll pluck it down."

<sup>204</sup>Friedrick Meinecke, *Machiavellism: The Doctrine of Raison d'État and Its Place in Modern History*. New York: Praeger. 1962. Originally published as, *Die Idee der Staatsräson in der neueren Geschichte*. München and Berlin: Druck und Verlag von R. Oldenbourg. 1925.

<sup>205</sup>Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*. (Glencoe, Ill.) 1958. This seems to be true only of the exoteric Machiavelli; the esoteric Machiavelli seems to be a devoted Platonist. See also Harvey Mansfield, Jr., *Machiavelli's New Modes and Orders*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979. and "Strauss's Machiavelli" *Political Theory*. Vol. 3, No. 4 (Nov., 1975), pp.372-384.

<sup>206</sup>Sheldon S. Wolin, "Machiavelli: Politics and the Economy of Violence," in *Politics and Vision*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press) 2004 [1960]. p. 175-214.

<sup>207</sup>Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation" [1919] in *The Vocation Lectures*. Trans. Rodney Livingstone. Eds. David Owen and Tracy B. Strong. Indianapolis/Chambridge: Hackett Publishing Company. 2004.

<sup>208</sup>By *stato* Machiavelli does not quite mean "the state" in the modern sense of the world. Instead it means 1. the state of being (as "stato" is the past participle of the verb "to be"), 2. possession of rule or status, or 3. the political structures over which one could rule and in which one can have status. I refrain from translating the noun but I do translate the verb.

analysis of republican governance in the *Discorsi, dell'Arte della Guerra*, and *Istorie Fiorentine* altogether. A second body of literature views Machiavelli as a staunch republican devoted to republican liberty (Skinner, *Foundations*)<sup>209</sup> whose influence on the thought of later republicans in Europe and America is well documented (Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*).<sup>210</sup> Machiavelli is depicted as one amongst a large lineage of thinkers devoted to republican liberty (Pettit, *Republicanism*),<sup>211</sup> though he represents the democratic wing of this republican tradition (McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy*).<sup>212</sup> These readings often either try to dissociate the goals of *il Principe* and the *Discorsi*, or even go so far as to claim that *il Principe* is a republican satire of princely tyranny (Rousseau, *The Social Contract*)<sup>213</sup> or a trap for the Medici (Dietz, “Trapping the Prince”).<sup>214</sup> These thinkers’ interpretations focus on Machiavelli’s service to republican Florence and take Machiavelli to be more interested in the multigenerational success of states than in that of individual

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<sup>209</sup> Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998 [1978].

<sup>210</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*. Princeton: The Princeton University Press, 1975.

<sup>211</sup> Phillip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

<sup>212</sup> John P. McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 2011. McCormick is an exception to this ‘republican Machiavelli camp’ in that, while in his book, he seems to view Machiavelli as a staunch republican, in some of his later articles, he suggests that Machiavelli may favor popularly supported tyrannies over elite dominated republics. See especially: John P. McCormick, “Subdue the Senate: Machiavelli’s “Way of Freedom” or Path to Tyranny” *Political Theory*. Vol. 40 No. 6 (2012): 714-735.

<sup>213</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* in *The Basic Political Writings*. Trans. Donald A. Cress. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987 [1762].

<sup>214</sup> Mary G. Dietz. “Trapping the Prince: Machiavelli and the Politics of Deception.” *American Political Science Review*. Vol. 80, No.3 (Sept. 1986): 777-799.

politicians. While this group of readers does not ignore *il Principe*, they interpret the *Discorsi* to contain Machiavelli's real beliefs about the ends of politics.<sup>215</sup>

Noting that the divergences between these interpretations of Machiavelli are caused by focusing on either the *il Principe* or the *Discorsi*, Hans Baron ("Citizen and Author")<sup>216</sup> proposed that Machiavelli transitions from the political technician of the career diplomat concerned with *mantenere lo stato* in *il Principe* to the sophisticated analyst of republican politics, ancient and modern, concerned with what was necessary to preserve the *vivere libero* in the *Discorsi*.<sup>217</sup> That is, Baron proposed that Machiavelli's conception of the ends of politics changes from *il Principe* to the *Discorsi*. According to Baron this change reflects the change in Machiavelli's source material from primarily power politics in Renaissance Italy in *il Principe* to primarily ancient history and philosophy in the *Discorsi*.<sup>218</sup>

My interpretation is essentially the opposite of Baron's. There is no 'break' in Machiavelli's thinking between *il Principe* and the *Discorsi*; that is, Machiavelli did

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<sup>215</sup> A notable exception to this view in the republican camp is Mark Jurdjevic, who focuses on Machiavelli's Florentine Histories (1525) and his 'Discourse on Reforming the Government of Florence' (1520). Mark Jurdjevic, *A Great and Wretched City: Promise and Failure in Machiavelli's Florentine Political Thought*. Cambridge Mass. and London: Harvard UP. 2014.

<sup>216</sup> Hans Baron, "Machiavelli the Republican Citizen and Author of *The Prince*," *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 76, No. 299. (Apr., 1961), pp. 217-253.

<sup>217</sup> Baron (on page 250) notes that Machiavelli has a third phase in his intellectual development: that of the melancholy re-encounter of the loss of Florentine freedom in his *Istorie Fiorentine*. Mark Jurdjevic takes issue with this, claiming that Machiavelli's difference in tone between the *Discorsi* and the *Istorie Fiorentine* reflect a shift in his focus of analysis from an idealized and abstract depiction of Roman republicanism to a concrete and brutally realist analysis of the Florentine republic's failures and potential future successes (*Great and Wretched City*).

<sup>218</sup> I take Skinner to agree with Baron in the claim that the two books had separate goals, though I do not know that he follows Baron's reason as to why. Pocock also claims that the two books have separate goals, but his sense of how substantially separate their goals are is more radical than Skinner's or Baron's. See my discussion of Pocock and Skinner in the Introduction.

not suddenly become a more astute social analyst who was less interested and engaged with Italian politics when he wrote the latter book. Machiavelli's conception of the ends of politics remains more or less constant throughout his writing, though his expression of these ends will vary with the specific subject matter he addressed in each work. For Machiavelli, the goals of *mantenere lo stato* (the goal of *il Principe*) and preserving that state's liberty (the goal of the *Discorsi*) are deeply intertwined to the point of often being one and the same. Further, *mantenere lo stato* and preserving the state's liberty are also the end of politics in Machiavelli's other major works: *dell'Arte della Guerra* and the *Istorie Fiorentine*.

Machiavelli discusses liberty in two ways: First, he wrote of the liberty of a state (or corporate liberty) in the sense of it being free from foreign rule, in the same sense that Louis XI liberated France from the English (P 13). This type of liberty is enjoyed by states, and can be possessed by principalities as well as republics, and is maintained by preventing foreign conquest. Second, Machiavelli speaks of liberty as (a form of) republican liberty – the liberty that citizens enjoy when they participate in the government of the city (D 2:2), which is contrasted with princely government and anarchy (P 9). This sort of liberty is maintained by preventing the corruption that would cause a change from republican governance.

Both of these types of liberty are byproducts of the laws and orders<sup>219</sup> of the state; though they each have a different relationship to the laws, both relationships are mediated by the virtù of the citizens. In the first case, the laws and orders that govern the military keep the (preferably citizen) soldiers virtuous and capable of keeping the state free. In the second case, the laws generate the examples of citizens with virtù (D 1:4) who serve to protect the laws, orders, and modes<sup>220</sup> that comprise a free way of life (D 3:1). One reason for Machiavelli's preference for republics over principalities is that a well ordered republic will have more virtuous citizens, because there are more rewards for, and less suspicion of, virtù than in principalities (D 1:20, D 2:2, D 1:29). This preference means that a well ordered republic will perform better than a principality at preserving both senses of liberty used by Machiavelli; a well ordered republic will be better than a principality at *mantenere lo stato*, and further is the form of *stato* best able to cover itself and its citizens in glory.

### 3.1 *Libertà and Mantenere lo Stato*

The definition of *mantenere lo stato* depends on whether the state is a principality or a republic. For princes, *mantenere lo stato* means to maintain rule of a state themselves (and usually for their posterity), for republics it is to maintain the rule

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<sup>219</sup> By *ordine* (pl: *ordini*) Machiavelli means the ordering, rules, and institutions of an organization such as a republic, a monarchy, a guild, or a legion. Following convention, I translate this as the English "order".

<sup>220</sup> By *modo* (pl: *modi*) Machiavelli means the mode, manner, means or method of proceeding or of conduct that can either be peculiar to an individual or habitual for a people. Following convention, I translate this as the English "mode".

of the state by the current regime. The relationship between *mantenere lo stato* and liberty depends on whether Machiavelli is speaking of liberty in the sense of corporate liberty or republican liberty.<sup>221</sup>

### 3.1.1 “Corporate liberty”

For Machiavelli, one of the ways in which a state can be said to have liberty is for it to be free of foreign rule. According to Marcia Colish, Machiavelli derives this concept of liberty from “the corporation theory developed in the Middle Ages on the basis of the Roman legal conception of the corporation” (“Idea of Liberty”, 327). For Machiavelli, “Cities are free when they possess autonomy, when they live under their own laws (*con le loro leggi*) and not under the jurisdiction of foreigners (*servitù*)” (327).<sup>222</sup> Thus, Machiavelli uses corporate liberty as a relatively simple concept that

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<sup>221</sup> Marcia Colish finds that Machiavelli uses “*libertà*” and related words in four senses, of which the last two are political: 1. A common place, not technical sense which includes financial liberty and liberty of a person from prison. 2. In the sense of free will. 3. In the sense of corporate liberty, the liberty of a state. 4. In the sense of republican liberty, the liberty within a state. Marcia L. Colish, “The Idea of Liberty in Machiavelli”. *Journal of the History of Ideas*. Vol. 32, No. 3 (Jul. – Sep., 1971), pp.323-350. Though I will frequently take issue with some of Colish’s particular claims, her paper is, on the whole, extraordinarily useful.

<sup>222</sup> While I usually agree with Colish’s interpretations of Machiavelli’s thinking on liberty, and I think that the evidence on the whole supports these interpretations, I often find the evidence that Colish presents to be not the strongest possible evidence to support my interpretation of Machiavelli. For example, the passages cited as evidence for this definition are to IF 1:25, IF 1:39, IF 8:22, and P 8. Of these, IF 1:25 and IF 8:22 are references to corporate liberty (though the reference in IF 8:21 is much clearer than in the following chapter). The references in IF 1:39 first juxtaposes Siena and Lucca (both lived under their own laws) with the rest of Tuscany (controlled by Florence); but Lucca is said to live under the Guinigi family (a local but nonetheless powerful house) while only Siena (a republic) is said to be free. Second, the Genovese are said to sometimes be free and sometimes serve either the Kings of France or the Visconti Dukes of Milan. Finally, the reference to P 8 could be to how Agathocles *liberò* (liberated) Syracuse from a Carthaginian siege (here “free” and “save” have similar meanings) or to how Oliverotto da Ferma acquired the state of Ferma with the aid of those who cherished slavery (*servitù*) more than *libertà* (which, from context, is clearly a case of republican liberty).

pervades all his major works as something that communities pursue. Examples include: France was liberated (*libra*) from the English through the *fortuna*<sup>223</sup> and virtù of Louis XI (P 12); Rome's liberty was in peril after Varro's defeat by Hannibal (example 42) at the battle of Cannae (D 1:31); there must have been numerous men with virtù in the populations of the Etruscans (example 91), Samnites (example 90), Gauls (example 92), and Spanish, because they managed to defend their liberty from Rome for a very long time (AG 2: 304, see example 89 the "Enemies of Rome"); and Florence (example 97) was in danger of losing its liberty as a result of its Venetian (example 99) and Papal enemies and potentially aggressive friend in Naples (IF 8:19).

Because corporate liberty is the liberty of the state with respect to freedom from external control, both principalities and republics can be said to have corporate liberty. For both types of state, corporate liberty can be said to be a prerequisite for achieving its other political goals because it is not (usually) possible to maintain a princely dynasty or a republic when a conquered people. Corporate liberty is so important that Machiavelli claimed "that the patria is well defended in whatever mode one defends it, either with ignominy or with glory"<sup>224</sup> and that it is much better for the state to survive through ignominious means than lose its liberty through glorious ones (D 3:41). It is worthwhile to pause and take note of this claim: Machiavelli, despite his

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<sup>223</sup> By *fortuna*, Machiavelli means something akin to the contemporary English usage for "fortune" in the sense of "luck" and sometimes seems to additionally mean the connotations of wealth which can be in the Italian as well as in the English words. However, Machiavelli also personifies *Fortuna* in ways both reminiscent of the Roman Goddess and of medieval iconography.

<sup>224</sup> "...che la patria è bene difesa in qualunque modo la si difende, o con ignominia o con gloria..." Machiavelli refers here to the incident at the Caudine Forks in the Second Samnite War, but clearly intends the point to apply to principalities because he closes the chapter by saying that the French imitate this in their saying about the monarchy.

reputation to the contrary, constantly extolled his readers to act gloriously<sup>225</sup> except for cases in which the necessity of preserving the corporate liberty of the state demanded acting otherwise. These means will eventually (probably) be judged honorable if they result in successfully *mantenere lo stato* (P 18).<sup>226</sup>

While preserving corporate liberty is, for Machiavelli, a prerequisite to *mantenere lo stato*, the inverse is not true. Because corporate liberty is the liberty of a state in regards to other states, it is possible for the prince or republican regime to fail to *mantenere lo stato* while that state's corporate liberty is preserved because they fall to domestic threats. Indeed, much of the narrative of the first half of the *Istorie Fiorentine* recounts changes of government in Florence (when the previous government failed to *mantenere lo stato*) as a result of various tumults while Florence, for the most part, maintained its corporate liberty.<sup>227</sup> However, Machiavelli's writings on *mantenere lo stato* tend to suggest that a regime that is strong enough to effectively preserve the corporate liberty of the state, and is not excessively tyrannical, will not be very susceptible to domestic threats.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> For a thorough discussion of Machiavelli's conception of glory, see: Russel Price, "The Theme of *Gloria* in Machiavelli." *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 4, Studies in the Renaissance Issue (Winter, 1977), pp.588-631. For Machiavelli's admonitions to glory, see especially P 21 and P 36.

<sup>226</sup> For Machiavelli, there is no certainty that they will be judged honorable: see his treatment of Agathocles in P 8.

<sup>227</sup> See especially The conflicts between the Guelfs and Ghibellines: IF 2:4, IF 2:6, IF 2:9, IF 2:11-14; between the Whites and the Blacks: IF 2:16-19; between the people and the great: IF 2:42, IF 3:10, IF 3:12-17 (the Ciompi uprising), IF 3:19; and the Medici seizure of the state IF 4:28-33. The most notable exception to this was when Walter, Duke of Athens, was ruler of Florence for a time (IF 2:33-37).

<sup>228</sup> See especially P3, P 17 – 19, P 24. Machiavelli's claims about why most people desire republican liberty in D 1:16 also suggest this point. The main exception to this comes in D 3:6.

### 3.1.2 Republican Liberty

Machiavelli's conception of liberty within a state is more complex and more widely commented on than his conception of corporate liberty. While it is clear that he associated liberty within the state with republics, Machiavelli did not claim all governments that he referred to as republics had republican liberty. Furthermore, Machiavelli never claimed that certain constitutional or institutional structures were necessary or sufficient for a republic to have liberty.<sup>229</sup> Indeed, in the *Discorsi* Machiavelli further muddies the waters by claiming that the institutions and laws of Rome, as established by Romulus, “were more adapted for a civil and free life, than one absolute and tyrannical” (D 1:9).<sup>230</sup> Furthermore, Machiavelli seemed to believe that the Florentine Republic — both before and after the Medici family rose to prominence — did not possess republican liberty (IF 3:27, IF 8:8).<sup>231</sup> These complications make it appear as though Machiavelli thought that there is at best only a weak relationship between republican government and liberty. However, for Machiavelli, liberty within the state is republican liberty.

*Republican liberty in principalities?* Given the opacity with which Machiavelli defines republican liberty, one must assess the extent to which, for Machiavelli, it is

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<sup>229</sup> See Colish, “Idea of Liberty”, 331.

<sup>230</sup> “...essere stati più conformi a uno vivere civile e libero, che a uno assoluto e tirannico.”

<sup>231</sup> Much of Jurdjevic (*Great and Wretched City*) is devoted to demonstrating that Machiavelli's analysis of the Florentine Republic in his *Istorie Fiorentine* demonstrates that very few Florentine governments had ever pursued the common good of the republic.

possible for a people ruled by a prince, to possess liberty.<sup>232</sup> Colish cites four chapters from the *Discorsi* to claim that “Kings promote liberty primarily by their legislation, according to Machiavelli” (“Idea of Liberty”, 337).<sup>233</sup> However, I take issue with Colish’s interpretations of the passages she used as evidence. The first passage Colish cited is D 1:2 where Machiavelli says that the orders established by the Roman kings were conducive to free life. But, according to Machiavelli, the Romans during the regal period did not possess republican liberty,

Because Romulus and all the other kings made many good laws, which also conformed to a free life [vivere libero]: but because their end was to found a kingdom and not a republic, when that city became free, there were lacking many things that were necessary to be ordered in favor of liberty, which had not been ordered by those kings (D 1:2).<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Much of Peter Stacey’s work has been devoted to the proposition that Machiavelli is refuting the Senecan claim that republican liberty can exist in a principality. See his *Roman Monarchy and the Renaissance Prince*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2007. Especially Chapters 1 and 7. Stacey and Quentin Skinner (rightly) reject out of hand this suggestion that republican liberty can exist in principalities. For Stacey, Machiavelli follows a long line of Florentine republicans with whom “Machiavelli shares this fundamental belief that we are only in a state of freedom for as long as we live in a free state.” See his “Free and Unfree States in Machiavelli’s Political Philosophy”, Quentin Skinner and Martin van Gelderen, eds. *Freedom and the Construction of Europe, Volume 1: Religious and Constitutional Liberties*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2013. Page 180. For Skinner, in order for individual citizens to enjoy liberty, they must “live in a community of which it can already be said that it enjoys *uno vivere libero*, a free way of life” Quentin Skinner, “Machiavelli on the Maintenance of Liberty”, *Politics* Vol. 18, No. 2, November 1983. Page 4 and his in his revised restatement of the article Quentin Skinner, “Machiavelli on *virtù* and the maintenance of liberty” in *Visions of Politics Volume 2: Renaissance Virtues*. Ed. Quentin Skinner. 2002. Pages 162-163.

<sup>233</sup> Colish cites D 1:2, D 1:23, D 1:16, and D 3:5. Even when misinterpreting the text, Colish is very thorough and, as far as I can tell, these four citations exhaust the places where Machiavelli might ascribe republican liberty to states ruled by princes.

<sup>234</sup> “Perché Romolo e tutti gli altre re fecero molte buone leggi, conformi ancora al vivere libero: ma perché il fine loro fu fondare un regno e non una repubblica, quando quella città rimase libera, vi mancavano molte cose che era necessario ordinare in favore della libertà, le quali non erano state da quelli re ordinate.”

Although he praises these kings for their orders conducive to republican liberty, it is clear that, in this passage Machiavelli writes that the Romans did not acquire republican liberty until they cast out the kings and established the Republic.

The second passage Colish cites is *Discorsi* 1:23, in which Machiavelli criticizes Tullus Hostilius, the third king of Rome, and Mettius, the King of Alba, for agreeing to let the battle between the Horatii and Curiatii replace a pitched battle between the armies of the two cities. Of them Machiavelli states

...that by this decision all the effort that had been sustained by their antecessors in ordering the republic, to make it live free for a long time and to make its citizens defenders of their liberty, was almost as though it was vain, being in the power of so few to lose it. This thing could not have been worse considered by those kings (D 1:23).<sup>235</sup>

In this passage it appears, at first glance, that Machiavelli is associating the defense of liberty in a republic with the Roman King Tullus. Given Machiavelli's claim in *il Principe* that a state is either a republic or a principality (P 1),<sup>236</sup> it is surprising to see him use the term "republic" to describe a state ruled by a prince. My sense of this is that Machiavelli does not believe that Rome during the Regal period was a republic, but that he slipped into the traditional usage of "republic", which comes from Seneca, which allows for a state ruled by a prince to be called a republic as long as that prince

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<sup>235</sup> "... come per questo partito tutta la fatica che avevano durata, i loro antecessori nell'ordinare la republica, per farla vivere lungamente libera e per fare i suoi cittadini difensori della loro libertà, era quasi che stata vana, stando nella potenza di sì pochi a perderla. La quale cosa da quelli re non poté essere peggio considerata."

<sup>236</sup> See also the extensive discussion of this in Peter Stacey, *Roman Monarchy*. Especially Chapter 7.

pursues the common good.<sup>237</sup> This interpretation I take to make more sense than Colish's, which requires a belief that Machiavelli is less committed to his division between free republics and un-free principalities than we are led to believe by the opening chapter of *il Principe*.<sup>238</sup> Indeed, if we mentally replace "republic" with "state" in the above quote, it is clear that Machiavelli is not speaking about republican liberty at all, but rather about the state's freedom from other states, what Colish calls corporate liberty: the state is ordered such that it will survive free from conquest for a long time and that the people will defend it from conquest. This interpretation makes sense because the context in which the passage appears is one in which Machiavelli discusses one state conquering another and military strategy, not republican freedom (D 1:23).

The third passage Colish provided as evidence that kings promote liberty through legislation is *Discorsi* 1:16. As Colish acknowledges ("Idea of Liberty", 337), this is not the actuality of republican liberty, but it is satisfying the motivation that drives most to want liberty: for their own security. Machiavelli's advice to "princes that have become tyrants of their patria"<sup>239</sup> is to take three actions: first to crush those

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<sup>237</sup> Stacey (*Roman Monarchy*) convincingly establishes that this conception of republic comes from Seneca (see chapter 1) and spends the bulk of his book (chapters 2-5) demonstrating how that conception dominated western thinking for some 1500 years. See also, Miguel Vatter, "Republics are a Species of State: Machiavelli and the Genealogy of the Modern State", *Social Research*. Vol. 81: No. 1: Spring 2014. pp. 217-241. However, I do not think Machiavelli's usage is quite as flexible (perhaps excepting this usage and that in D 3:5) as Colish states later in the paper, "...Machiavelli also uses *republica* in the sense derived by the Romans from its generic Latin meaning of *respublica*, the commonwealth or the common weal. Thus, Machiavelli feels free to apply the term *republica* to any kind of commonwealth regardless of its constitutional form" (page 345).

<sup>238</sup> See Stacey (*Roman Monarchy*) especially pages 260-264. The one possible exception to this (D 3:5) is dealt with below.

<sup>239</sup> "...principi che sono diventati della loro patria tiranni..."

who helped them come to power, so that the people feel revenged against those who were the cause of their servitude, second to either co-opt or crush those with a desire to rule, and, third, to provide security to the people even against the prince's own power (D 1:16). For Machiavelli, the tyrant's satisfaction of the people's desire for security is not a replacement for republican liberty. Rather it is a restatement of Machiavelli's advice to new princes for making their reigns stable (P 9, P 19-21).

The final passage is the one clear exception to Machiavelli's claim that liberty within a state is republican liberty that Colish ("Idea of Liberty", 337) pointed to is Machiavelli's statement "[that Tarquinius Superbus] in a brief time despoiled Rome of all that liberty that it had maintained under the other kings" (D 3:5).<sup>240</sup> Although this is the case in which Machiavelli speaks of (republican?) liberty within a monarchical state, the sorts of things that Tarquinius Superbus does to despoil it are telling: he breaks the laws of the state, governs tyrannically, and takes from the senate the authority that they had exercised in public (making laws and deciding court cases) for himself to exercise in private. These liberties are those that become the bedrock of the Roman republic and seem to have been, for the Romans of the regal period, the sort of ancient customs, which a hereditary ruler ought not transgress, if he wants to stay in power (D 3:5, P 2). However, it is not any of the kings, but Lucius Junius Brutus, whom Machiavelli names as "father of Roman liberty" (D 3:1).<sup>241</sup> Machiavelli, both here and in his later discussion of Brutus (D 3:2-3), suggests that Roman liberty, in the republican sense, was born in a substantial way with the expulsion of Tarquin. In any

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<sup>240</sup> "in breve tempo gli spoliò Roma di tutta quella libertà ch'ella aveva sotto gli altri re mantenuta."

<sup>241</sup> "...padre della romana libertà."

case, this seems to be the only exception in Machiavelli's otherwise consistent position that liberty within a state is republican liberty, which only exists in republics.

*Republican liberty in republics.* However, not all republics can be said to have liberty. In addition to the times in which Machiavelli says that the republic of Florence (example 97) does not have liberty (IF 3:27, IF 8:8) he adds that all republics in Italy have lost their liberty due to factions (IF 3:5), and that the late Roman republic was too corrupt to return to liberty after the fall of Julius Caesar (example 23, D 1:17).

According to Machiavelli,

Cities, and mostly those that are not well ordered, administered under the name of republic, frequently vary their governments and states, not between liberty and servitude, as many believe, but between servitude and license. Because only the name of liberty is celebrated by ministers of license, who are the *popolari*, and by those of servitude, who are the nobles, neither of these types desiring to be subordinated either to laws or to men. It is true that when it happens (though it happens infrequently) that, by good fortuna of the city, there rises in it a wise, good and powerful citizen, from whom laws are ordered for which these humors of the nobles and the *popolani* are quieted, or in [some] mode restrained that they cannot work evil, so it is that one can call that city free, and one can judge that state stable and firm; because, being founded under good laws and good orders, it does not have necessity for the virtù of a single man, as have all others, to maintain [*mantenga*] it (IF 4:1).<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> “Le città, e quelle massimamente che non sono bene ordinate, le quali sotto nome di repubblica si amministrano, variano spesso i governi e stati loro, non mediante la libertà e la servitù, come motli credono, ma mediante la servitù e la licenza. Perché della libertà solamente il nome dai ministri della licenza, che sono i popolari, e da quelli della servitù, che sono i nobili, è celebrato, desiderando qualunque di costoro non essere né alle leggi né agli uomini sottoposto. Vero è che quando pure avviene (che avviene rade volte) che, per buona fortuna della città, surga in quella un savio, buono e

For Machiavelli, many states that call themselves republics fail to achieve republican liberty and instead alternate between servitude and license. These results come from the conflict between the humors of the nobles and of the people, which are found in every state. In a well ordered republic with good laws, these humors<sup>243</sup> are quieted, such as presumably occurred in the *Serenissima* Republic of Venice (example 99) and in Sparta (example 88, D 1:6), or are restrained so they cannot work evil (and may even preserve liberty), as they were in Rome (example 87, D1:3-5). The state must be well ordered, because (as everyone, says Machiavelli, who reasons about republics demonstrates) “it is necessary... to presuppose that all men are evil, and that they have always to use the malignity of their spirit, any time they have a free *occasione* (D 1:3).<sup>244</sup> In poorly ordered republics, the nobles and the people will pursue their own interests while claiming to pursue the public interest.<sup>245</sup> When the noble humor temporarily triumphs, the city suffers servitude. When the *popolari* humor temporarily triumphs, the city is racked by license. In no cases does this poorly ordered republic ever achieve liberty.

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potente cittadino, da il quale si ordinino leggi per le quali questi umori de' nobili e de' popolani si quietino, o in modo si restringhino che male operare non possano, allora è che quella città si può chiamare libera, e quello stato si può stabile e fermo giudicare; perchè, sendo sopra buone leggi e buoni ordini fondato, non ha necessità della virtù d'uno uomo, come hanno gli altri, che lo mantenga.”

<sup>243</sup> Machiavelli's use of humors (*umori*) to describe the two types of people in a state (nobles and populace) is a reference to the 'four humors' theory of medicine in which sickness occurs when the humors are out of balance.

<sup>244</sup> “... è necessario ... presupporre tutti gli uomini rei, e che li abbiano sempre a usare la malignità dello animo loro, qualunque volta ne abbiano libera occasione...” By *occasione*, Machiavelli means something like the occasion or opportunity to accomplish some great thing. Here he invokes the medieval notion (expressed in the iconography) that *Occasione* is the daughter of *Fortune* and as *Occasione* approaches she is difficult to recognize, but she passes she is easy to recognize but impossible to seize.

<sup>245</sup> This may be something like Jon Elster's civilizing force of hypocrisy. See Jon Elster, “Deliberation and Constitution making”, in *Deliberative Democracy*, Ed. Jon Elster. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Pages 97-122.

This passage from Machiavelli's *Istorie Fiorentine* is, perhaps, a restatement of his famous remarks from the *Prince* that

“in every city one finds these two diverse humors; and it was born of this, that the people desire not to be commanded and oppressed by the great, and the great desire to command and oppress the people; and from these two diverse appetites are born in cities one of three effects: either principality or liberty or license” (P 9).<sup>246</sup>

This passage gives some specific content to the purposes of the humors from the earlier passage. Machiavelli's position on the outcomes of these humors are stated differently in the two books: in *il Principe* it seems that any of the three outcomes can be reached by either the nobles or the people being victorious, but in *Istorie Fiorentine* servitude is linked with the nobles and license is linked to the people. When the people successfully pursue their desire not to be oppressed or commanded, the state ends up suffering the anarchy of license. When the nobles successfully pursue their desire to command and oppress the people, the state ends up in servitude. What is remarkable about the passage from the later book is that, for Machiavelli, these victories by the humors in states that call themselves republics are only temporary, whereas in *il Principe*, the figure of the 'Civil Prince' is meant to put an end to these conflicts by creating a winner.

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<sup>246</sup> “... in ogni città si truovono questi dua umori diversi; e nasce da questo, che il popolo desidera non essere comandato né oppresso da' grandi, e li grandi desiderano comandare e opprimere el popolo; e da questi dua appetiti diversi nasce nella città uno de' tre effetti: o principato o libertà o licenzia.” Colish (“Idea of Liberty”, 338-339) likens the three possibilities to the Aristotelian tripartite forms of government, which would have aristocracy be liberty and democracy be license, which, given what Machiavelli says in that chapter and in D 1:5, I do not think is correct.

If the republic is to remain a republic, rather than becoming a principality or descending permanently into a state of license,<sup>247</sup> and if the republic is exit the cycle of varying governments between servitude and license, it must acquire good orders. In *Istorie Fiorentine*, these good orders come from a “wise, good and powerful” citizen who is produced in the city through its good *fortuna* (IF 4:1). The city, which already exists, must be refounded and brought back to the good that, for Machiavelli, must have existed at its founding (D 3:1).<sup>248</sup> When Republican Rome was in need of being brought back to its beginnings and made to renew its respect for its ancient orders, it was fortunate to have Marcus Furius Camillus (example 7), the ‘second founder of Rome’ (Livy 5:49) who caused the Romans to change their modes back to observing the laws and orders that had preserved its liberty (D 3:1).<sup>249</sup> In a similar vein, Sparta had the reformer Cleomenes, who seized sole power, but did so to restore the ancient orders of Lycurgus (D 1:9).<sup>250</sup>

Florence on the other hand had no wise, good and powerful citizen to reorder her laws to quiet the humors or make them unable to work evil. The Republic of Florence was born during a temporary reconciliation between the Guelfs and

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<sup>247</sup> Presumably a state which was ruled by license would be too disorganized to maintain its corporate liberty for long and would be easily conquered by another, better ordered state.

<sup>248</sup> For Florence, according to Machiavelli, this founding is the founding of the Florentine Republic and the original Florentine militia (IF 2:4) discussed below.

<sup>249</sup> It is worth noting that, for Machiavelli, Rome’s laws and orders at the time of Camillus were (mostly) excellent, the problem was that the Romans were beginning to lose the modes of following those laws and orders. The Romans were fortunate that the corruption was not able to reach their orders and laws before it was halted. While this does not make the Romans perfectly fit the argument that Machiavelli makes in IF 4:1, Camillus’s re-founding of Rome is the example of a successful re-founding which Machiavelli develops in the most detail.

<sup>250</sup> Though, unlike Camillus to whom the Romans mostly deferred without feeling envy (D1:8, D 3:1, D 3:30), Cleomenes felt it necessary to kill the Ephors (D 1:9).

Ghibellines (in 1250) when “it seemed to them time which they could take on a form of free life [*vivere libero*]” (IF 2:4)<sup>251</sup> they established a legislative counsel, invited in two foreign judges (as was the practice in the late Middle Ages) and established original *Gonfalioni* of the militia (IF 2:5). “On these military and civil orders the Florentines founded their liberty” (IF 2:6).<sup>252</sup> However, this first version of the government of the Florentine republic only lasted a few years until the conflict between the Guelfs and Ghibellines reemerged. After that, future Florentine governments pursued their own factional goods at the expense of the common good (Jurdjevic, *Great and Wretched City*). After almost 200 years of varying their state between license and servitude while rarely if ever regaining their liberty, Florence finally descended into a permanent state of servitude to the Medici family.

*Republican liberty and mantenere lo stato.* Republican liberty can only be possessed by republics with good laws and good orders. These republics will also be successful at *mantenere lo stato*. As noted above, the two threats to a regime’s ability to *mantenere lo stato* are foreign conquest (which removes the state’s corporate liberty, a prerequisite for republican liberty) and domestic regime change. A republican regime that, through its good laws and good orders, manages to secure republican liberty for the state will be considerably more secure from these domestic threats than a republican regime that does not. As was shown above, republican

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<sup>251</sup> “...parve loro tempo da potere pigliare forma di vivere libero.” This *occasione* was with the death of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II.

<sup>252</sup> “Con questi ordini military e vivili fondorono i Fiorentini la loro libertà.”

regimes that are ruled by either the humor of the great or that of the people are, for Machiavelli, prone to constantly “vary their governments and states” (IF 4:1); these ‘variances’ occur when the ruling nobles or *popolari* fail to *mantenere lo stato* and are displaced by the opposing humor. These poorly ordered republics, such as Florence, are inherently unstable because whatever humor controls the state, the opposing humor is its implacable foe that will not rest until it is able to seize power (IF 4:1). The humor which is out of power will undercut the ruling regime’s ability to marshal the full resources of the state to achieve the public good. That is, if the ruling regime ceases to pursue its own good for long enough to attempt to pursue the common good. For similar reasons, republics that do not have good laws and good orders will be less successful at *mantenere lo stato* against foreign threats to its corporate liberty (D 1:2) than those republics that have managed to achieve the domestic stability that comes from acquiring republican liberty.

### **3.2 Good Laws and Good Orders**

In this section I will discuss in detail the relationship between the laws and orders of a state and the state’s ability to maintain republican liberty (where applicable) and corporate liberty. The relationships between the laws and orders of the state and that state’s ability to maintain its liberty are mediated by the *virtù* of that state’s citizens. A state will be better able to maintain its liberty, whether in the sense

of republican liberty or corporate liberty, if its laws and orders allow it to produce and accommodate more men with virtù.

### 3.2.1 Good Laws, Republican Liberty, and Virtù

Although Machiavelli deploys republican liberty frequently, he rarely describes what he considers to be the substantive components of the concept. It seems that most substantially, republican liberty consists of the absence of tyranny, the arbitrary rule of one man (D 1:2, D 1:28, D 2:2, D 3:5). Additionally, republican liberty includes the ability of citizens to participate in the selections of their own leaders (D 1:20, D 1:49, IF 5:6), to at least some additional participation in civil life (D 1:3), and to have one's good name protected (D 1: 8). The most important characteristic of republican liberty for Machiavelli seems to be the pursuit of the common good, which is what makes cities great (D 1:10, D 2:2) and is achieved through good laws and orders that channel the inevitable conflicts between the humors of the great and of the people (D 1:3, IF 3:1, IF 4:1).

Machiavelli repeatedly turns to the example of Roman history for guidance of how a republic can be ordered to preserve republican liberty.<sup>253</sup> For Machiavelli, the chief laws and orders that preserved Roman liberty were the Consuls, the Senate, and

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<sup>253</sup> But see Jurdjevic (*Great and Wretched City*), who in his second chapter claims that, even in the *Discorsi*, Machiavelli does not totally believe that Rome is a workable exemplar to be imitated in designing renaissance Italian republican orders. Further, one of the central claims of the book is that Machiavelli's analysis of republics in the *Istorie Fiorentine* is much closer to how he actually suggests to order a republic in his 'Discourse on Reforming the Government of Florence' (1520).

the Tribunes, which collectively managed to blend the powers of king, aristocracy, and democracy and allowed all humors a role in the government (D 1:2). The Tribunes represented the humor of the people in opposing oppression and acted as an institutional check on the power of the Consuls and the Senate that prevented them from oppressing the plebs (D 1:3). This satisfied the people's desire for security, which, according to Machiavelli, is why most men want liberty (D 1:16). The Senate and Consuls gave the nobles outlet for their desire to rule, which is why the great desire liberty (D 1:16). The presence of these laws and orders forced the tumults in Rome to generate further "laws and orders to benefit public liberty" (D 1:4).<sup>254</sup> Further, the mode of proceeding in these tumults, with little interpersonal violence (D 1:4), allowed the Romans to avoid all out combat in the conflict between their humors, which would have led to the weakening of the city as the combat between the humors did in Florence (IF 3:1). While control of Florentine government oscillated between the two humors and was weak and unstable, the Roman government incorporated them both and was strong, stable, and free.

A second benefit of these tumults was that Rome as a city was filled with individuals with virtù. Machiavelli says that those who criticize Rome for being poorly ordered because of the tumults between the plebs and the nobles are mistaken. "One could not call it in that mode, with reason, a disorderly republic, where there were so many examples of virtù; because good examples are born from good education, good

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<sup>254</sup> "...leggi e ordini in beneficio della publica libertà."

education from good laws, and good laws from the tumults”<sup>255</sup> between the plebs and the nobles (D 1:4). For Machiavelli, one of the proofs that Rome was a well ordered republic was the sheer number of its citizens who were excellent examples of *virtù*, which he here attributes more to their education in the laws of the city than to the imitation of history that he recommends to princes (P 14).

Rome’s production of so many individuals with *virtù* served to bolster the laws and protect the city’s liberty. For Machiavelli, republican liberty both creates *virtù* (as shown above) and needs *virtù* to be sustained.<sup>256</sup> The need for *virtù* to sustain the republic is seen as time passes from the founding of the laws and orders that created liberty. All states are corrupted as their laws, orders, and modes begin to diverge from what they were at the founding.<sup>257</sup> This divergence is why Machiavelli says that it is of the utmost importance “To want a sect or a republic that lives for a long time, it is necessary to often pull it back towards its beginning” (D 3:1).<sup>258</sup> In order to “pull back” a republic, citizens of *virtù* are required. With such citizens pulling back the republic towards its beginning is the way that corruption is prevented and expunged from republics.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> “Né si può chiamare in alcun modo, con ragione, una repubblica inordinata, dove siano tanti esempi di *virtù*; perché li buoni esempi nascono dalla buona educazione, la buona educazione dalle buone leggi, e le buone leggi da quelli tumulti...”

<sup>256</sup> Skinner agrees, stating, “Machiavelli’s way of summarizing these claims is to say that *libertà*, both personal and public, can only be maintained if the citizen-body as a whole displays the quality of *virtù*.” (Skinner, “Machiavelli on *virtù* and liberty” page 163).

<sup>257</sup> According to Skinner, this corruption is the “negation of *virtù*” and what Machiavelli means by corruption is “that their basic inclination, if left unchecked, will be to place their own private interests above the public good.” (“Machiavelli on *virtù* and liberty”, pages 163-164.)

<sup>258</sup> “A volere che una seta o una repubblica viva lungamente, è necessario ritrarla spesso verso il sup pincipio” This is the title of the chapter.

<sup>259</sup> See also Skinner, “Machiavelli on *virtù* and liberty”, pages 170-172.

For Machiavelli, a republic can be pulled back towards its beginnings “either by virtù of a man or by virtù of an order,”<sup>260</sup> but for the order to be effective, it “has need of being made alive by the virtù of a citizen”<sup>261</sup> who reinforces the order with ostentatious vigor so as to be notable (D 3:1). For Machiavelli, such acts ought to occur frequently (about once every decade) to stave off corruption (D 3:1). Republics can also be pulled back to their beginnings “through the simple virtù of a man... who is of such reputation and of so much example, that good men desire to imitate him, and the wicked are ashamed to abide by a life contrary to his” (D 3:1).<sup>262</sup> These examples must also come along fairly frequently (every generation or two) to stave off corruption because they will no longer have an effect in an already corrupt city (D 3:1).

Although the Romans, for most of the duration of the republic, had such men of virtù, the Florentines did not. As demonstrated above, for Machiavelli, the tumults between the plebs and the nobles of Rome were the cause of so many virtuous Romans (D 1:4). But in Florence, the conflicts between the people and the great caused the extinction of Florentine (military) virtù (IF 3:1) and resulted in license or servitude rather than liberty and good laws (IF 4:1). As a consequence, Florence was never able to produce the orders or the examples of men with simple virtù that could bring the

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<sup>260</sup> “...o per virtù d’un uomo o per virtù d’uno ordine.”

<sup>261</sup> “...hanno bisogno di essere fatti vivi dalla virtù d’uno cittadino.”

<sup>262</sup> “...dalla semplice virtù d’un uomo...sono di tale riputazione e di tanto esempio, che gli uomini buoni desiderano imitarle, e gli cattivi si vergognano a tenere via contraria a quelle.”

republic back to the orders on which its liberty was founded.<sup>263</sup> Additionally, as a result of the differences in their modes of mediating the conflict of the orders, Rome was able to combine its individuals with *virtù* and is frequently said to have a “Roman *virtù*”. By contrast, as I discussed at length in Chapter 1, Florence was never able to develop a “Florentine *virtù*” (IF 3:1, see also example 97). Thus, Florentine governments could not rely on their laws and orders, but rather had to rely on the *virtù* of a single man, to *mantenere lo stato* (IF 4:1). This reliance on a single man by Florence is required because, unlike in Rome, the people and the great believed that the governments of Florence represented the goals of one or the other humor rather than the goal of the common good, the public’s liberty. Further, because the Florentines had to rely on a single man, rather than their laws and orders, they were never able to achieve the greatness of the Romans because, for the Romans, it was “By maintaining ‘law and order’ – the right *leggi e ordini* – they were able to preserve their city’s freedom and independence; and by preserving their free way of life they were able to scale the highest peaks of *grandezza*” (Skinner, “Machiavelli on *virtù* and liberty” page 174).

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<sup>263</sup> According to Machiavelli (D 3:1), in Rome these men of simple *virtù* were 14 Publius Decius, 15 Horatius Coclus, 16 Scaevola, 17 Fabricius, 18 Publius Decius (son of 14 Publius Decius), 19 Marcus Regulus Attilius, 20 Cato the Elder, 21 Cato the Younger. See Appendix One for a list of all the Roman and Florentine citizens who Machiavelli says have *virtù*.

### 3.2.2 Good Laws, Corporate Liberty, and Virtù

The relationship between the laws and orders of a state and its ability to maintain corporate liberty are fairly simple for Machiavelli. The laws and orders of the state need to produce an army with virtù and a virtuous captain who can lead it. It is with good arms that a state maintains its corporate liberty. Indeed, Machiavelli cited as the chief reason why so many Italian princes lost their states “a common defect as regards to arms” (P 24)<sup>264</sup>. Machiavelli considered this defect was as pernicious as it was prevalent in Italy. It so worried Machiavelli that he published *dell'Arte della Guerra* in an attempt to teach his fellow Italians how to correct this error.

For Machiavelli, the defining order that a state can use to preserve its corporate liberty, is to be prepared to fight with its own troops. To fight with mercenary soldiers is to go to battle with those who are totally unreliable in battle and have no loyalty to the state that they defend (P 12). To fight an army composed of auxiliary soldiers is to put yourself in a position of losing your corporate liberty to the state that lent you their troops (P 13). For a state to be secure in its corporate liberty it must use its own soldiers because “without having its own arms, no principality is secure; rather it is totally obligated to *fortuna*, not having virtù to defend it with faith in adversity”(P 13).<sup>265</sup> Corporate liberty requires having one’s own troops. But mustering troops is not enough; the regime must also know how to train them and how to lead them in battle (P 14, AG 1:278).

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<sup>264</sup> “..uno cumne defetto quanto alle armi...”

<sup>265</sup> “...sanze avere arme proprie, nessuno principato è sicuro; anzi è tutto obligato alla fortuna, non avendo virtù che nelle avversit con fede lo difenda.”

There are two sets of orders that must be maintained for an army to have virtù. The first type of order involves the preparation of an army. Specifically, an army must be trained and drilled and it must be properly organized and led in battle. Machiavelli's discussion on how to drill soldiers is limited in *il Principe*, where he merely says that a prince should "keep his [soldiers] well ordered and trained" (P 14).<sup>266</sup> However, in *dell'Arte della Guerra* Machiavelli is much more specific. Conscripts should be drafted primarily from the rural areas surrounding a city because they are more accustomed to physical labor (AG 1:279); they should be between the ages of 17 and 40 (AG 1:279);<sup>267</sup> and should be agile, strong, and of good moral fiber (AG 1:282). Machiavelli suggested a mode of arming troops which he says is a mix of that mode used by the ancient Romans and that mode used by the Germans (AG 2: 290-291).<sup>268</sup> Soldiers must be exercised to be accustomed to fatigue, to handle their weapons properly, and to obey orders in battle (AG 2:293).<sup>269</sup> Machiavelli suggested that training occur during holidays and other days that militia men have off from work (AG 2:294).<sup>270</sup> For Machiavelli, this approach is the best way that a *stato* can instill its soldiers with virtù before war begins. These preparations are analogous to the famous need for levees and embankments to stem the flood of the rushing river of bad *fortuna* (P 25).

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<sup>266</sup> "...al tenere bene ordinate ed esercitati e' suoi"

<sup>267</sup> However, only 17 year olds are to be conscripted if one is recruiting to fill vacancies in an already existing militia rather than creating a new militia for a city which did not previously have one.

<sup>268</sup> That is, about half of the infantry with sword and shield and about half with pikes.

<sup>269</sup> In Book 2 Machiavelli goes into quite a lot of detail about the drilling, especially how different regiments form together to make an army. See especially AG 2:293-302.

<sup>270</sup> Machiavelli also suggests that the soldiers be taught to swim "because there are not always bridges at rivers / *perché non sempre sono i ponti a' fiumi*" (AG 2:294).

The second sort of orders, which must be maintained for an army to have virtù, is the manner by which troops are deployed during battle. In the *Discorsi* Machiavelli discussed at length three examples of the orders that different peoples have used to deploy troops during battle: the Romans, the Gauls, and contemporary Italians. Machiavelli gives us no reason to believe that the Gauls, as individuals, were less excellent as soldiers than the Romans. Further, Machiavelli explicitly praised Italian soldiers as individuals (P 26). However, when looking at the virtù of their armies, rather than that of individual soldiers, only the Roman Legion had an “ordered [*ordinate*] virtù” (D3:36) which came from their superior training and their superior ordering in the three times of the maniple system,<sup>271</sup> as discussed in Chapter 2. In Machiavelli’s discussion of the orders in forming troops for battle, he imitates the Roman maniple system with some variations to take into account gunpowder weapons (AG 3). An army so ordered would maximize its virtù and, thus, give the state deploying it the best chance of maintaining its corporate liberty when it inevitably had to defend it on the battlefield.

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<sup>271</sup> To state briefly the order of the maniple: there were three lines ordered as the *astati*, *principi*, and *triari* which arrayed themselves in that order facing the enemy when battle was joined. They were spaced such that the *astati* could retreat into gaps within the line of the *principi* when pushed back and both could do the same with the *triari* if necessary (D 2:16). This is the *ordine* which Machiavelli creates for his army in *dell’Arte della Guerra*. See also Livy 8.8; Polybius 6.19-24; and Mike Duncan, *The History of Rome Volume I: The Republic*. Ed. Peter D. Campbell. Herodotus Press. 2016. Pages 128-130.

## Conclusion

I have laid out the two types of liberty – corporate liberty and republican liberty – that Machiavelli speaks of states having. I have also shown what the relationship of these two types of liberty is to the objective of *mantenere lo stato*. Preserving corporate liberty is a prerequisite for *mantenere lo stato*. Additionally, republics with republican liberty will be far more successful at *mantenere lo stato* than those that are corrupt.

Republics with good laws and orders will be better at preserving corporate liberty than even well ordered principalities. Well ordered republics will be better able to make use of the orders that Machiavelli prescribes for cultivating virtù in the militia than principalities. This is because in republics, virtù is rewarded whereas in principalities it must be viewed with suspicion when manifested in anyone other than the prince (D 1:29). Further, citizens in a republic with liberty are encouraged to develop their virtù because they know it will open the door to societal praise and potentially leadership positions (D1:20, D 2:2). Because republics, unlike principalities, select leaders based on virtù and do so based on frequent elections, the well ordered republic will always have leadership with virtù (D 1:20) and can as a corporate body vary its mode of proceeding to match the variances of *fortuna* in a way that principalities cannot (D 3:9). As such, the well ordered republic is the form of government that best preserves both republican and corporate liberty, and is best at *mantenere lo stato*.

Further, the constellation of virtù and pursuit of the common good that makes a well ordered republic the form of government is best at *mantenere lo stato* and preserving its liberty also make it the form of government that best able to achieve for itself and its citizens worldly glory. Only well ordered republics truly possess republican liberty and, according to Machiavelli, constituent of republican liberty is the pursuit of the common good (D 1:10, D 2:2). The Romans, were able to become so powerful and to achieve so many great and glorious things during the couple hundred years of the republic while they were merely one small Italian city state during the regal period “because it is not the particular good, but the common good that makes cities great” (D 2:2).<sup>272</sup> Rome during the regal period fought for the glory of particular Roman kings. And, though many of those kings had virtù (see examples 4 Romulus, 5 Numa, and 6 Tullus) and won glory for themselves and for Rome, it is undeniable that the good these kings did and the glory that they won was first for themselves and only secondly for the Romans. However, while the republic remained uncorrupt, the Romans understood that when they accomplished great things, their accomplishments brought glory both to themselves and to the republic in which they all shared. Further, because virtù is required for the acquisition of true glory (Price, “*Gloria in Machiavelli*”, 606-610), its superior ability to produce and accommodate more individuals with virtù makes a well ordered republic the type of regime most likely to acquire true glory through the demonstration of virtù.

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<sup>272</sup> “...perché non il bene particolare, ma il bene comune è quelle fa grandi le città.”

## Conclusion

I do not know, therefore, if I deserve to be numbered amongst those who deceive themselves, if in these my discourses I praise too much the time of the ancient Romans, and blame ours. And truly, if the virtù that reigned then, and the vice that reigns today, were not clearer than the sun, I would proceed with more cautious speech, doubting that I do not succumb to that mistake of which I accuse some. But the thing being so manifest that everyone sees it, I will be *animoso* in manifestly saying that which I will intend of those and of these times; so that the *animi* of the youth that will read these writings of mine, can flee these [times], and prepare themselves to imitate those, any time *fortuna* gives them *occasione* (D2:Preface).<sup>273</sup>

Virtù is the particularly political human quality, but it is also a quality that Machiavelli sees in particular humans. It is the self-reliance, strength, bravery, and skill displayed by those individuals and peoples who tend to succeed in war and politics. And, although Machiavelli never provides an analytic definition of virtù, based on the systematic and in depth analysis of Machiavelli's 107 examples of it I presented in the proceeding chapters and in the appendices that follow, I have

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<sup>273</sup> “Non so, adunque, se io meriterò d'essere numerato tra quelli che si ingannano, se in questi mia discorsi io lauderò troppo i tempi degli antichi Romani, e biasimerò i nostri. E varamente, se la virtù che allora regnava, ed il vizio che ora regna, non fussino più chiari che il sole, andrei col parlare più rattenuto, dubitando non incorrere in questo inganno di che io accuso alcuni. Ma essendo la cosa sì manifesta che ciascuno la vede, sarò animoso in dire manifestamente quello che io intenderò di quelli e di questi tempi; acciocché gli animi de' giovani che questi mia scritti leggeranno, possano fuggire questi, e prepararsi ad imitar quegli, qualunque volta la fortuna ne dessi loro occasione.” By *animo*, Machiavelli intends a range of meanings that include “mind”, “soul”, “heart”, and “intellect”. *Animo* is used as the opposite of meanings such as “body”, “flesh”, and “appetite”. By *fortuna*, Machiavelli means something akin to the contemporary English usage of “fortune” in the sense of “luck” and sometimes seems additionally to mean the connotation of wealth, which can be in the Italian as well as in the English words. However, Machiavelli also personifies *Fortuna* in ways both reminiscent of the Roman Goddess and of medieval iconography. By *occasione*, Machiavelli means something along the lines of occasion or opportunity to accomplish some great thing. Here he invokes the medieval notion (expressed in the iconography) that *Occasione* is the daughter of *Fortune* and as *Occasione* approaches she is difficult to recognize, but she passes she is easy to recognize but impossible to seize.

demonstrated that this understanding of *virtù* is an accurate and plausible interpretation of Machiavelli's uses while other competing definitions are not.

In Chapter 1 I demonstrated that Machiavelli's goal in writing, to present his readers with exemplars of *virtù* for them to imitate, would have made sense to his readers who were already familiar with this pedagogical practice. I demonstrated that the *virtù* of an individual can be imitated by imitating their modes<sup>274</sup> and actions, and the *virtù* of a people can be imitated by imitating their modes, orders,<sup>275</sup> and laws. The modes, actions, orders, and laws of the exemplar are *not* identical to their *virtù* and imitating those does not convey the *virtù* upon the imitator immediately. Rather, imitating the exemplar's modes, actions, orders, and laws is equivalent to following in their path. Imitation allows the imitator to pick up on the scent of the exemplar's *virtù* and to acquire their own *virtù* by tracking that of their exemplar. And, because it is unlikely to acquire as much *virtù* as the exemplar being imitated, it is important to imitate the most excellent exemplars available so that the upper bound on the amount of *virtù* acquired is set very high indeed. That is why Machiavelli puts forward the grandest examples for his readers to imitate, whether these exemplars are the semi-mythical founders for individuals to imitate or the Romans for peoples to imitate.

In Chapter 2, I synthesized the results of my analyses of all Machiavelli's examples of *virtù* to present the characteristics of *virtù* which persist consistently

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<sup>274</sup> By *modo* (pl: *modi*) Machiavelli means the mode, manner, means, or method of proceeding or of conduct that can either be peculiar to an individual or habitual for a people. Following convention, I translate this as the English "mode".

<sup>275</sup> By *ordine* (pl: *ordini*), Machiavelli means the ordering, rules, and institutions of an organization such as a republic, a monarchy, a guild, or a legion. Following convention, I translate this as the English "order".

throughout Machiavelli's usage in all (or nearly all) of the examples he puts forward. Through my method of systematically analyzing *all* of Machiavelli's examples I was able to demonstrate: 1. That *virtù* is both political and military, and is comprised of fortitude, strength, endurance, and skill at arms or command. 2. That *virtù* is a form of self-help or self-reliance as opposed to reliance on others or on *fortuna*. 3. That *virtù* is *not* a heuristic for political success but those who have it tend to succeed while those that do not tend to fail. And, 4. that *virtù* is displayed and requires the *occasione* to be displayed; that the effects of *virtù* are seen and are only seen in action. While it may appear that the understanding of *virtù* produced by my analysis of Machiavelli's examples is commonplace or obvious, of the authors in the secondary literature, only Wood's understanding of *virtù* is mostly supported by this analysis. The understandings of Gilbert, Skinner, and Price are partially supported and partially refuted by my analysis. The understandings of Strauss, Mansfield, McCormick, Pitkin, Clarke, Pocock, Kahn, and Whitfield are all almost entirely refuted by the systematic analysis of Machiavelli's examples I presented.

Chapter 2 further identified the differences in how *virtù* is manifested in individuals compared to peoples and in principalities compared to republics. *Virtù* in individuals is trained through practice and imitation either initiated by the individual or by their good education. *Virtù* in peoples is organized through their modes, orders, and laws that both encourage individual citizens to train themselves to acquire *virtù* and orders them into a body that collectively possesses and displays *virtù*. The *virtù* of a principality is inextricably tied to the *virtù* of the prince: if the prince or his

successor lacks virtù, the ability of the principality as a whole to display virtù is greatly curtailed. The virtù of a republic is tied to the virtù of those who participate in the regime; Machiavelli advocated for a more inclusive regimes (*governo largo*) because, by maximizing the number of those included, the regime maximizes the number of those with virtù available to be selected for leadership positions.

Republican governments, and especially those with an inclusive regime, are the form of government best suited to encourage their citizens to develop virtù and, thus, are the most likely regimes to be successful.

In Chapter 3, I described the relationship between virtù and the ends of politics in Machiavelli's *arte dello stato*. According to Machiavelli, the three political goals that individuals and peoples pursue are for their regime to *mantenere lo stato* (stay in power), to preserve the corporate liberty of the *stato* from foreign conquest and – if a republic – to preserve republican liberty against corruption, and to earn worldly glory for accomplishing great deeds. I specified that corporate liberty is a prerequisite for *mantenere lo stato* and republican liberty, and that states with republican liberty will be better able to *mantenere lo stato* against both foreign and domestic threats, though republican liberty is not a prerequisite for this success. I demonstrated that the modes, orders, and laws that work to *mantenere lo stato* and preserve both corporate and republican liberty were those that produced and accommodated more men with virtù. Because well ordered republics are the form of government that produces and accommodates the most men with virtù, they are the regime type best able to *mantenere lo stato* and preserve their corporate liberty. For this same reason, well

ordered republics are also the regime type most likely to do great deeds and earn worldly glory.

Machiavelli's goal in writing was to produce something useful, that could help his fellow countrymen to practice *l'arte dello stato* in such a mode that their country would acquire virtù, and with virtù achieve the political ends of *mantenere lo stato*, preserving its liberty, and acquiring worldly glory. When Machiavelli looked at the actions and modes of his countrymen he was filled with revulsion at their vices which had allowed them all to become dominated by the ultramontanes: the non-Italian Europeans who came from beyond the Alps. The political and military laziness (*ozio*) and cowardness (*viltà*) of Machiavelli's countrymen prevented them from cultivating in themselves the virtù necessary to defend themselves from domination by foreigners and continued to cause them to mistakenly blame bad *fortuna* for their servitude, when they should blame their lack of virtù. The weakness and vacillation of the French aligned republican government of Florence Machiavelli had served, the petty tyrannies of the Spanish aligned Medici who succeeded them, the other major Italian principalities and republics who relied on mercenaries for their security, and the petty Italian lords who served them as *condottieri* all feebly jockeyed for minor gain while succumbing to the seemingly irresistible hegemony of the French and the Spanish. Machiavelli judged that the French and the Spanish were so dominant because they were unified and well ordered.

To acquire good orders, the Florentines needed to be reordered by a reformer. To inspire the Florentines to devise their own good orders so they could defend their

liberty from the ultramontanes, and perhaps to unify Italy in gloriously expelling the ultramontane invaders, Machiavelli put before them the example of the Romans, who had defended their liberty, unified the Italian peninsula, and subjugated the French and the Spanish. Machiavelli could not be the reformer to give his countrymen the good orders necessary to generate the *virtù* required to defend his patria because he was forced out of political office by the resurgent Medici in 1512 and his subsequent advice to them for how to reform the *stato* of Florence went ignored. Unable to act himself, Machiavelli wrote to inspire the *animi* of the youth – who because they are by nature bold would be favored by *fortuna* – to imitate the *virtù* of the Romans in reordering their *stato* if given the *occasione* that Machiavelli was denied and that the Medici had let pass.

I began by insisting that the study of politics needs to speak about political action as taking place in the condition of plurality. Individuals and peoples act in the context of the contingent plurality of other political actors all of whom are in a fundamental way unique and therefore not *actually* reducible to mere functions of social forces or analytically identical unites. To speak of political behavior, rather than political action, then is not only to inappropriately speak of politics as if it were economics (or some other social activity), but to err in judgment. Through my focus on Machiavelli's examples of individuals and peoples with *virtù*, I have presented an original interpretation of *virtù* that is a contribution to Machiavelli studies. My analysis of how Machiavelli uses examples to develop his *arte dello stato* and his conception of *virtù* has also shown that Machiavelli is among the greatest examples of

how to analyze politics in such a way that political action is acknowledged to take place in the condition of plurality and that is still capable of learning from collective political experience. Thus, by imitating Machiavelli's mode of political analysis through examples and through the vocabulary of *virtù*, we can acquire the ability to speak about politics as occurring in the condition of plurality and his ability to develop an *arte dello stato* which is both insightful into politics and useful for participating in them.

## Appendices

Examples are ordered roughly chronologically (with variations due to Machiavelli's discussion of the examples). Numbers are used for reference.

### 5.1 Appendix 1 Machiavelli's Examples of Individuals with Virtù

#### 5.1.1 Founders and Refounders

1. Moses (P 6)
2. Theseus (P 6)
3. Cyrus (P 6)
4. Romulus (P 6, D 1:19.1, D 1:19.3)
5. Numa (D 1:19.1)
6. Tullus (D 1:19.1, D 1:21.1)
7. Marcus Furius Camillus (D 1:8.1, D 3:1.2, D 3:23.1, D 3:30.1)

#### 5.1.2 Romans

8. Horatius (D 1:23.1)
9. Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus (D 3:25.1)
10. Tempanius, a Roman Centurion (D 3:18.2)
11. Manlius Capitolinus (D 1:58.2, D 3:8.1)
12. Publius Valerius Corvinus (D 1:60.1, D 3:22.1, D 3:38.1)
13. Manlius Torquatus (D 2:16.1, D 3:19.1, D 3:22.1, D 3:22.4, D 3:34.2)
14. Publius Decius (D 2:16.1, D 3:1.3)
15. Horatius Coclus (D3.1.3)
16. Scaevola (D 3.1.3)
17. Fabricius (D3.1.3)
18. Publius Decius (son of 14 Publius Decius) (D 3.1.3)
19. Marcus Regulus Attilius (D 3.1.3)
20. Cato the Elder (D 3.1.3)
21. Cato the Younger (D 3.1.3)
22. Scipio Africanus (D 1:29.3, D 3:21.3)
23. Julius Caesar (D 1:33.4, AG 7:211/366 (F.C.))
24. Marc Anthony (D 2:18.3)
25. Antonius Primus (D 1:29.2)
26. Marcus Aurelius (P 19)
27. Septimius Severus (P 19, D 1:10.4)
28. Arcadius and Honorius (the sons of Theodosius) (IF 1:1 (2))
29. Belisarius (and Giovanni and Vitales) (IF 1:6(1))
30. Narses (IF 1:8(1))

#### 5.1.3 Non-Roman Ancients

31. David (D 1:19.

- 32. Solomon (D 1:19.2)
- 33. Rehoboam (D 1:19.2)
- 34. Dion and Timoleon (D 1:17.1)
- 35. Epaminondas (D 1:17.3, D 1:21.3)
- 36. Pelopidas (D 1:21.3)
- 37. Alexander the Great (AG 7:211/366 (F.C.))
- 38. Agathocles (P 8)
- 39. Hiero of Syracuse (P 6)
- 40. Aratus of Sicyon (D 2:32.1)
- 41. Theodorus of Syracuse (D 3:6.6)
- 42. Hannibal (P 17, D 2:27.4, D 3:21.3, D 3:21.4)
- 43. Theodoric the (Ostra)goth (IF 1:4(2))

#### 5.1.4 Florentines

- 44. Messer Farinata degli Uberti (IF 2:7(1))
- 45. Messer Corso Donati (IF 2:18(1))
- 46. Michele di Lando (IF 3:17(2))
- 47. Messer Maso degli Albizzi (then) Niccolò da Uzzano (IF 4:2(1))
- 48. Messer Ringaldo degli Albizzi (IF 4:7(1))
- 49. Bardo Amncini (IF 4:9(1))
- 50. Brunelleschi (IF 4:23(1))
- 51. Niccolò da Pisa (IF 5:30(1))
- 52. Neri di Gino Capponi (IF 6:6(1))
- 53. Baldaccio di Anghiari (IF 6:6(1))
- 54. Friar Girolamo Savonarola (D 1:45.2)
- 55. Cosimo Rucellai (AG 1:8\*271).
- 56. The Medici Family (P 26)
- 57. Salvestro de' Medici (IF 3:9(2))
- 58. Cosimo de' Medici (IF 7:5(2), IF 7:6(1))
- 59. Piero de' Medici (IF 7:23(1))
- 60. Lorenzo (il magnifico) de' Medici (IF 8:36(2))
- 61. Pope Leo X (Giovanni de' Medici) (P 11)
- 62. Giulio de' Medici (I F 8:9(1))

#### 5.1.5 Non-Florentine Italians

- 63. Alberic, duke of Tuscany (IF 1:12(2))
- 64. Castruccio Castracani (IF 2:30(2), CC 405/452, CC 406/452, CC 415/458, CC 423/463, CC 424/463)
- 65. Messer Francesco Guinigi (CC 405/452)
- 66. Pagolo Guinigi (CC 424/463)
- 67. the Castellan of Pavia (IF 1:34(1))
- 68. Carmagnola (P 12, IF 4:13(1))
- 69. Niccolò Piccinino (IF 5:32(1), IF 6:8(1))

- 70. Francesco Spinula (IF 5:6(2))
- 71. Francesco Sforza (P 7, IF 5:2(1), IF 6:24(1), IF 7:12(2))
- 72. Galeazzo Sforza (IF 7:12(2), IF 7:30(1))
- 73. Ferdinand of Naples (IF 6:28(1))
- 74. Pope Sextus IV (Francesco da Savona) (IF 7:22(1))
- 75. Caterina Sforza (AG 7:187\*/355 (F.C.))
- 76. Antonio Tassino of Ferrara (IF 8:18(1))
- 77. Cesare Borgia (P 7)
- 78. Oliverotto da Fermo (P 8)
- 79. Gonsalvo Ferrante (D 1:29.2)
- 80. Ottaviano Fregoso (D 2:24.2)

### 5.1.6 Non-Italian Moderns

- 81. Charles Martel and Pepin (I) (IF 1:10(1))
- 82. Charles VII of France (P 13)
- 83. Saladin (IF 1:17(1))
- 84. Walter, Duke of Athens (IF 2:33(2))
- 85. Cardinal Egidio Albornoz (IF 1:32(1))
- 86. Kings of France and Spain and the order of those Kingdoms (D 1:55.2)

## 5.2 Appendix 2 : Machiavelli's Examples of Peoples with Virtù

### 5.2.1 Romans

- 87. Romans (P 3, P 13, AG 2: 46/288 (F.C.), AG 2:78/304 (F.C.), AG 2:78/304 (F.C.), AG 3:88\*/308 (F.C.), AG 6:164\*/345 (F.C.), AG 6:182\*/353 (F.C.), AG 7:201/361 (F.C.), IF 1:1(1), IF 1:31(1), IF 3:1(1), D 1:1.1, D 1:1.5, D 1:4.1, D 1:5.4, D 1:15.1, D \*\*?\*1:18(3), D 1:20.1, D 1:23.1, D 1:30.2, D 1:43.1, D 1:60.1, D 2:1.T, D 2:1.1, D 2:2.1, D 2:6.2, D 2:8.1, D 2:16.1, D 2:18.4, D 2:19.T, D 2:19.2, D 2:20.1, D 2:24.1, D 2:24.3, D 2:24.4, D 2:29.1, D 2:30.1, D 3:1.2, D 3:1.3, D 3:12.3, D 3:13.1, D 3:15.1, D 3:16.2, D 3: 25.1, D 3:31.2, D \*\*\*3:31(4), D 3:33.1, D 3:36.2, D 3:38.1)

### 5.2.2 Non-Roman Ancients

- 88. Spartans (D 1:9.4, D 2:24.4)
- 89. Enemies of Rome (AG 2:78/304 (F.C.))
- 90. Samnites (D 1:15.1)
- 91. Etruscans (D 2:5.2)
- 92. Gauls (D 3:36.2)
- 93. Carthaginians (AG 4:112\*/321 (F.C.), AG 4:115\*/322 (F.C.), AG 4:115\*/322 (F.C.))

- 94. Parthians (AG 3:96\*/312 (F.C.))
- 95. Goths (P 13)
- 96. Ostrogoths ( IF 1:4 (1))

### 5.2.3 Florentines

- 97. Florentines (IF P (1), IF 2:5(1), IF 2:8(1), IF \*\*\*2:10(1), IF 2:32(2), IF 3:1(1), IF 3:7(2), IF 3:29(2), IF 4:30(1), IF 5:8(1), IF 5:34(1), IF 6:28(1), CC 410/454, CC 418/459, D 2:12.4, D 2:24.1, D 2:24.3)

### 5.2.4 Non-Florentine Italian

- 98. Italians (P 26, AG 2:80/305 (F.C.), AG 7:209\*/365 (F.C.), IF 1:34(1), IF 5:1(1), IF 5:1(2). D 3: 36.2)
- 99. Venetians (D 3:31.3)
- 100. Lucchese (CC 417/458)

### 5.2.5 Non-Italian Moderns

- 101. Turks (D 2:17.5)
- 102. Swiss (D 2:18.4, D 2:22.1)
- 103. French (IF 6: 38(2), D 2:22.1)
- 104. Germans (AG 2:47\*/288 (F.C.), AG 2:81/305 (F.C.))
- 105. Spanish (AG 2:47\*/288 (F.C.))
- 106. The defenders of Rhodes (IF 8:20(1))

### 5.2.6 The Army of Words

- 107. Army of Words (AG 3:93 /311 (F.C.), AG 3:93/311 (F.C.), AG 3:94/311 (F.C.))

# Appendix 1: Machiavelli's Examples of Individuals with Virtù

## 5.1.1 Founders and Refounders:

Founders: 1 Moses (P 6), 2 Cyrus (P 6), 3 Theseus (P 6), **4 Romulus (P 6, D 1:19.1, D 1:19.3), 5 Numa (D 1:19.1), and 6 Tullus (D 1:19.1, D 1:21.1)**

Refounder: 7 **Marcus Furius Camillus (D 1:8.1, D 3:1.2, D 3:23.1, D 3:30.1)**

In this case it is where one gets to know the virtù of the builder, and the fortuna of the built: which is more or less marvelous, according to how more or less virtuoso is he who was the beginning [principio] (D 1:1.4).<sup>276</sup>

## Introduction

Machiavelli's first sustained treatment of virtù in both *il Principe* and in the *Discorsi* is in discussions of founding.<sup>277</sup> The founders are the most excellent men:

“Among all men praised, those who are most praiseworthy were those who have been heads or orderers of religions. After which are those who have founded either

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<sup>276</sup> “In questo case è dove si conosce la virtù dello edificatore, e la fortuna dello edificato: la quale è più o meno maravigliosa, secondo che più o meno è virtuoso colui ne è stato principio.”

<sup>277</sup> My views on the relationship between *il Principe* and *Discorsi* will be explained in detail in part 3.

republics or kingdoms.” (D1:10.1).<sup>278</sup> Further, these are the men to whom Machiavelli specifically refers as the grandest examples, the imitation of whose actions (as quoted in the epigraph for Chapter 1) will cause his readers, if not to match their virtù, at least to achieve some of the scent of it (P 6).<sup>279</sup> At the very least, imitation of the examples of the founders will cause Machiavelli’s readers to rely on their virtù as much as possible and to rely on *fortuna* as little as possible because they will see that “he who has [relied] less on *fortuna* has maintained himself more” (P 6).<sup>280</sup>

The Founder is one of the three images of masculine virtù that Hanna Pitkin (*Fortune is a Woman*) claims appears in Machiavelli’s writings. The Founder is the mythic image of those who have created, as out of formless matter, lasting institutions through their virtù alone, relying on no other man and relying only on fortune for the opportunity to found (*Fortune is a Woman*, 53, 55). As such, for Machiavelli, founding requires almost super human capacities (76) which are based on a fraudulently claimed semi-divine status (99). However, Pitkin claims that this image of the Founder is a myth that never has and cannot possibly exist because no human can possess the sort of semi-divine capacities required to create something out of nothing in the way that the founder does (99). Indeed, many of Machiavelli’s examples of founders are probably more mythical than historical. However, Machiavelli never speaks of these examples as if they were impossible myths. And

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<sup>278</sup> “Intra tutti gli uomini laudati, sono i laudatissimi quelli che sono stati capi e ordinatori delle religioni. Appresso dipai quelli che hanno fondato o repubbliche o regni.”

<sup>279</sup> Hanna F. Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1984.

<sup>280</sup> “...colui che è stato meno in su la fortuna si è mantenuto più.”

even if he had thought that they were mythical rather than historical, he clearly believed that their status as exemplars for imitation was not diminished by the fact that they were not historically accurate. As exemplars, the usefulness may be heightened by the unachievable greatness of their virtù because those imitating them will be pushed to aim even higher (P 6). Further, Machiavelli treats the imitation of Achilles by Alexander the Great as seriously as he treats Julius Caesar's imitation of Alexander or Scipio Africanus's imitation of Cyrus (P 14). What is important for Machiavelli in the examples of the founders is that they used their virtù to create orders, modes, and laws which outlasted their lifetimes and that their examples provide insight into how such a founding could be accomplished through imitation of their actions.

Machiavelli's primary examples of founders are Romulus, Theseus, Cyrus, Moses, and Numa (as orderers of religions), and Marcus Furius Camillus (as a refounder). In what follows, I will address first Romulus, Numa, and Tullus, the first three kings of Rome, who were responsible for its founding, followed by Camillus, who was responsible for refounding Rome after the devastation of the Gallic sack in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. I selected these examples as the focus of my analysis because Machiavelli devoted the most attention to them and because what he wrote about the virtù of Theseus, Cyrus, and Moses in *il Principe* 6 and 26 is meant to apply also to Romulus.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> Machiavelli mentions Moses, Cyrus, and Theseus again in P 26, saying "it was necessary, wanting to see the virtù of Moses, that the people of Israel were enslaved in Egypt; and to know the greatness of the *animo* of Cyrus, that the Persians were oppressed by the Medes; and the excellence of Theseus, that the Athenians were dispersed/era necessario, volendo vedere la virtù di Moisè, che il popolo d'Isdrael

## Founders: Romulus (Numa and Tullus)

Romulus appears as an example of virtù in Machiavelli's two major discussions of founders: *il Principe* 6, in which he discusses how Romulus came to power, and *Discorsi* 1:19, in which he discusses what Romulus and his successors did with that power. In *il Principe*, Romulus is listed amongst the "grandest examples" Machiavelli puts forward of the "most excellent" men because he was one of those "that through their own virtù, and not through *fortuna*, became princes"<sup>282</sup> and received nothing "from *fortuna* but the *occasione*"<sup>283</sup> to seize power (P 6).

Romulus of course was the (legendary and mythical) founder of Rome. Machiavelli acknowledges that some might think of Aeneas as the first founder of Rome rather than Romulus (D 1.1), and he credits Aeneas with founding a new city that he built anew (D 1.1) when Aeneas founded the city of Lavinium and the Latin

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fussi stiavo in Egitto; e a conoscere la grandezza dello animo di Ciro, che' Persi fussino oppressati da' Medi; e la eccellenza di Teseo, che li Ateniesi fussino dispersi..." Machiavelli also mentions Moses in D 1:1 (as one who inhabited the cities of the land to which he moved his people, D1:9 (as a well known example of one who reformed laws alone in power), D 2:8 (as an example of how peoples displaced by necessity invade other countries, massacre the inhabitants, and change the name of the country), and D 3:30 (as an example of how Moses succeeded because he was an armed prophet who could kill those who opposed him out of envy). Machiavelli also mentions Cyrus in P 14, P 16, D 2:12, D 2:13, D 3:20, D 3:22, D 3:39, AG 2, AG 6, and AG 7. Machiavelli also mentions Theseus in D1:1 (as founding Athens from men native to the location of the city).

<sup>282</sup> "...che per propria virtù, e non per fortuna, sono diventati principi..." By *fortuna*, Machiavelli means something akin to the contemporary English usage for "fortune" in the sense of "luck" and sometimes seems to additionally mean the connotations of wealth which can be in the Italian as well as in the English words. However, Machiavelli also personifies *Fortuna* in ways both reminiscent of the Roman Goddess and of medieval iconography. Pitkin (*Fortune is a Woman*) has the best account of the medieval iconography behind Machiavelli's understanding of *fortuna*. Skinner (*Foundations*) is also excellent.

<sup>283</sup> "...altro dalla fortuna che la occasione..." By *occasione*, Machiavelli means something like the occasion or opportunity to accomplish some great thing. Here he invokes the medieval notion (expressed in the iconography) that occasione is the daughter of *Fortune* and as occasione approaches she is difficult to recognize, but as she passes she is easy to recognize but impossible to seize. Again, Pitkin (*Fortune is a Woman*) and Skinner (*Foundations*) give useful accounts.

people (Livy 1.2). However, Machiavelli does not discuss Aeneas further. He only describes Romulus (and subsequent kings of Rome) as contributing significantly to the foundation of the Roman monarchy, which he subsequently analyzes in detail in later chapters. In this analysis, Machiavelli claims that Rome's first orderer (*ordinatore*) was Romulus and that Romulus gave birth to Rome, his daughter (D 1.11).<sup>284</sup>

Romulus's paternal founding of Rome owed nothing to *fortuna* but the *occasione*. This *occasione* was that Romulus and his brother were able to found a city on the spot where they had been exposed as infants. Neither Machiavelli nor Livy gives any detail as to why Romulus and Remus felt it necessary to leave Alba Longa. Machiavelli merely states, "It was fitting that Romulus did not find a place in Alba, to have been exposed at birth, to want to become king of Rome and founder of that fatherland" (P 6).<sup>285</sup> Livy merely wrote "Romulus and Remus conceived the desire of founding a city in the place they had been exposed and raised" (Livy 1.6). Perhaps Romulus left to found Rome because he sensed the *occasione* to do so. Whatever the cause for leaving Alba Longa, it is clear that to both Machiavelli and Livy, leaving allowed Romulus to found a new city to rule rather than inheriting Alba Longa from his grandfather.

For those like Romulus, "without that *occasione* the virtù of their *animo* would have burnt out, and without that virtù the *occasione* would have come in vain" (P

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<sup>284</sup> See Peter Stacey ("Free and Unfree States", 188) for the importance of describing the founder as a parent of their city. Peter Stacey, "Free and Unfree States in Machiavelli's Political Philosophy", Quentin Skinner and Martin van Gelderen, eds. *Freedom and the Construction of Europe, Volume 1: Religious and Constitutional Liberties*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2013. Pages 176-194.

<sup>285</sup> "Conveniva che Romulo non capessi in Alba, fussi stato esposto al nascere, a volere che diventassi re di Roma e fondatore di quella patria."

6).<sup>286</sup> Virtù does not merely allow one to notice the *occasione*, but is required to be the sort of person for whom it is an *occasione*. Being exposed as a child or leaving the city of one's ancestors would not be the *occasione* for anyone but those with virtù of *animo* like Romulus. Specifically, the *occasione* was for Romulus, as for the other founders discussed by Machiavelli, that “which gave them material they could impose into that form they imagined”<sup>287</sup>; giving form to that material is what required their virtù of *animo* (P 6).<sup>288</sup> Thus, through overcoming difficulties (including a quarrel with his brother Remus) by use of his virtù and arms, Romulus was able to found Rome, establish himself as its sole prince, and secure his power.

In the *Discorsi*, Romulus and his successors are discussed in terms of their effects on the laws and orders<sup>289</sup> that they established in Rome. Romulus established the monarchy, the senate, and the first popular assembly of Rome; however, the most important order he established was the legion. For Machiavelli, that the Romans kept all of Romulus's political orders except the monarchy, which they replaced with the consuls, demonstrates that “all the first orders of that city were more adapted for a

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<sup>286</sup> “...sanza quella occasione la virtù dello animo loro si sarebbe spenta, e senza quella virtù la occasione sarebbe venuta invano.” By *animo*, Machiavelli intends a range of meanings which include “mind”, “soul”, “heart”, and “intellect”. *Animo* is used as the opposite of meanings like “body”, “flesh”, and “appetite”.

<sup>287</sup> “...la quale dette loro materia a potere introdurvi drento quella forma parse loro...”

<sup>288</sup> See Peter Stacey, *Roman Monarchy and the Renaissance Prince*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. The imposition of *forma* (form) upon *materia* (matter) is what it means to found in both P6 and P26 (p. 226) and is expressed in self-consciously aesthetic terminology because, after all, Machiavelli is expounding a theory of *l'arte dello stato* (literally: the art of the state) (p. 305).

<sup>289</sup> By *ordine* (pl: *ordini*), Machiavelli means the ordering, rules, and institutions of an organization such as a republic, a monarchy, a guild, or a legion. Following convention, I translate this as the English “order”.

civil and free life, than one absolute and tyrannical” (D 1:9).<sup>290</sup> And so, while Machiavelli claims that Romulus’s laws were updated and improved after his death and perfected with the institution of the office of Tribune of the Plebs (D 1:3), he also points out that the basic orders laid out by Romulus would be the foundations for the Roman Republic.

Machiavelli includes Romulus’s first two successor monarchs — Numa Pompilius and Tullus Hostilius — as having importantly contributed to the laws, orders, and modes that filled Rome with so much virtù. Numa founded the city’s religion, an event Machiavelli believes is so important that he even claims that Rome owed more to Numa than Romulus, its founder (D 1:11).<sup>291</sup> Tullus re-founded the Roman military after Numa had allowed it to lapse (D 1:21) and oversaw Rome’s first real expansion, though in a manner not characteristic of Rome’s usual prudence in acquisition (D 1:23). For Machiavelli, the primary contribution of Romulus, Numa, and Tullus to Rome as a group was their laws, which created so many necessities for the citizens of Rome that “the fertility of the site, the convenience of the sea, the frequent victories, the grandness of the empire, could not for many centuries corrupt it, and maintained it overflowing with so much virtù, as much as has ever adorned any other city or republic” (D 1:1).<sup>292</sup> It is of the utmost importance that a city be forced to

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<sup>290</sup> “...tutti gli ordini primi di quella città essere stati più conformi a uno vivere civile e libero, che a uno assoluto e tirannico.” See also Stacey (“Free and Unfree States”).

<sup>291</sup> Recall Machiavelli’s discussion in D 1:10, where he says that orderers of religions, like Numa, are praised even more than orderers of republics and monarchies, like Romulus. Little wonder that Machiavelli praises Numa more than Romulus.

<sup>292</sup> “...la fertilità del sito, la commodità del mare, le spesse vittorie, la grandezze dello imperio, non la potero per molti secoli corrompere, e la mantenero piena di tanta virtù, di quanta mai fusse alcun’altra città o republica ornata.”

develop virtù by necessity because it will develop less virtù if it is given a choice. That necessity can come either in the form of actual hardships such as the bareness of the site of the city, inconvenience to the sea and trade, hostile neighbors, or from strict laws which simulate actual hardships by preventing the citizens from being idle and becoming corrupt (D 1:1).

Of course, the other essential contribution of her first three kings was instilling Rome with military virtù, without which their good laws would have been for nothing because Rome would have been overrun by its neighbors. Indeed, Machiavelli opens the chapter where he gives the most sustained treatment of their virtù,<sup>293</sup> by stating that

“Having considered the virtù and the mode of proceeding of Romulus, Numa, and of Tullus, the first three Roman kings, one sees how Rome produced (*sortì*) the greatest fortuna, having the first king very ferocious and bellicose, the other quiet and religious, and the third similar in ferocity to Romulus and more a lover of war than of peace” (D 1:19).<sup>294</sup>

Machiavelli discusses the benefits of Numa’s religious reforms elsewhere. Here, he is concerned with the conditions that allowed Numa to turn away from war for many years: “the virtù of Romulus was so great that it could give space to Numa Pompilius

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<sup>293</sup> D 1:19, titled “After an excellent prince one can maintain a weak prince; but after a weak prince one cannot maintain any kingdom with another weak prince. / Dopo uno eccellente principe si può mantenere uno principe debole; ma, dopo uno debole, non si può con un altro debole mantenere alcuno regno.”

<sup>294</sup> “Considerato la virtù e il modo del procedere di Romolo, Numa e di Tullo, i primi tre re romani, si vede come Roma *sortì* una fortuna grandissima, avendo il primo re ferocissimo e bellicose, l’altro quieto e religioso, il terzo simile di ferocità a Romolo e più amatore della guerra che della pace.” *Sortì* (*sortire*) can also mean “sortie” in the military sense, such as to sortie out from the castle to face the enemy or to dispatch a sortie to worry the enemy’s flank.

to be able to rule Rome for many years with the art of peace ...,”<sup>295</sup> without which Numa could never have accomplished his reforms (D1:19). Thus, for Numa’s ability to be at peace for many years was due to the great military virtù of Romulus that earlier pacified Rome’s neighbors through force of arms.

However, though Machiavelli believed Numa’s reforms essential to the later greatness of the city, after the death of Numa, it “was good and necessary that the other kings recovered the virtù of Romulus, otherwise that city would have become effeminate, and prey to its neighbors” (D 1:19).<sup>296</sup> Thus, the main contribution of Tullus, upon succeeding Numa, was the continuation of Numa’s religious reforms while reinstating Rome’s military orders. Tullus, seeing that the Romans had known forty years of peace, knew that peace was unsustainable, and “so great was his virtù that in a stroke under his government he was able to make excellent soldiers” (D 1:21).<sup>297</sup> Machiavelli draws two conclusions from Tullus’s example. The first is that princes who do not have their own soldiers have no one but themselves to blame, because it is clearly possible to make any men into soldiers (D 1:21). Here, Machiavelli contrasts the virtù of Tullus with the weakness of contemporary Italian princes, whom he blames for losing their states, because they refuse to follow Tullus’s example and make their subjects into soldiers (P 24).

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<sup>295</sup> “...che la virtù di Romolo fu tanta che la potette dare spazio a Numa Pompilio di potere molti anni con l’arte della pace reggere Roma...”

<sup>296</sup> “...era bene poi necessario che gli altri re ripigliassero la virtù di Romolo, altrimenti quella città sarebbe diventata effeminate, e preda de’suoi vicini.”

<sup>297</sup> “...fu tanta la sua virtù che in un tratto sotto il suo governo gli poté fare soldati eccellentissimi.”

The second conclusion is that even the great laws and religious institutions founded by Numa would not have been possible without strong military leaders before and after Numa. Without the religion instituted by Numa, Machiavelli believes that the Romans would never have achieved their greatness, but religion without the force of arms would have left Rome indefensible against her warlike neighbors who would inevitably have conquered her. Machiavelli supports this claim by employing the example of a different triad of kings: David, Solomon, and Rehoboam, for although David had *virtù*, Solomon and Rehoboam were weak, which is why Rehoboam was only able to hold on to one sixth of his father's kingdom (D 1:19). Machiavelli may also take this as evidence for his claim that hereditary succession of political power is unreliable and showing how Romulus's orders were suited for a free way of life. The first several kings of Rome were elected rather than the children of the previous kings, unlike in ancient Israel. Hereditary succession does not ensure that the new rulers will possess *virtù*, since *virtù* is not hereditary.<sup>298</sup> But, holding elections for leaders when the people are not corrupt, will yield leaders with *virtù*, just as in a republic where the people are not corrupt (D 1:20), and the people of Rome under the monarchy were never corrupted, even though the monarchs eventually became corrupt (D 1:17). And, in turn, as claimed above, it was the laws and orders of these kings that kept Rome full of *virtù* and free.

Machiavelli considered all of the first three kings of Rome, as founders. But while Romulus founded the kingdom, Numa founded the religion, and Tullus

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<sup>298</sup> I discuss Machiavelli's claim that *virtù* is not hereditary and his subsequent recommendation against hereditary succession of rule in chapters 3 and 4.

refounded the military and, as a general, added to his kingdom through conquest. Each was one of the types of men that Machiavelli lists as the most praiseworthy: first are founders of religions, second are founders of state, and third are those who add to their country through military conquest (D 1:10). The last four kings of Rome were not because, unlike their predecessors, they founded nothing, and provided a no useful example of virtù.

Collectively, the virtù of the first three kings of Rome allowed them to establish laws and orders that would far outlast their lives, their kingdom, and occasionally the successor republic and empire. The Roman Senate, founded by Romulus, outlasted the fall of the Western Roman Empire and was recreated during the late middle ages.<sup>299</sup> The office of Pontifex Maximus, the high priest of Rome, founded by Numa, exists to this day and is held by the Pope. The endurance of these orders — which modern political science refers to as institutions — allowed the virtù of these founders to be preserved in Rome and transmitted to future generations. Yet, for these *ordini* to continue to work as sources of virtù for Rome, they had to be renewed or refounded occasionally. I have already discussed the first instance of this in Roman history, when Tullus refounded the Legion after Numa had allowed it to lapse. However, the most important example of a refounder is the man who refounded the city of Rome itself, Marcus Furius Camillus.

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<sup>299</sup> Machiavelli claims that Castruccio Castracani was initiated as a member of the Senate in *La Vita*.

## Refounder: Marcus Furius Camillus

Machiavelli discusses Marcus Furius Camillus only in the *Discorsi*, but Camillus's presence is justifiably felt throughout Machiavelli's great treatise on republican governance. As with Romulus, Camillus displayed his virtù as both a soldier and a type of founder. Camillus is a legendary figure in Roman history. His life and career bridged the semi-mythical time before the Gaulic sack of Rome in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E and the post-sack time for which more reliable records were preserved for later historians (such as Livy). He is said to have served as Military Tribune with Consular power six times and as Dictator a record five times (Plutarch: Camillus 37.1, 1.1).<sup>300</sup> Camillus is credited with finally winning the long war against the rival Etruscan city of Veii, of driving off Brennus and the Gauls who sacked Rome,<sup>301</sup> and leading the Romans in many battles against all of the various neighboring peoples who attacked the Romans in the wake of the Gaulic sack of Rome.

However, despite Camillus's well earned reputation of being the best general of his day, Machiavelli specifically mentions his military virtù only once. Here,

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<sup>300</sup> Plutarch. "Camillus" in *Plutarch's Lives* with an English Translation by Bernadotte Perrin. Cambridge, MA. Harvard University Press. London. William Heinemann Ltd. 1914. 2. Accessed on Perseus: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0007.tlg011.perseus-eng1:1.1>

<sup>301</sup> From what I understand, modern historians do not believe that Camillus came back and drove off Brennus and the Gauls. See Mike Duncan (2019; p. 98). However, Livy (5.49) and Plutarch (*Camillus* 29) both certainly give credence to this story. As noted above, Machiavelli does not seem bothered that some of the ancient histories' accounts of these individuals were not entirely factual as this does not, I think, diminish their usefulness as examples of virtù. But see Pitkin (1984. p. 105) who seems to believe that Machiavelli's use of mythical exemplars whose examples are unachievable because they are mythical (and often contradictory) significantly weakens his overall project.

Machiavelli quotes Livy (5.26), in describing Camillus's military discipline, "the soldiers both hated and marveled at his virtù" (D 3:23).<sup>302</sup> They marveled at his "concern, prudence, the greatness of his *animo*, the good order that he observed in employing himself, and commanding soldiers" (D 3:23.1).<sup>303</sup> Indeed, Machiavelli refers to Camillus as the most prudent of all Rome's captains based on how he managed the necessity of those inside Veii when his soldiers stormed the city (D 3:13.3). Camillus was hated because he was "more severe in punishing than liberal in rewarding" (D 3:23).<sup>304</sup> While this approach to military discipline is approved by Machiavelli<sup>305</sup> and was one of the reasons for Camillus's success in war, Machiavelli lists it as a reason why Camillus was exiled after he conquered Veii. He was not recalled until the Gauls sacked Rome (D 3:23).<sup>306</sup> Though Camillus was a great captain, Machiavelli clearly finds Camillus's virtù more useful as an example of a refounder than as an example of a great captain.

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<sup>302</sup> "eius virtutem milites oderant et mirabantur." I use the Mansfield/Tarcov translation of Machiavelli's quote of Livy's Latin, but use "virtù" for their "virtue." Luce's (1998) translation is "they both hated and admired his worth."

<sup>303</sup> "...la sollicitudine, la prudenza, la grandezza dello animo, il buon ordine che lui servava nello adoperarsi e nel comandare agli eserciti..."

<sup>304</sup> "...più severo nel gastigargli che liberale nel remunerargli."

<sup>305</sup> According to Machiavelli, this severity also made Camillus the right type of captain for a republican army because it ensured that his soldiers did not prioritize their loyalty to him above their loyalty to the republic. I will address this in fuller detail below when I address the use of virtù in maintaining military discipline (Chapter 4).

<sup>306</sup> Indeed, this discussion appears in the chapter titled "For what reasons Camillus was banished from Rome", in Italian: "Per quale cagione Cammillo fusse cacciato di Roma". The three reasons that Machiavelli reports Livy as providing were: (1) He put the spoils taken at Veii into the public treasury rather than distributing them to his soldiers. (2) his chariot at his triumphal procession was pulled by four white horses, a dignity traditionally reserved for monarchs and that Machiavelli said was interpreted by Camillus's contemporaries as a sort of claim to divinity. (See Plutarch *Camillus* 7.1). And (3) he made his soldiers return 1/10th of what spoils he had given them (and set aside one-tenth of Veii's land) to fulfill a pre-battle pledge he had made to Apollo to dedicate one-tenth of the spoils to him if Camillus's army was victorious in the storming of Veii. (See Plutarch *Camillus* 7.4-8.2).

Machiavelli praises Camillus so highly for his actions after he was recalled to Rome and after the Gauls departed. According to Livy, it was for driving off Brennus and his Gauls that Camillus's soldiers "deservedly called him Romulus, parent of his county and the city's second founder" (Livy 5.49).<sup>307</sup> However, for Machiavelli it was Camillus's later conduct and actions which earned him the glory as Rome's refounder. In contrast to Romulus, Camillus's role as the refounder of Rome came not from him being a great giver of laws or maker of new modes and orders for the Romans, but as one who brought the Romans back to the old, traditional modes of the republic and as the shield behind which the Romans could rebuild and renew themselves.

Machiavelli claims that during the years immediately preceding the sack of Rome by the Gauls the Romans had begun to relax their devotion to their religion<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> "Romulus ac parens patriae conditorque alter urbis haud vanis laudibus appellabatur." I use T.J. Luce's (1998) English translation. Interestingly, Plutarch's version of events does not have Camillus's soldiers praise him by calling him Romulus, but rather has his political opponents claim that "He wished not merely to be a leader and general of Rome, but to thrust Romulus to one side and be styled its founder" (Plutarch, *Camillus* 31.2). This attack on Camillus's character is ironic because it was levied against him by those who, in the wake of the Gallic sack of Rome, wanted to move the population of Rome *en masse* to the depopulated but still intact Veii. If Camillus had, instead of resisting this call, embraced it, he would have effectively been the founder of this new city of Romans in Veii.

<sup>308</sup> Three Fabii brothers had violated their sacred duties as ambassadors by engaging in war against the Gaulic tribe they had been sent to speak with as diplomats. When they were denounced by the Fetiales, the priesthood responsible for determining whether Rome could go to war, the "The Senate referred the matter to the people, and although the priests with one accord denounced Fabius, the multitude so scorned and mocked at religion as to appoint him military tribune, along with his brothers" (Plutarch, *Camillus* 18.2). According to Livy and Plutarch, this so offended the Gaulic king Brennus that he marched against Rome, eventually sacking the city. The Roman army which was led out to face the Gauls "had neglected all religious rites, having neither sacrificed with good omens, nor consulted the prophets as was meet before the perils of battle" (Plutarch, *Camillus* 18.4). For McCormick (2016), this is an example of the wholesale corruption of Rome's nobility and demonstrates that the "external accident" of the Gaulic sack was not chance or *Fortuna* but caused by Roman imprudence and corruption. "Pocock, Machiavelli and Political Contingency in Foreign Affairs: Republican Existentialism Outside (and Within) the City", *History of European Ideas*, DOI: 10.1080/01916599.2016.1198073.

and their respect for the *virtù* of their citizens was diminished (D 3:1).<sup>309</sup> However, the sacking of their city shook the Romans as if from a stupor and caused them to renew their religious zeal and respect for individual citizens with *virtù*. Camillus was not the cause of these renewals but was, nevertheless, at the center of each. In the aftermath of the Gaulic sack of Rome, the Romans were faced with the problem of rebuilding while suffering near constant attack by hostile neighbors who seized the opportunity to prey upon the weakened city. One solution to the problem—which, according to Livy, was advocated by the Tribunes of the Plebs (Livy 5.50)—was to abandon Rome and migrate to the nearby, empty city of Veii. Camillus, however, opposed such a move mostly on the basis that it would force individual families to abandon their household gods and force the city to abandon all of its important shrines to the city’s gods; the temples could not just be moved to Veii (Livy 5.51-54). Moving would be grossly impious to the deities of the religion established by Numa and whom the Romans credited with having seen them through that recently survived crisis.<sup>310</sup> These reasons were the most persuasive to the Roman people, and coupled with an additional sign from the gods that they should stay, the people rejected the bill for moving to Veii (Livy 5.55). That the Romans as a people refused to migrate to Veii

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<sup>309</sup> According to John McCormick (“Pocock, Machiavelli, and Political Contingency”) the envy of particular senators and the hatred of the plebs which caused Camillus to be exiled is not merely an example of this lack of respect for *virtù* but *is*, for Machiavelli, definitive of it.

<sup>310</sup> In the speech that Livy gives him (5.51-54), Camillus goes out of his way to stress the impiety of abandoning Jupiter Optimus Maximus, the Jupiter whose temple was the Capitol, on the Capitoline hill on which the Romans had managed to hold out against the Gauls. Jupiter was also credited with warning the Romans of the Gaulic attempt to storm the Capitol in the famous instance in which the Capitoline geese (who were sacred to Juno) warned the Romans of the sneak attack and Manlius led the Roman counter attack, for which he was called Capitolineus.

for what, according to Livy, were mostly religious reasons demonstrates that they had regained their ancient piety.<sup>311</sup>

The deference of the Romans to Camillus, after the decision to stay had been made, demonstrated that they had regained their respect and appreciation for citizens with virtù. Actually, the devastation of the sack of Rome was so dire “that the virtù of Furius Camillus, after he had freed Rome from the oppression of the Gauls, had made all Roman citizens, without appearing to take away their reputation or greatness, yield to him”<sup>312</sup> to such a great extent that Camillus had a form of tacit unconstitutional super-authority over the city (D 1:8). Even though Camillus’s extra authority was only occasionally held legally (in the form of appointments to the office of Dictator, which occurred at least three times during the next few years), his unique *auctoritas* made him the *de facto* sole leader of the city in a way that approached that recommended by Machiavelli as necessary to successfully reorder a state (D 1:9).<sup>313</sup> However, unlike

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<sup>311</sup> Plutarch also credits the people’s eventual choice to stay in Rome to religious considerations but, compared to Livy, minimizes the role Camillus played in the deliberations and eventual decision (Plutarch, *Camillus* 31.2-32.3).

<sup>312</sup> “...che la virtù di Furio Camillo, poi ch’egli ebbe libera Roma dalla oppression de’Franciosi, avesse fatto che tutti I cittadini romani, senza parere loro tòrsi riputazione o grado cedevano a quello...” Machiavelli refers to both the French and the Gauls as “the French”.

<sup>313</sup> But see McCormick (“Pocock, Machiavelli, and Political Contingency”) who completely disagrees. McCormick argues: (1) Deference to Camillus was not demonstrative of the Romans’ renewed respect for virtù; rather, it *was* what it meant to have a renewed respect for virtù. (2) McCormick claims that Camillus held Rome like a city he had conquered (p.5) because Camillus’s actions to protect the city were that his “colleagues surrendered all their authority to him, and also how he posted armed guards at the Senate and the popular assemblies” (D 3:30), which looked very similar to when he put down a revolt by several Latin cities by placing guards in and taking hostages from each city (D 2:23). However, What Machiavelli actually wrote that Camillus did was to put one of his colleagues in the Senate, one in the popular assemblies, and one in charge of an army that he left to guard the city because Roman territory was actually under attack (D 3:30). McCormick is correct to note that Camillus’s colleagues as Military Tribunes with Consular authority, who were legally his equal, deferred to him. But, this deference was in response to the lesson that the Romans had learned from when the military tribunes failed to successfully prosecute the war against the Gauls, in part because there was no single leader, which resulted in the sacking of the city (Plutarch, *Camillus* 18.5). Further,

the situation faced by Agis and Cleomenes, the Spartan kings who attempted to return Sparta to the laws and orders of Lycurgus, that city's famous lawgiver (D 1:9), Rome's laws and orders were mostly still conducive to a free way of life. Rather, as noted above, it was the Roman modes that needed to be returned to its beginning, which is why Camillus did not assume supreme power for himself as he would need to do in order to reform the laws and orders of the city. This is what Cleomenes did by killing the Ephors in Sparta (D 1:9) and Sulla and Caesar did by having themselves declared dictator for life (though Caesar certainly was not attempting to return Rome to its republican beginnings).<sup>314</sup> Had the Romans proceeded further in the direction in which they were headed, the bad modes with which they proceeded would have corrupted their orders and laws, but their way down that path was halted by the Gaulic sack.

Although the Romans were no longer in danger of continuing down that path, they were in real danger of being militarily overwhelmed by their enemies. This is why I contend that Camillus's most important role as 'the second founder of Rome'

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this deference occurred only because Camillus was already a Military Tribune with Consular power. If he had not been, the Senate would have appointed him dictator (Livy 6.6), which would have given Camillus *de jure* the authority needed to defend Rome, which he was able to use *de facto* because of the (patriotic) voluntary deference of his colleagues. In contrast to McCormick's interpretation, Camillus did not treat Rome like a conquered subject, nor did the Romans in deferring to Camillus treat him like a conqueror. Rather, both followed what was the traditional and virtuous *modo* of selecting the leader of the republic based on *virtù* (D 1:20).

<sup>314</sup> John McCormick would disagree with my claim that a reformer need not have sole power in order to reform corrupt *modi* when the laws and *ordini* are not corrupt. He argues that examples of those normally referred to as tyrants (such as Agathocles) are actually those whom Machiavelli had in mind when he wrote about the correct *modi* for reforming a republic. See McCormick (2015). John McCormick, "Machiavelli's Greek Tyrant as Republican Reformer" in *The Radical Machiavelli: Politics, Philosophy, and Language*. Filippo Del Lucchese, Fabio Frosini, and Vittorio Morfino eds. Leiden and Boston: Brill. 2015. pages 337-348.

was his role as the shield that defended the Romans from these threats.<sup>315</sup> The Romans “put so much esteem in the virtù and goodness of Camillus that, the Senate and others put behind them all envy, they put back on him all the weight of that republic” (D 3:1).<sup>316</sup> Rome needed a single man to coordinate her defenses while she rebuilt and recovered from the Gaulic sack. The office of dictator was the order that was supposed to allow for responses to emergencies, but that office (usually) had a term of only six months and Rome was in a state of emergency for years, not months, after the sack. Although it was necessary for the Romans to cede Camillus this power to protect them from external threats, it presented the potential danger of internal discord if his fellow citizens followed Manlius Capitolinus in being envious of Camillus’s glory and authority.

Here we see the importance of Camillus’s reputation and the high esteem his countrymen had for his virtù. Camillus was able to take nearly absolute power without it appearing to denigrate those who legally held power through their respective elective offices. This was not accomplished through clever manipulation, but because the virtù of Camillus was so great that there was no shame in deferring to him. Machiavelli uses this as an example of one of the two means by which envy can be eliminated in a republic: that an event so dreadful occurs that each “put aside every ambition, run voluntarily to obey the one that they believe with his virtù can liberate

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<sup>315</sup> See Duncan’s gloss of Livy (6.1-6.10, 6.22-6.27, 6.38, 6.42) and Plutarch (*Camillus* 33.1-43.1) in Mike Duncan, *The History of Rome Volume I: The Republic*. Ed. Peter D. Campbell. Herodotus Press. 2016. Pag 102.

<sup>316</sup> “...appresso tanto stimorono la virtù e bonità di Cammillo che, propsto il Senato e gli altri ogni invidia, rimettevono in lui tutto il pondo di quella republic.” I quote the Inglese text of *Discorsi*, the Capata edition has different comma placements for this passage.

them; as Camillus intervened”<sup>317</sup> to lead the Romans through being attacked on multiple fronts in the aftermath of the Gaulic sack without needing to be named a Dictator (D 3:30).<sup>318</sup> The seizure of near absolute power by Camillus occurred when he was a Military Tribune with Consular power and had four colleagues who were legally his equal. However, there was no need to name a Dictator because each of Camillus’s colleagues subordinated themselves to him so that he could coordinate the defense of their fatherland. Had any of these four men harbored a great envy, they would not have allowed Camillus, their equal in rank, to treat them as subordinates. But, it seems that no other Roman followed Manlius Capitolinus in harboring such envy of Camillus that they would not defer to him for the public good.

Camillus’s virtù made him a successful military commander and allowed him to save his fatherland from the Gauls. Before the sack, Camillus was considered great for the victories he had won. But those great victories only made him a great captain. What he did to earn Machiavelli’s high praise was that, when turned to in the city’s hour of need, Camillus led Rome without evoking the envy of the Romans. Camillus was able to accomplish these latter feats partially because of the respect that his countrymen had for his virtù and past military accomplishments. It was through his example and behind the protective shield of his leadership that Rome was able to refound itself and rebuild.

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<sup>317</sup> “...proposta ogni ambizione, corre volontariamente a ubbidire a colui che crede che con la sua virtù lo possa liberare; come intervenne a Cammillo...”

<sup>318</sup> The other way envy is eliminated is when the envious die (D 3:30), as in the case of Manlius Capitolinus, who demonstrates just how far men are willing to go in an attempt to sate their envy (D 3:8).

### Conclusions about the Virtù of Founders and Refounders

Based on the above account, there are two ways in which Machiavelli discusses how these founders displayed and made use of their virtù. The first of these is the relationship between their virtù and *fortuna*. Romulus, of course, owed nothing to *fortuna* but the *occasione* to seize power, an *occasione* that he could not have seized without his virtù of *animo*. Indeed, as has been mentioned, Romulus possessed great virtù. In fact, was so great that Numa's ability to rule Rome in peace for decades was due to the virtù of Romulus, rather than to his own virtù or to *fortuna*.

The role that *fortuna* played in the success of Tullus is more uncertain because, though he had great virtù, he imprudently risked the whole virtù of his army on the virtù of only a small part of it when he agreed to allow the outcome of the battle between the Horatii and Curiatii triplets to decide the outcome of the war between Rome and Alba Longa (D1:23). Due to Tullus's imprudent agreement to risk the liberty of Rome on the virtù and *fortuna* of just three of his soldiers selected by *Fortuna* (Livy 1.23)<sup>319</sup> Tullus relied on *fortuna* for the outcome of the combat rather than on virtù. So, whereas the victory of Horatius over the Curiatii was due to Horatius's virtù (D 1.24), the fact that Horatius possessed the virtù to win was almost certainly due to *fortuna*.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> Livy is referencing the Roman goddess.

<sup>320</sup> Unless we are to believe either that any trio of Romans could have won that fight or that Tullus only agreed to the contest because he knew that the Horatii could win it. I find neither plausible.

Machiavelli does not write of *fortuna* in relationship to Camillus's virtù. However, Machiavelli does describe Camillus's refounding of Rome as a result of the "external accident"<sup>321</sup> of the Gaulic sack, which although not explicitly *fortuna*, is certainly closer to being dependant on *fortuna* than it is to the city prudently reevaluating its modes and orders to prevent and eliminate corruption. Thus, it is plausible to read the sack of Rome by the Gauls as the *occasione* for the Republic to reform itself under the temporary leadership of Camillus. Certainly, if Camillus had been of a different mind, he could have used the sack of Rome as the *occasione* to found a new settlement at Veii. The people and Tribunes were already agitating for moving *en mass* to the depopulated but still standing city, and it was largely through Camillus's efforts that the Romans did not abandon the seven hills. Had Camillus been less pious and more ambitious, he might have moved the Romans to Veii and taken the *occasione* to found a new city.

The second way in which Machiavelli discusses how these founders displayed and made use of their virtù is their ability to use their virtù to shape matter into form. Romulus, Numa, and Tullus are all described as creating laws, orders, and modes to shape Rome based on their visions and using their virtù. By contrast, Camillus does not create laws or orders and only indirectly recreates modes. Further, when Machiavelli discusses the ordering actions of Romulus, Numa, and Tullus there is seldom mention of the people (the matter) whom they are forming through the laws, orders, and modes that they create, while Machiavelli's discussion of Camillus is

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<sup>321</sup> "accidente estrinseco"

centrally focused on his interactions with his fellow citizens who may either defer to him or enviously resist his attempts to bring back Rome to its birth (that is, refund it).

Each of the first three kings of Rome form orders in aspects of Roman life where none existed: Romulus founded the city of Rome, the legions, and the Senate and popular assemblies; Numa founded the most important institutes of Roman religion but allows the legions to lapse into formlessness; Tullus (re)founded the legions from scratch. Even though, after Romulus orders the Senate and people's assembly, none of these kings held sole power or were "alone in the government" of the city, they were "alone in the government" of the orders that they were forming because neither the Senate nor the people's assembly yet had a role in those institutions (D 1:9). Further, they were "armed prophets" in the sense that they were able to rely on their own virtù<sup>322</sup> and arms to secure the success of their founding projects (P 6) against any competitors that might arise.

By contrast, Camillus was neither an armed prophet nor was he alone in the government of the Roman modes, which needed revision. Even when he had the ultimate and sole authority over life and death and government policy when serving as dictator, Camillus did not have the authority or means (or desire) to give form to the city's laws and orders. Rather than lead Rome by arms and lawgiving, Camillus's virtù and the extraordinary situation allowed him to lead Rome by example, persuasion, and consensus through a rebirth of its modes.

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<sup>322</sup> Or, as stated above, that Numa was able to rely on Romulus's virtù.

## 5.1.2 Romans

### 8 Horatius (D 1:23)

(See also descript of 21 Tullus above)

However great Tullus's prudence in deciding to recreate Rome's army, and his virtù in creating it so quickly, Tullus's policy in his first military encounter was a bad one. This is the example of the encounter between the Horatii and the Curiatii, where in order to avoid battle Tullus and the Alban leader Mettius agreed to let the outcome of the combat between two sets of three brothers, the Horatii for Rome and the Curiatii for Alba, decide the fate of the two peoples. By agreeing to this form of combat, the leaders "committed all the *fortuna* of their country and the virtù of many men, the numbers had the one and the other of the people in their armies, to the virtù and *fortuna* of three of their citizens, that came to be a minimal part of their forces..." (D 1:23).<sup>323</sup> For Machiavelli, it is a bad policy to risk everything on only a part of your available resources. Tullus and Rome had the great *fortuna* "the merits of Horatius were very great, having with his virtù defeated the Curiatii" (D1:24).<sup>324</sup> Despite Horatius's great virtù, the conquest of Alba is the first, and least prudently executed example of Roman expansion through conquest. We will now move on to examine the examples of citizens with virtù from the republican period, which make up the bulk of Machiavelli's examples of Roman politicians with virtù.

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<sup>323</sup> "...commissono la fortuna tutta della patria loro e la virtù di tanti uomini, quanti aveva l'uno e l'altro di costoro negli eserciti suoi, alla virtù e fortuna di tre de'loro cittadini, che veniva a essere una minima parte delle forze..."

<sup>324</sup> "Erano stati i meriti di Orazio grandissimi, avendo con la sua virtù vinti i Curiatii..."

## 9 Lucius Quintius Cincinnatus (D 3:25)

The example of Lucius Quintius Cincinnatus is one of these examples of Rome seeking virtù wherever it may be found. When Rome found itself in a crisis and determined to appoint a dictator, Cincinnatus, the most virtuous citizen of his age, was impoverished. But, because “poverty did not impede the way to any rank or any honor, and similarly Rome went to seek virtù in any house it inhabited,” it was virtù and not wealth which causes men to be named to the dictatorship, as was Cincinnatus (3:25).<sup>325</sup> Machiavelli quotes Livy (III 26) as reprimanding his contemporaries with the example of Cincinnatus, “It is worth listening to by those who scorn all human things in comparison with wealth and do not think there is any place for great honor and virtù except where riches flow” (3:25).<sup>326</sup> For both Machiavelli and Livy, Cincinnatus is an exemplar of the republican virtù of the period when the virtuoso citizen, after serving his country, returned to his small farm and poverty. When these *modi* and *ordini* were maintained, the Republic flourished and grew. But when citizens with virtù who were poor were no longer honored by the state and, as a result, thought more about serving their own interests than the republic which clearly cared nothing for them, the republic faded and died

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<sup>325</sup> “...la povertà non ti era impedita la via a qualunque grado e a qualunque onore, e come e’ si andava a trovare la virtù in qualunque casa l’abitasse.

<sup>326</sup> “Operae praetium est audire, qui omnia prae divitiis humana spernunt, neque honori magno locum, neque virtuti putant esse, nisi effusae affluent opes.” I use the Mansfield/Tarcov translation of Livy’s latin, but use “virtù” for their “virtue.”

### 10 Tempanius, a Roman Centurion (D 3:18)

Machiavelli gives the example of a confusing battle against the Aequi in which “Tempanius, a centurion, by whose virtù that Roman army that day was not broken entirely” (3:18.2).<sup>327</sup> So to add to the examples of excellent captains, we have examples of weak captains who loose with a virtuoso army and of a virtuoso army succeeding either without or despite its captains.

### 11 Manlius Capitolinus (D 1:58, D 3:8)

(See also 7 Camillus Above)

The one Roman who seemed immune to the otherwise universal sense that deferring to Camillus did not lessen their reputation or greatness was Manlius Capitolinus. When the Romans were under siege by the Gauls in the Capitol, Manlius had saved them from a Gaulic sneak attack, which is where he earned the divine cognomen Capitolinus. After the sack of Rome, Manlius was envious that Camillus enjoyed all of the glory for saving the city, though without Manlius’s own part there would have been nothing left to save. According to Machiavelli, through the example of Manlius “one sees how much *virtù* of *animo* and of body, how many good actions done in favor of his fatherland, canceled later by an ugly greed for rule; that, as one

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<sup>327</sup> “...uno Tempanio centurione, per la virtù del quale lo esercito romano quel giorno non era stato rotto interamente.”

sees, was born in this man for the envy that he had of the honors given to Camillus...”(D 3:8).<sup>328</sup> Manlius responded by initiating a conspiracy against the state which had denied him honors equal to what he thought he was due, for which, when the conspiracy was divulged, he was tried and condemned to death. Though Manlius was loved by the citizens of Rome for his virtù and heroism on the Capitoline Hill, “no one in that city moved to defend a citizen overflowing with every virtù, and that publicly and privately had done very many laudable actions” (D 3:8).<sup>329</sup> And, though Manlius was mourned after his death by those very citizens who had condemned him to death, according to Machiavelli, “if the Roman people desired Manlius Capitolinus [after he was] dead, do not marvel; because they desired his virtù, which was such that the memory of it brought compassion to everybody...” but the Romans would have, nonetheless, condemned him to death again (D 1:58).<sup>330</sup> This was because the Romans loved virtù in their citizens and mourned for citizens of virtù who died, but they did not love citizens with virtù more than their country or their freedom. For Machiavelli, this example demonstrates the excellent institutions of Rome at the time for, had Manlius been born when Rome was corrupt, his virtù and impetuousness would have made him great (D 3:8). It is impossible to know whether the example of Manlius Capitolinus was one of a citizen who impatiently demanded honor for his virtù before the city had a chance to honor it, or if this example is a rare deviation from the Roman

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<sup>328</sup> “...si vede quanta virtù d’animo e di corpo, quante buone opera fatte in favore della patria, cancella dipoi una brutta cupidità di regnare; la quale, come si vede, nacque in costui per la invidia che lui aveva degli onori erano fatti a Cammillo...”

<sup>329</sup> “...nessuno di quella città si mosse a difendere uno cittadino pieno d’ogni virtù, e che publicamente e privatamente aveva fatte moltissime opera laudibili.”

<sup>330</sup> “...se il popolo romano desiderava Manlio Capitolino morto, non è maraviglia; perché ei desiderava le sue virtù, le quali eran state tali che la memoria di esse recava compassione a ciascuno...”

practice of seeking virtù and honoring it where ever it may be found, whatever age the virtuous citizen may be and whether they be rich or poor.

**12 Publius Valerius Corvinus (D 1:60, D 3:22, D 3:38), 13 Manlius Torquatus (D 2:16, D 3:19, D 3:22, D 3:22, D 3:34), and 14 Publius Decius (D 2:16, D 3:1)**

### **12 Publius Valerius Corvinus**

An example of Rome seeking virtù wherever it could be found is Marcus Valerius Corvinus. Corvinus was elected consul at the age of twenty-three, because Rome “always went to seek virtù whether it was in the young or in the old” (D 1:60).<sup>331</sup> Nor, according to the speech given to Corvinus by Livy (VII 32), was he elected because he was a member of the Valerius family, one of the most prominent patrician families in Rome (who descended from Publius Valerius Publicola, who was consul in 509 B.C., the first year of the republic). Rather Corvinus’s election was “the reward of virtù, not of blood” (D 1:60).<sup>332</sup> Corvinus was elected consul the year after winning a duel with a Gaulic warrior before a battle, when before the duel, but after Corvinus had accepted, a raven landed on his shield and participated in attacking the

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<sup>331</sup> “...sempre si andò a trovare la virtù o in giovane o in vecchio che la fusse.”

<sup>332</sup> “...praemium virtutis, non sanguinis.” I use the Mansfield/Tarcov translation of Livy’s Latin, but use “virtù” for their “virtue.”

Gaulic warrior, a clear sign of favor by the gods. Machiavelli uses a speech from late in Corvinus's life as the example of why a captain should be appointed on the basis of virtù. As he readied his men for battle against the Samnites, he spoke to his soldiers "proclaiming the virtù of his soldiers and his own,"<sup>333</sup> Corvinus argued that they need not fear this new foe who had yet to prove that their skills in combat matched their words, but that his skills as a captain and a soldier were well known, and his soldiers should look to his example and follow his deeds in combat (D 3:38). Here Corvinus demonstrates both the virtù that Machiavelli wishes republican captains to emulate and the mode of discipline he does not think wise for captains of republican armies to emulate. The virtù of Corvinus as captain is that he was experienced in combat both as soldier and commander and had won his honors with these skills. The discipline, which, while effective, Machiavelli believes dangerous in a republic, will be dealt with in contrast to Manlius Torquatus, below.

### **13 Titus Manlius Torquatus (and 14 Publius Decius)**

Titus Manlius Torquatus is another citizen who first displayed his virtù when young. In contrast to Corvinus, who did so on the battlefield, Torquatus by "defending his father so virtuously and extraordinarily from the accusation of a tribune, and for this action grabbed his first reputation"<sup>334</sup> and second, like Corvinus, by defeating a

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<sup>333</sup> "...allegando la virtù de'souì soldati e la propria."

<sup>334</sup> "...defenso ch'egli il padre tanto virtuosamente e istaordinariamente, e per questa azione presa la prima reputazione sua..."

Gaul in single combat (D 3:34). Apparently, Torquatus's means for defending his father from the tribune was to force the tribune, at sword point, to swear an oath to drop the charges against his father. When Torquatus commanded armies later in life, he lost none of this severity, for which he is best known. Rather than making himself loved by his troops, Torquatus made them fear him, a tactic Machiavelli notes would succeed less than being loved by the troops "if it was not already accompanied by an excessive virtù, as was Manlius Torquatus" (D 3:19).<sup>335</sup> Torquatus's most extreme example of this earns him a spot on Machiavelli's list of examples of those who vigorously defend the *ordini* which preserve the republic, when he killed his own son for engaging the enemy against orders in the Latin War (D 3:1). For Machiavelli, this brutal action was one of the reasons the Romans won the Latin War.

For Machiavelli, the Romans and Latins who engaged in the Latin War were so alike in virtù, in military *ordini*, and in strength of arms, that the outcome of the battle would come down to sheer obstinacy: whichever side gave in second would win. For Machiavelli's Livy, the only "difference was that the captains of the Roman army were more virtuosi than those of the Latin army" (D 2:16).<sup>336</sup> And to inspire this greater (and decisive) obstinacy in the Roman army, Torquatus had to kill his son, while Publius Decius (Torquatus's consular colleague) had to sacrifice himself — an act for which he, and his son who did the same in a later war, are included in Machiavelli's examples of citizens with simple virtù that maintain a republic (D 3:1.3). Machiavelli cites Livy's conclusion "that only the virtù of Manlius gave that

<sup>335</sup> "...se già e' non erano accompagnati da una eccessiva virtù, come fu Manlio Torquato."

<sup>336</sup> "...differenza che i capi dello esercito romano furono più virtuosi che guelli dello esercito latino."

victory to the Romans” (D 3:22).<sup>337</sup> Thus, Manlius Torquatus gets the credit for the victory in a very closely contested fight between two extremely closely matched armies, in which only his and Decius’s superior virtù was the difference between the two forces.

### **Publius Valerius Corvinus Compared to Titus Manlius Torquatus**

Manlius Torquatus and Valerius Corvinus were of equal virtù, but had very different methods for maintaining the discipline of their troops, and Machiavelli claims that Torquatus’s were better for a republic. Machiavelli opens the comparison by telling us that

“There were in Rome at the same time two excellent captains, Manlius Torquatus and Valerius Corvinus; they lived in Rome with equal virtù, with equal triumph and glory; and each of them, in everything as pertained to the enemy, they seized with equal virtù, but, everything as pertained to armies and to dealings with soldiers, proceeded most differently” (D 3:22).<sup>338</sup>

Corvinus dealt with his soldiers humanely and familiarly, while Torquatus treated them harshly, but both were equally successful, despite their diverse *modi* of proceeding (D 3:22). Machiavelli concludes that, as long as a captain has great virtù, he can maintain discipline using either method, but that in republics, the method of

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<sup>337</sup> “...che solo la virtù di Manlio dette quella vittoria ai Romani.”

<sup>338</sup> “E’ furno in Roma in uno medesimo tempo due capitani eccellenti, Manlio Tarquato e Valerio Corvino; i quali di pari virtù, di pari trionfi e gloria vissono in Roma; e ciascuno di loro, in quanto si apparteneva al nimico, con pari virtù l’acquistarono, ma, quanto si apparteneva agli eserciti e agli’intrattenimenti de’soldati, diversissimamente procederono.” “Intrattenimenti” means literally time spent in between other actions, thus here, time spent in between battles. I follow Mansfield/Tarcov in rendering it “dealings”.

Torquatus is better. The reason is that treating soldiers with the humaneness and familiarity of Corvinus can cause them to develop loyalties to the captain that may compete with their loyalties to the state, and the only reason that this did not occur with the example of Corvinus is that the Romans were not yet corrupt (D 3:22). The harsh discipline of Manlius does not allow for the possibility of these dangerous, potentially competing loyalties to develop (D 3:22). Such loyalties developed in the late republican period once the population was corrupt and are a major reason the republic fell, since soldiers were willing to take their commander's side when the commander was in conflict with the state.

### **Roman Men of Simple Virtù**

**14 Publius Decius (D 2:16, D 3:1), 15 Horatius Coclus (D 3:1), 16 Scaevola (D 3:1), 17 Fabricius (D3:1), 18 Publius Decius (son of 14 Publius Decius) (D 3:1), 19 Marcus Regulus Attilius (D 3:1), 20 Cato the Elder (D 3:1), 21 Cato the Younger (D 3:1)**

One type example which is a source of virtù in Rome, is simply an excellent example of a virtuous citizen. According to Machiavelli, this arises “from these simple virtù[s] of a man...of such reputation and is so exemplary that good men desire to

imitate his virtù and the bad feel ashamed to have a life contrary to his virtù” (3:1).<sup>339</sup> Just as the orders which are a source of virtù need men of virtù to protect them, these men need the orders to allow them to gain reputation such that their simple virtù will be known as an exemplar for others to follow. Machiavelli lists a number of these men, in which he includes Horatius Coclus, Scaevola, Fabricius, the Decii ( Publius Decius and his son with the same name), Marcus Regulus Attilius, Cato the Elder, and Cato the Younger (D 3:1). Horatius Coclus and the Decii gained their reputation on the battlefield. Horatius gained fame for defeating the Curiatii and the Decii for sacrificing their lives to win battles.<sup>340</sup> Their examples not only served to inspire their contemporaries to virtù, but because they were made into legends, their examples could inspire future generations to come.

**22 Scipio Africanus (D 1:29, D 3:21) (compared to 42 Hannibal (P 17, D 2:27, D 3:21, D 3:21))**

Machiavelli uses the example of Hannibal Barca to illustrate why, especially in leading armies, it is better to be feared than loved. Amongst Hannibal’s accomplishments, the one that stands out the most for Machiavelli, in this context, is

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<sup>339</sup> “...dalle simplice vitù d’un uomo...sono di tale riputazione e di tanto esemplo che gli uomini buoni disiderano imitarle e gli cattivi si vergognano a tenere vita contraria a quelle.”

<sup>340</sup> I discussed the Horatii when discussing Tullus in my section on the Roman kings and the Decii in the section on Manlius Torquatus, above.

that his army never rebelled against him (52).<sup>341</sup> According to Machiavelli, this unheard of loyalty and obedience of Hannibal's troops to him was not because of their love of him but because of the reputation "of his inhuman cruelty, this together with his infinite virtù always made him appear to his soldiers venerable<sup>342</sup> and terrifying; and without this [cruelty], to produce this effect, his other virtù[s] would not have been enough" (42-43).<sup>343</sup> The logic behind such a style of leading armies is simple: to make your soldiers fear insubordination against their captain more than they fear the enemy or defeat. Machiavelli says to those who doubt his claim that Hannibal's "other virtù[s] would not have been enough"<sup>344</sup> to consider the case of Scipio Africanus, who had a reputation for pity,<sup>345</sup> which led to his troops rebelling in Spain (53). For Machiavelli, good military discipline is one of the key sources of military virtù, and it is generated by cruel, rather than humane, leadership.

Much of Machiavelli's analysis of Cornelius Scipio Africanus and Hannibal Barca centers on how their very great virtù mitigated the disadvantages of their contrasting modes of maintaining discipline. We will see that Publius Valerius Corvinus maintained discipline with humanness while Titus Manlius Torquatus maintained it with severity, and both were equally successful. Similarly, Scipio

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<sup>341</sup> It is not possible to understate this accomplishment. All of the other great generals of the ancient world had to deal with dissension in the ranks at some time, and often several times.

<sup>342</sup> Machiavelli uses the Italian "*venerando*" which also carries both the connotations of fear and an object of worship.

<sup>343</sup> Wootton: "harsh and cruel. This, together with his numerous virtues [*virtù*], meant his soldiers always regarded him with admiration and fear. Without cruelty, his other virtues [*virtù*] would not have done the job."

<sup>344</sup> Wootton: "his other virtues [*virtù*] would have been insufficient..."

<sup>345</sup> Machiavelli uses the Italian word "*pieta*" which also carries the religious meaning of piety. However, given the context in which Machiavelli uses the word, I believe pity to be the more appropriate translation.

Africanus maintained discipline through making himself loved by his soldiers while Hannibal maintained it by making himself feared by them. And, at least, while Hannibal was in Italy and Scipio in Spain, both were successful (D 3:21). Machiavelli notes that each of these extremes carries with it a disadvantage, but, characteristically, he maintains that the middle path between each extreme is impossible “because our nature does not consent to it” (D 3:21).<sup>346</sup> For Machiavelli, the dangers of the extremes are that those “who too much desire to be loved, [for] every little bit that one departs from that correct course, [they] become despicable; the other that desires too much to be feared, [for] every little that they exceed the *modo*, [they] become hateful” (D 3:21).<sup>347</sup> Thus, as in *il Principe* 17 and 19, to be loved and feared is good, but one must avoid being hated and contemptible. In ruling principalities, avoiding these ills come as policy suggestions: to avoid hatred do not take the property and women of the subjects; to avoid contempt do not appear frivolous, cowardly, or irresolute. However, in maintaining military discipline, there appears to be only one mode to avoid becoming despicable or hated: “it is necessary to mitigate these things that exceed with an excessive virtù, as did Hannibal and Scipio” (3:21)<sup>348</sup>

At first pass, this seems like impossible advice. Machiavelli’s suggestion that the only solution to the problem of maintaining military discipline is to have a commander with virtù comparable to Scipio or Hannibal seems too strict a standard.

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<sup>346</sup> “...perché la nostra natura non ce lo consente...”

<sup>347</sup> “che troppo desidera essere amato, ogni poco che si parte dalla vera via, diventa disprezzabile; quell’altro che desidera troppo di essere temuto, ogni poco ch’egli eccede il modo, diventa odioso.”

<sup>348</sup> “...è necesario queste cose che eccedono mitigare con una eccessiva virtù, come faceva Annibale e Scipione.”

However, I believe Machiavelli to be continuing his advice from *il Principe* 6 that individuals should choose to imitate the most virtuoso and excellent examples, like the “prudent archers” who, knowing the “virtù of their bow” aim higher to reach far off targets. In maintaining military discipline, one could not choose a better exemplar than Hannibal, who, alone amongst the great captains of the ancient world, never had to face dissent in the ranks (D 3:21). “That could not have derived from other than the terror that was born from his person: that was so great, mixed with the reputation that his virtù gave him, that it held his soldiers quiet and united” (3:21).<sup>349</sup> Machiavelli also recommends Hannibal’s example in suing for peace after he returned to Africa and judged that the war could no longer be won. “And if Hannibal, who was so virtuous and had his army intact, sought peace before fighting, when he saw that losing this would change his fatherland to servitude,”<sup>350</sup> then those of lesser virtù should follow his example (D 2:27). However, even following such an excellent example does not guarantee success or the gratitude of one’s fatherland.

Though Hannibal and Scipio had similar success in maintaining discipline in Italy and Spain, respectively, and though Scipio won the war and Hannibal lost, each found his fatherland similarly ungrateful. Hannibal was banished from Carthage, and Scipio was later accused and left Rome.<sup>351</sup> Of Scipio, Machiavelli says he came to be held in suspicion because “of the greatness of the enemy that Scipio had defeated, of

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<sup>349</sup> “Il che non potette dirivare da altro che dal terrore che nasceva dalla persona sua: il quale era tanto grande, mescolato con la riputazione che gli dava la sua virtù, che teneva i suoi soldati quieti e uniti.”

<sup>350</sup> “E se Annibale, il quale era tanto virtuoso e aveva il suo esercito intero, cercò prima la pace che la zuffa, quando ei vidde perdendo quella la sua patria diveniva serva...”

<sup>351</sup> Either because he was banished or because it was a self-imposed exile.

the reputation given him by his victory in a long and perilous war, of the promptness of [his victory], of the favor of his youth, the prudence and other memorable virtù[s] it was acquired” (D 1:29)<sup>352</sup> Such was Scipio’s reputation that the other magistrates of the republic feared his authority in a way they had never feared the authority of another citizen (1:29). It is for this reason that Machiavelli lists the accusation of the Scipiones as an example of a citizen virtuously enforcing the modes and orders of the republic (3:1). Scipio’s mode of maintaining discipline through the love his troops bore him was dangerous to the republic, because it meant that they were personally loyal to him. Though the republic was not yet corrupt, apparently this was seen as a much greater threat than the otherwise similar example of Corvinus above. Though Scipio was never a threat to the republic, it was not long before such commanders would become so.

However, we should note that though Machiavelli condemns the mode of maintaining discipline through making the soldiers love you, employed by Corvinus and Scipio, because it had the potential of making the soldiers personally loyal to them, it was Hannibal, who maintained discipline through making the soldiers fear him, to whom the most intense and constant loyalty was owed.

The other example of the military virtù of Rome’s enemies is Hannibal’s army (in its conflict with Scipio Africanus’s army). In both *il Principe* and the *Discorsi* Machiavelli uses Hannibal as a key exemplar of military and political virtù. And,

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<sup>352</sup> “...dalla grandezza del nimico che Scipionoe aveve vinto, dalla riputazione che gli aveva data la vittoria di sì lunga e pericolosa guerra, dalla celerità di essa, dai favori che la gioventù, la prudenza e le altre sue memorabilia virtudi gli acquistavano.”

indeed, according to Machiavelli, Hannibal is one of the (few) exceptions to the general rule that historians avoid praising the virtù of the vanquished. Hannibal's virtù and military genius was too glorious to be ignored or glossed over. However, in this instance, Machiavelli discusses Hannibal and Scipio Africanus's thinking behind their battle formations at the Battle of Zama. Machiavelli notes that Hannibal put his auxiliaries, which were his weakest and least reliable troops, in front of his more virtuoso veterans, firstly, so that the auxiliaries would not be able to run once the battle had begun and secondly so that they would tire out the Roman troops so that "with his people fresh and virtuosa he could easily beat the already tired Romans" (AG 4:115\*/322).<sup>353</sup> Scipio, saw that "Hannibal had posted all the virtù of his army in the second rank; whence that Scipio, to put forward to that similar virtù, united the principi and triarii together..." so that they would not be overwhelmed when Hannibal's second rank charged (AG 4:115\*/322).<sup>354</sup> Here Machiavelli speaks of the virtù of an army to mean the soldiers in an army that were the strongest and most reliable due to their experience, good modes and orders, and numbers. Part of what makes Hannibal so successful an enemy of the Romans is that he was one of the few enemies with a heavy infantry with virtù almost equivalent to their own. Hannibal's cavalry was vastly superior to that of the Romans for most of the duration of the war, but as we saw with the examples of the Parthians and the Carthaginians in the First Punic War above, the Romans were beating enemies with far superior cavalries.

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<sup>353</sup> "...con la sua gente fresco e virtuosa facilmente i Romani già stracchi superare."

<sup>354</sup> "...Annibale posta tutta la virtù del suo esercito nella second schiera; donde che Scipinone, per opporre, a quella, simile virtù, raccolzò i principi e i triarii insieme..."

**23 Julius Caesar (D 1:33, AG 7:211/366 (F.C.)) (and 37 Alexander the Great (AG 7:211/366 (F.C.)))**

In *Discorsi*:

His virtù was not used for the good of the republic, but for their own good. Of Caesar, Machiavelli says that he was initially “favored by Pompey and others for his virtù, which was soon after converted from favor to fear...”<sup>355</sup> which caused Pompey and the Senate to attempt to take measures against him, which in turn caused him to turn against the republic (D 1:33).

In *dell’Arte della Guerra*:

Machiavelli explains the difference in the risks ancient rulers were willing to run in comparison to his contemporaries. “Hence it came that Caesar, Alexander [the Great] and all such men and excellent princes, were the first in combats, went armed by foot, and if they lost their state, they lost their life; so that they lived and died virtuosamente” (AG 7:211/366).<sup>356</sup> That is, the excellent princes who Machiavelli exhorts us to imitate were led their troops into war personally and virtuously, rather than sending others to fight their wars for them while they remained behind out of harm’s way as Machiavelli sees most of his contemporary princes do.

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<sup>355</sup> “...favorite da Pompeo e dagli altri quella sua virtù, si convertì poco dipoi quel favore in paura...”

<sup>356</sup> “Onde nasceva che Cesare, Alessandro e tutti quegli uomini e principi eccellenti, erano i primii tra’ combattitori, andavano armati a piè, e se pure perdevano lo stato, e’ volevano perdere la vita; talmente che vivevano e morivano virtuosament.”

## **24 Marc Anthony (D 2:18)**

Machiavelli uses the example of Marc Anthony to demonstrate that a largely infantry based army can resist a largely cavalry based army. Though both Crassus and, later, Antony were beaten by the largely cavalry based armies of the Parthians, Machiavelli claims it was not because infantry has less virtù than cavalry, but that Crassus lost because he was deceived (D 2:18). On the other hand, “Marc Anthony virtuously saved himself”<sup>357</sup> such that even “in the judgment of the Parthians themselves, very virtuously saved himself”<sup>358</sup> and the Parthians never even tried to attack his infantry with their cavalry (D 2:18). The main difference between Crassus and Marc Anthony which lead Anthony to save himself and his army and Crassus to be tricked, captured, and put to death was that Crassus lacked military virtù but Marc Anthony was full of it.

## **25 Antonius Primus (D 1:29)**

Machiavelli’s example of Antonius Primus is used to demonstrate that princes are more ungrateful than a people in rewarding virtù. In 69 C.E., the Year of the Four Emperors, when Titus Flavius Vespasian was hailed imperator by his army while

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<sup>357</sup> “...Marc’ Antonio virtuosamente si salvo.”

<sup>358</sup> “...al giudico de’ Parti medesimi, virtuosissimamente si salvo...”

stationed in Judea, Antonius Primus declared for him and marched his legions on Rome (which was then held by Aulus Vitellius). Primus “very virtuously routed two Vitellian armies and occupied Rome; such that Mucianus, sent by Vespasian, found that the virtù of Antonius had acquired everything and defeated every difficulty” (1:29).<sup>359</sup> Despite practically handing Vespasian the empire, Antonius Primus was not rewarded at all, but rather dismissed from his governorship and died soon after (1:29). Princes are not as grateful as peoples because they often cannot be. A prince who rewards a captain with virtù is essentially giving reputation and prestige to a potential rival. This is especially true for princes who came to power through usurpation as Vespasian did because their only claim to power is military victory, a claim their virtuoso captains could also make.

## **26 Marcus Aurelius (P 19) and 27 Septimius Severus (P 19, D 1:10)**

The Roman emperors Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Severus are Machiavelli’s final in *The Prince*, of politicians with virtù. They are considered in the chapter on “Of Avoiding Contempt and Hatred.”(P 19)<sup>360</sup> Here Machiavelli considers the reigns of the Roman Emperors from Marcus Aurelius to Maximinus Thrax: Marcus Aurelius, Commodus, Pertinax, Julian, Septimius Severus, Caracalla,

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<sup>359</sup> “...virkosissimamente ruppe dua eserciti vitelliani e occupò Roma; taché Muziano, mandato da Vespasiano, trovò per la virtù d’Antonio acquistato il tutto e vinta ogni difficoltà.”

<sup>360</sup> “De Contemptu et Odio Fugiendo”

Macrinus, Elagabalus, Alexander Severus, and Maximinus Thrax (P 19). Machiavelli concludes that the reason why, only Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Severus died natural deaths, was because only these two had the virtù to avoid hatred and contempt (P 19). Machiavelli also notes that these Roman Emperors had a more difficult problem to solve in securing their power than his contemporaries, who only had to worry about the competing interests of the nobles and the populace. These Emperors had to deal with the competing interests of the nobles, the populace, and “to have to sustain the cruelty and avarice of the soldiers” (P 19).<sup>361</sup> Of the ten emperors, only Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Severus were able to overcome these difficulties and *mantenere lo stato*,<sup>362</sup> though they did so using very different modes.

Machiavelli establishes Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Severus as nearly diametrically opposed models for how rulers should behave. Marcus Aurelius was a fundamentally good man and a hereditary ruler, while Severus seized power in a civil war and was a generally wicked man. But, both had virtù and were generally successful rulers. Marcus Aurelius successfully *mantenere lo stato* because he had inherited his *stato* (which meant that he did not owe his power to the senate, nor to the soldiers or the people as most subsequent emperors would) and “being accompanied by many virtù[s] that made him venerable, he always held, while he lived, the one [the soldiers] and the other [the populace] ordine within its bounds, and was never hated

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<sup>361</sup> “...di avere a sopportare la crudeltà e avarizia de’ soldati.” It is worth noting that Machiavelli generally confines his discussion to the emperors relationship with the population and the military, ignoring their relationships with the by this time less powerful Roman Senate.

<sup>362</sup> By which I mean Marcus Aurelius and Septimius Severus were the only two of the ten listed who died natural deaths and were succeeded on the throne by their chosen heirs.

nor despised” (P 19).<sup>363</sup> Marcus Aurelius did not have to legitimize his rule as Severus had to, and he never did anything to call this legitimacy into question as Commodus and Caracalla did. Hereditary rulers are, in general, of little interest to Machiavelli, because it is generally so easy for them to retain rule that they have little need of virtù (P 2). Marcus Aurelius’s virtù was not necessary for him to *mantenere lo stato*, but it did make his rule glorious.

Severus was an entirely different type of ruler, because he seized power with the support of his soldiers and was able to consolidate it with their support alone. He was able to accomplish this “because in Severus there was so much virtù”<sup>364</sup> that he could rule securely with the aid of the army alone (P 19). Severus’s “virtù made him in the view of the soldiers and the people so admirable that the latter remained in a certain manner stupefied and astonished, and the former reverent and satisfied.” (P 19).<sup>365</sup> A good deal of the responsibility for this was the reputation Severus gained from the actions which allowed him to defeat the other claimants to the purple. Severus’s actions, according to Machiavelli, show “how well he knew to use the persona of the lion and of the fox” (P 19).<sup>366</sup> Severus seized the *occasione* presented by the death of Pertinax to march on Rome and intimidated the supporters of Julius into abandoning him without battle. However, two other provincial governors had been hailed emperor by their legions: Albinus in Britain and Niger in Syria. Severus

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<sup>363</sup> “...essendo accompagnato da molte virtù che lo facevano venerando, tenne sempre, mentre che visse, l’uno e l’altro ordine in tra e’ termini suoi, en non fu mai odiato né disprezzato.”

<sup>364</sup> “...in Severo fu tanta virtù...”

<sup>365</sup> “...virtù lo facevano nel conceptto de’ soldati e de’ populi sì mirabile che questi rimanevano quodammodo stupidi e attoniti, e quelli altri reverneti e satisfatti.”

<sup>366</sup> “...quanto seppe bene usare la persona del liono e della golpe...”

deceived Albinus into believing that he would name Albinus his heir in exchange for Albinus's support against Niger. After Albinus accepted these terms, Severus defeated Niger in battle. After consolidating power, Severus turned on Albinus and defeated him in battle (P19). After these victories, there was no one in the empire in a position to challenge Severus's rule.

Concluding his discussion of Marcus Antonius and Septimius Severus, Machiavelli advises new rulers to follow both of these examples in part, but not in their entirety. A new ruler cannot follow the example of Marcus Aurelius because he behaved in a way that is only appropriate to a hereditary ruler. However, a new ruler ought not completely to follow the example of Severus either. Of the other eight emperors Machiavelli discusses, he says that Pertinax and Alexander Severus attempted to imitate Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, Caracalla, and Maximinus Thrax attempted to imitate Severus.<sup>367</sup> Those who attempted to imitate Marcus Aurelius failed because his style of action could not be used to consolidate power and by attempting to imitate it, they made themselves hated and contemptible and were thought to be weak (P 19). Those who attempted to imitate Severus failed "for none had so much virtù as would be sufficient to follow in his footsteps" (P 19).<sup>368</sup> Severus's methods required a leader of his great virtù, which seems to exceed the virtù even of most virtuoso leaders. Machiavelli counsels leaders to rely on their virtù, but not to embark on plans of action which require more virtù than they possess. The

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<sup>367</sup> Elagabalus, Macrinus, and Julian are not worth considering, because they "are totally contemptible they were extinguished at once/*essere al tutto contennendi si spensono subito*" (P 19).

<sup>368</sup> "...per non avere àta tanta virtù che bastassi a seguire le vestigie sua."

danger of attempting to follow a course of action beyond one's virtù is that your failure will make you hated and contemptible as it made Commodus, Caracalla and Maximinus Thrax (P 19). For a new leader, virtù will prevent him from imitating Marcus Aurelius and allow him to get away with some degree of imitating Severus.

Still, Machiavelli advises leaders to imitate part of each example. Leaders ought to imitate Severus in "those parts that are necessary for founding your state, and from Marcus those that are fitting and glorious to conserve a state that is already established and firm" (P 19).<sup>369</sup> What a ruler must imitate from the example of Severus is his ability to use the personas of fox and lion in order to seize and consolidate rule. After power is consolidated, the ruler must be able to imitate Marcus Aurelius in the persona of man and lion to conserve and bring glory to his rule.<sup>370</sup> When using the persona of the fox, "it is necessary to know well how to color this nature and to be a great pretender and dissembler" (P 18).<sup>371</sup> Severus could not have tricked Albinus had Albinus known that Severus was the type to engage in such trickery. Additionally, while the roles of the fox and the man are, here, not necessary to imitate at all times, the ruler must always use the persona of the lion. That is, the ruler must always appear to have a strong military which he is willing to use. Finally, unless you have a really exceptional amount of virtù, like Severus, you must imitate Marcus Aurelius in doing glorious deeds and in using the persona of the man in order

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<sup>369</sup> "...quelle parti che per fondare el suo stato sono necessarie, e da Marco quelle che sono convenienti e gloriose a conservare uno stato che sia già stabilito e fermo."

<sup>370</sup> Machiavelli does not discuss the ability of Marcus Aurelius to play the part of the lion, but he was an accomplished military leader whose reign was largely occupied in fighting a series of wars on Rome's Eastern and Northern fronts against the Parthian Empire and a large coalition of Germanic tribes, respectively.

<sup>371</sup> "...è necessario questa natura saperla bene colorire ed essere gran simulatore e dissimulatore..."

to gain the reputation necessary to prevent being hated or contemptible. That is, you must like Marcus Aurelius acquire a reputation as a military leader of virtù and also a reputation as a just and honorable man.

For Machiavelli, you must be able to use the appropriate persona for the circumstances, no matter your natural inclinations; you must have the capacity to do what is necessary. When Machiavelli claims that a leader must know how to use the personas of fox, lion, and man, he means just that: there is no substituting one for the other. A virtuoso politician is one who knows how to imitate all three of these natures and has the prudence necessary to know when to change the nature he imitates with the circumstances. If one fights as a man when the circumstances demand fighting like a lion and a fox, he who chooses to fight like a man will be destroyed. If a ruler fails to conceal his use of the persona of a fox, he will fail in his deception and become hated and contemptible. For the use of the persona of the man is essential for keeping up the appearance that the ruler has all the good qualities which make up what appears to be virtù to most people (P 15). As Machiavelli's advice to selectively imitate Severus and Marcus Aurelius suggests, Machiavelli's admonition to imitate past virtuoso leaders is not an admonition to slavishly imitate their actions in all circumstances. Rather, the point of reading history is to understand what ancient leaders have done in circumstances similar to those in which you find yourself and to imitate those actions which have been successful and avoid those which have failed (P 15). In this manner, a leader can acquire the prudence necessary to know which persona to use under what circumstances.

Machiavelli's (chronologically) last example of a Roman with virtù is Septimius Severus. To explain why Severus died a natural death though he was essentially a criminal, Machiavelli claims this was "born of his very great *fortuna* and virtù, those two things that accompany few men" (D 1:10).<sup>372</sup> Severus is an exception to Machiavelli's general rule that good princes die natural deaths while bad ones are betrayed or deposed, because Severus was exceptional to have so much virtù and *fortuna*. Instead, according to Machiavelli, a virtuoso prince will be just as powerful if he is a good prince as if he is a bad prince, and the good princes will have more security, because there are fewer who would wish them harm (D 1:10). Machiavelli's claim is that it is both in the interest of the principality and in the interest of the prince himself that he be good. For a prince who does not have as much virtù as Severus, cannot imitate him totally, as Machiavelli demonstrated in *il Principe* chapter 19.

## **28 Arcadius and Honorius (the sons of Theodosius) (IF 1:1)**

Theodosius was the last emperor of a united Roman Empire. He had great success in his campaigns against the Goths and other barbarian tribes both before and during his tenure as Emperor and was strong enough to mostly prevent rebellion within the Empire. "But death came to Theodosius and his sons Arcadius and Honorius remained heir of the Empire, but not of his virtù and *fortuna*, the times

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<sup>372</sup> "...nacque da una sua grandissima fortuna e virtù, le ugali due cose pochi uomini accompagnano."

changed [lit: mutated] with the prince” (IF 1:1).<sup>373</sup> Unlike their father, Arcadius and Honorius were weak willed, dim, and ruled by their advisors (especially Stilicho in the West), and were unable to prevent internal revolt or external invasion as their father had done. Indeed, the death of Theodosius marks the beginning of the steep decline of the fortunes of the Western Roman Empire.

### **29 Belisarius (compared to Giovanni and Vitales) (IF 1:6) and 30 Narses (IF 1:8)**

Machiavelli’s discussion of the virtù of Belisarius and Narses comes in the context of their invasions of Italy in the service of the Emperor Justinian, who was attempting to take Italy back for the Empire from the Ostrogoths about a century and a half after the death of Theodosius. Initially, Justinian sent Belisarius to conquer Italy and Belisarius was mostly successful. “And not even having in total obtained the victory, Belisarius was recalled [lit: revoked] by Justinian, and in his place were put Giovanni and Vitales, they were totally different from him in virtù and in customs...”<sup>374</sup> such that the Ostrogoths were able to take back most of Italy (IF 1:6). Later Justinian “sent to Italy with armies Narses, a eunuch, a man very excellent in

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<sup>373</sup> “Ma venuto a morte Teodosio e rimasi Arcadio e Onorio suoi figliuoli eredi dello Imperio, ma non della virtù e fortuna sua, si mutarono, con il principe, i tempi.”

<sup>374</sup> “E non avendo ancora al tutto conseguito la vittoria, fu Bellisario da Iustiniano revocato, e in suo luogo posto Giovanni e Vitale, disformi in tutto a quello di virtù e di costumi...”

war...<sup>375</sup> who was able to, again, reconquer the peninsula for the Empire (IF 1:6). But after Narses was successful, Justinian died and Justin replaced Narses with another captain. “Narses was strongly disdained against the Emperor, for having taken the government of that province that with his virtù and with his blood he had acquired...<sup>376</sup> so much so that Narses invited the Lombards to invade Italy (IF 1:8). Which they did and managed to conquer most of northern Italy, which is now called Lombardy.

### 5.1.3 Non-Roman Ancients

#### 31 David (D 1:19), 32 Solomon (D 1:19), and 33 Rehoboam (D 1:19)

(See also comparison to 4 Romulus, 5 Numa, and 6 Tullus above)

Machiavelli’s discussion of the Kings David, Solomon, and Rehoboam comes as a corroborating example in his discussion of Romulus, Numa, and Tullus (discussed above in section 1.I.A). Machiavelli tells us that Numa was a weak king, able to rule using the arts of peace because Romulus had been such a strong king and that Numa’s reign did not cause disaster in Rome because Tullus, who followed him, was a strong king like Romulus. This pattern was not followed by the Kings of Israel:

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<sup>375</sup> “...mandò in Italia con gli eserciti Narsete, eunuco, uomo in guerra eccellentissimo...”

<sup>376</sup> “Era Narsete sdegnato forte contro allo Imperadore, per essergli stato tolto il governo di quella provincia che con la sua virtù e con il suo sangue aveva acquistata...”

“David without doubt was a very excellent man in arms, in learning, [and] in judgment; and so much was his virtù, that, having defeated and beaten all of his neighbors, he left to his son Solomon a peaceful kingdom, which he could conserve with the art of peace and not with war, and he could happily enjoy the virtù of his father. But already he could not leave it to Rehoboam his son, who was not of similar virtù as his grandfather, nor of similar fortuna as his father, he remained with exertion heir of the sixth part of the kingdom” (D 1:19).<sup>377</sup>

Machiavelli claims that if a kingdom has two weak kings in a row, it comes to ruin, where Machiavelli explains that by a weak king, he means one that does not rule with the art of war (D 1:19). This occurred in the Kingdom of Israel but not in the Kingdom of Rome because Rehoboam was not of similar virtù to David while Tullus was of similar virtù to Romulus. Machiavelli’s claim about the Kingdom of Israel here is twofold. First, that had Rehoboam been of the same virtù as David, he would have been able to hold the kingdom together and defend it from its neighbors as Tullus was able to do in Rome. Second and more provocatively, Machiavelli seems to be claiming that the weakness of Solomon and of Numa was a liability which put their respective kingdoms in unnecessary risk. Had they been appropriately warlike, then the question of the virtù and strength of their successors would have had lower stakes.

This should be read as a claim against hereditary monarchy. Despite the automatic legitimacy which inheriting the throne from a blood relative brings with it that Machiavelli details in *il Principe 2*, Machiavelli demonstrates here one reason

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<sup>377</sup> “Davit senza dubbio fu un uomo per arme, per dottrina, per giudizio eccellentissimo; e fu tanta la sua virtù, che, avendo vinti e battuti tutti i suoi vicini, lasciò a Salomone suo figliuolo uno regno pacifico, quale egli si potette con l’arte della pace e non con la guerra conservare, e si potette godere felicemente la virtù di suo padre. Ma non potette già lasciarlo a Roboam suo figliuolo, il quale non essendo per virtù simile allo avolo, né per fortuna simile al padre, rimase con fatica erede della sesta parte del regno.”

why blood inheritance is a bad way to select a monarch. Tullus was elected, and was, thus, the best and most capable man in Rome for the job. Rehoboam was not selected because he was the best or most capable man in Israel for the crown, but because he was Solomon's son. And Rehoboam managed to live up to the low expectations for hereditary monarchs. He was a mediocre but not terrible king. But, as Machiavelli reminds us, *virtù* does not necessarily pass from father to son. The son of a very good king can be bad and the son of a bad king can be full of every *virtù* one could desire of a ruler. But, because of this analysis, Machiavelli should give more approval to the sort of elected monarchy which the Romans used than the hereditary monarchy of Israel or of the monarchies of his contemporary Europe. But, more than elective monarchies, Machiavelli favors republics in which the ruler who best suits the times can be elected.

### **34 Dion and Timoleon (D 1:17)**

Dion and Timoleon appear in Machiavelli's discussion of how difficult it is to maintain a republic when the people are corrupt. According to Machiavelli, if the prince of a principality dies or is expelled and the people are not corrupt, they can form a republic as when Tarquinius Superbus was expelled from Rome, but if they are corrupt, they can form a republic only with great difficulty but usually fail to do so (D 1:17). According to Machiavelli, keeping a corrupt city free is only possible through

the virtù and goodness of one man: “just as the interventions of Dion and Timoleon in Syracuse, the virtù of whom in diverse times, while they lived, held that city free: [after they died], it returned to its ancient tyranny” (D 1:17).<sup>378</sup> As Machiavelli sees in the case of Dion and Timoleon, a single man with virtù can take the place of a prince in a corrupt city and, through their goodness, attempt to maintain the city as a republic rather than making themselves prince. But, because the city is corrupt, the virtù of that single man is the only bulwark against the city reverting back into tyranny. It is only with the greatest effort and with good *fortuna* that this single man can order the republic and change the modes of the citizens so that they can continue after his death.

### **35 Epaminondas (D 1:17, D 1:21) and 36 Pelopidas (D 1:21)**

Epaminondas and Pelopidas have the same role in Thebes that Dion and Timoleon had in Syracuse, for Machiavelli.

“Pelopidas and Epaminondas the Thebans, since they had liberated Thebes and separated it from the servitude of the Spartan Empire, they found there a city used to servitude and at its center effeminate peoples, they did not doubt, so much was their virtù, of reducing them to arms and with these went to pay a visit on campaign to the Spartan armies, and they defeated them...” (D 1:21).<sup>379</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> “...come intervenne a Siracusa di Dione e di Timoleone, la virtù de’ quali in diversi tempi, mentre vissono, tenne libera quella città: morti che furono, si ritornò nell’antica tirannide.”

<sup>379</sup> “Pelopida ed Epaminonda tebani, poiché gli ebbero libera Tebe e trattata della servitù dello imperio spartano, trovandosi in una città usa a servire e in mezzo di popoli effeminati, non dubitarono, tanta era

Pelopidas and Epaminondas were able to accomplish two of the feats which Machiavelli praises most highly: freeing their country from the domination of outsiders and training an army of one's fellow citizens that can win. However, due to the servile (corrupt) nature of their countrymen, their reforms did not last after their deaths. In the earlier discussion of how difficult it is to maintain a corrupt people as a republic, what Machiavelli says of Dion and Timoleon (above), he reiterates about Epaminondas. That is, the virtù of one man can keep the corrupt city ordered as a republic, but when he dies, these orders fail: "just as intervening in Thebes, which by the virtù of Epaminondas, while he lived, was able to hold the form of a republic and its empire; but [when he died] it returned to its original disorders" (D 1:17).<sup>380</sup> Here again we see that the virtù of one man (or of two), while enough to hold their city to a republican form of government while they live, cannot force it to retain republican orders if no one is able to imitate their modes after they die. However, as was explained above, this problem is not unique to attempts to maintain republics in corrupt cities. The lack of a worthy successor to a leading politician with virtù is a problem in both principalities and in corrupt republics; only in well ordered republics does Machiavelli believe that this problem is usually overcome.

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la virtù loro, di ridurgli sotto l'armi e con quelli andare a trovare alla campagna gli eserciti spartani, e vincergli..."

<sup>380</sup> "...come intervenne a Tebe, la quale per la virtù di Epaminonda, mentre lui visse, potette tenere forma di republica e imperio; ma morto quello, la si ritornò ne' primi disordini suoi."

**37 Alexander the Great (AG 7:211/366 (F.C.)) (and 30 Julius Caesar (D 1:33; AG 7:211/366 (F.C.)))**

(See 23 Julius Caesar above).

**38 Agathocles**

(See also the discussion in Chapter 1)

Agathocles's most significant appearance in Machiavelli's texts is as the main example in the chapter of *il Principe* titled "Of Those Who Through Wickedness Become Prince" (P 8).<sup>381</sup> This chapter immediately follows the chapters on those who come to power through their own virtù and arms (P 6) and on those who come to power through the *fortuna* and arms of others (P 7) and breaks from the two part typology Machiavelli articulated in the first chapter of *il Principe*, that newly acquired principalities are "acquired either with the arms of others or with one's own, either by *fortuna* or by virtù" (P 1).<sup>382</sup> Machiavelli begins this chapter by saying that there are two additional *modi* for a private citizen to become prince which "one cannot attribute entirely either to *fortuna* or to virtù... These are when either one ascends to the principality by some wicked and nefarious way or when a private citizen becomes

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<sup>381</sup> "De His Qui Per Scelera ad Principatum Pervenere" Agathocles also appears in *Discorsi* book 2: chapters 12-13.

<sup>382</sup> "...acquistonsi con le armi d'altri o con le proprie, o per fortuna o per virtù."

prince of his fatherland with the favor of his fellow citizens” (P 8).<sup>383</sup> Machiavelli discusses the first *modo* in chapter 8 through the examples of Agathocles the Sicilian and Oliverotto Efferducci (da Fermo).<sup>384</sup> I focus on Agathocles because he is the more important example in the development of Machiavelli’s argument and because he is a much more central figure in the secondary literature on Machiavelli than Oliverotto. Although Machiavelli says that Agathocles had *virtù*, he also denies that Agathocles used *virtù* to acquire his principality.

Machiavelli’s consideration of Agathocles appears to oscillate between attributing *virtù* to him and denying him that attribution. Though Agathocles lived a wicked life, “nonetheless, he accompanied his wickedness with so much *virtù* of *animo* and of body”<sup>385</sup> that he quickly rose from abject poverty to the highest ranks of the Syracusan military (P8).

Later, we are told that “having considered, therefore, the actions and *virtù* of him, you will not see things, or few, which you could attribute to *fortuna*...” (P 8).<sup>386</sup> However, Machiavelli continues,

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<sup>383</sup> “...non si può al tutto o alla fortuna o alla virtù attribuire... Questi sono quando o per qualche via scellerata e nefaria si ascende al principato, o quando uno privato cittadino con il favore delli altri suoi cittadini diventa principe della sua patria.”

<sup>384</sup> I forgo a detailed discussion of Machiavelli’s chapter on those who become princes through the favor of their fellow citizens because “it is not necessary to achieve them either totally *virtù* or totally *fortuna*, but more granted to a *fortunate* cunning /nè a pervenirvi è necessario o tutto *virtù* o tutta *fortuna*, ma più presto una *astuzia fortunate*” (P 9). Further, while Machiavelli deploys the examples of Nabis in Sparta, Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus in Rome, and Giorgio Scali in Florence in this chapter, none of them are said to have *virtù* (P 9).

<sup>385</sup> “...nondimanco, accompagnò le sue sceleratezze con tanta *virtù* di *animo* e di *corpo*...”

<sup>386</sup> “...considerassi, adunque, le azioni e *virtù* di costui, non vedrà cose, o poche, le quali possa attribuire all *fortuna*...”

“Yet one cannot call it virtù to massacre one’s citizens, betray one’s friends, be without faith, without pity, without religion; these modi can acquire empire, but not glory. Because if one considers the virtù of Agathocles in the entering and in the exiting of perils, and the greatness of his animo in sustaining and in overcoming adverse things, one does not see why he has to be judged inferior to any of the most excellent captains; nonetheless, his brutal cruelty and inhumanity, with infinite wickedness, does not permit that he be celebrated amongst the most excellent men. One cannot, therefore, attribute to fortuna or virtù that which he achieved without the one or the other” (P 8).<sup>387</sup>

Agathocles acquired his principality through wicked actions, which by their nature owe nothing to *fortuna* and are not virtuoso actions. But, Agathocles still had virtù of *animo* and body that coexisted with his wickedness, and, it appears that it was his virtù, rather than his wickedness, that was the reason he was quickly promoted through the ranks when he joined the military. It also appears that it was his virtù that led him to be successful in his military campaigns against the Carthaginians, in which, Machiavelli tells us, he performed brilliantly. Where Agathocles acted with only wickedness, without virtù, was when he seized power, which he did by tricking the senate and people of Syracuse into coming to an assembly, and having his soldiers murder the entire senate and many of the wealthiest citizens.

As something of an afterthought, Agathocles’s appearances in the *Discorsi* are less noted and are, indeed, less noteworthy, because there Machiavelli only speaks of Agathocles in his role as captain of the Syracusans (D 2:12-13) and does not discuss

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<sup>387</sup> “Non si può ancora chiamare virtù ammazzare e sua cittadini, tradire li amici, essere senza fede, senza pietà, senza religione; e quali modi possono fare acquistare imperio, ma non gloria. Perché se si considerassi la virtù di Agatocle nell’entrare e nello uscire de’ pericoli, e la grandessa dello animo suo nel sopportare e superare le cose avverse, non si vede perché elli abbi ad essere iudicato inferiore a qualunque eccellentissimo capitano; nondimanco, la sua efferata crudeltà e inumanità, con infinite scelleratezza, non consentono che sia infra le eccellentissimi uomini celebrato. Non si può, adunque, attribuire alla fortuna o alla virtù quello che senza l’una e l’altra fu da lui conseguito.”

his atrocities, which were all in domestic affairs, aimed at his fellow Syracusans. Nor, in the *Discorsi*, does Machiavelli use Agathocles as an example of virtù.

It should not surprise us then that Machiavelli does not praise Agathocles as “amongst the greatest of men,” even though he praises him as among “the most excellent of captains.” However, Leo Strauss suggests that Machiavelli’s distinction between these two categories is superficial or intentionally misleading.<sup>388</sup> The basis of Strauss’s claim here is threefold: First, that part of the traditional criticism of Agathocles is his low birth and that Machiavelli does not discriminate against the low born, because he is himself lowborn. Second, the distinction melts away because “where there are good arms there come to be good laws...” (P 12)<sup>389</sup> and, as Strauss points out, Agathocles certainly had good arms. And, third, that Machiavelli condones other inhumane men and criminal acts, including those of Romulus. Though Strauss’s arguments are weighty, in the end I do not find them persuasive because I think that they (perhaps intentionally) miss the point.

Here, I think it is helpful to compare Agathocles with Romulus, whom he praises more than Agathocles, based on a hierarchy of the most laudable achievements: the most laudable is (1) ordering a new religion, followed by (2) founding a kingdom or republic, followed by (3) conquering new territory for their fatherland with arms, followed by, finally, (4) those with literary achievements (D1:10.1). The most favorable reading of Agathocles, which focuses on his role as a

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<sup>388</sup> Strauss (*Thoughts on Machiavelli*) Page 80 note 53 (an end note found on pages 309-310).

<sup>389</sup> “...dove sono buone arme conviene sieno buone legge...”

successful captain of the Syracusan military, is that he was in the third rank, among those who conquered, while Romulus was certainly in the second rank of political founders. That Machiavelli prefers Romulus to Agathocles is unsurprising and consistent; Machiavelli would have more praise for Romulus even if Agathocles had not been wicked. However, what must be explained is why Machiavelli claims Agathocles came to power with blameworthy wickedness rather than praiseworthy virtù.

I take part of the reason for this claim has to do with the relationship between necessity and appropriateness. Here I draw on Sheldon Wolin's famous claim that Machiavelli advocates an "economy of violence" (*Politics and Vision*, 198).<sup>390</sup> Some violence is necessary for a prince to secure power, but the prince should economize in the violence he employs. Agathocles, unlike Romulus, uses more violence than is necessary in acquiring his principality. Wolin develops this claim primarily based on Machiavelli's discussion of what constitutes using cruelty well: cruelty well used is used at a stroke such as to eliminate all enemies and, thus, all need to continually use cruelty, and Agathocles is Machiavelli's primary example (P 8). Indeed, so authoritative a commentator as Polybius says, in his *Histories*, that Agathocles was famous for the cruelty with which he seized the throne and the mildness with which he ruled later (9:23).<sup>391</sup> But, again, Agathocles is successful in acquiring empire, but not in acquiring glory. And though Polybius claims Agathocles must have had admirable

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<sup>390</sup> Sheldon S. Wolin, "Machiavelli: Politics and the Economy of Violence," in *Politics and Vision*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press) 2004 [1960]. pages 175-214.

<sup>391</sup> Polybius, *Histories*. English: Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*. Trans. Ian Scott-Kilvert, Ed. and abridged by F. W. Walbank. Penguin Books, 1979.

qualities to have achieved all he did (12:15), Agathocles was still remembered as a tyrant and a wicked man (8:10).

Romulus, on the other hand, acquires both empire and glory. Machiavelli recognizes that Romulus engaged in limited, necessary violence against rivals: he kills his brother, Remus, and acquiesces to the killing of his co-monarch, Titus Tatius Sabinus (D 1:9). But, Romulus's killings were on a much smaller scale than Agathocles's, as two men are fewer than the Senate of Syracuse and many of the city's leading citizens, and tradition does not record a serious domestic challenge to Romulus's rule which would make us suspect that he erred in this.<sup>392</sup> Thus, to use Wolin's formula, we can say that Romulus used violence more economically than Agathocles, though both were able to secure their rule. One gets the sense that Agathocles is bloodthirsty; that the violent and cruel massacre of so many of his fellow citizens was not something Agathocles had to do, but something that he wanted to do.

Further, according to Machiavelli, Romulus "merits pardon"<sup>393</sup> for these murders because "they were for the common good, and not for his own ambition..." (D 1:9);<sup>394</sup> no one suggests that Agathocles had any good but his own in mind when he seized the *stato*. I am suggesting that the notion of the economy of violence must be expanded beyond the temporal dimension we find in Machiavelli's account of cruelty

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<sup>392</sup> Machiavelli, Livy, and I all set aside the fact that Romulus was almost certainly legendary.

<sup>393</sup> "...meritasse scusa..."

<sup>394</sup> "fusse per il bene omune, e non per ambizione propria..." Machiavelli says Romulus demonstrated this by forming the Senate and giving them a role in his government.

well used. Rather, the prince with virtù would limit his use of violence to only those individuals whose deaths are necessary, and that this necessity is more of the common good of the polity than of the prince.

I think that for Machiavelli, it is not appropriate to kill one's fellow citizens unless it is necessary. As Machiavelli claims, "You ought therefore to know how there are two sorts of fighting: the one, with laws; the other, with force. The first is appropriate to man, the second, to beasts. But because many times the first is not enough, it is advisable to resort to the second: therefore to a prince it is necessary to know well to use the beast and the man" (P 18).<sup>395</sup> Romulus was able to use the man in domestic politics with fellow citizens for most of his reign and use the beast in defending his principality from foreign threats. Agathocles on the other hand, was only capable of fighting like a beast and so is viewed by Machiavelli and history as a brute and a criminal, because he fought his fellow citizens with force when it would be better to have used laws. Both Romulus and Agathocles were excellent captains and soldiers, but only Romulus was also an excellent statesman. Therefore, in determining whether to imitate Romulus or Agathocles, for Machiavelli, one should imitate Romulus because he knew how to use both the beast and the man, while Agathocles only knew how to use the beast.

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<sup>395</sup> "Dovete adunque sapere come e' sono dua generazioni di combattere: l'uno, con le leggi; l'altro, con la forza. Quel primo è proprio dello uomo; quel secondo, delle bestie. Ma perché el primo molte volte non basta, conviene ricorrere al secondo: pertanto a uno principe è necessario sapere bene usare la bestia e lo uomo."

These examples demonstrate that Machiavelli's conception of *virtù* does retain some normative content, even if it is not part of a system of morality. This normative content of *virtù* centers on praise and blame earned by political actors: and *virtù*, for Machiavelli, should always be praiseworthy. Thus, we can praise Romulus as an excellent founder and Rome as an excellent polity. We would praise Agathocles's actions as a soldier and as captain of the Syracusan military who acted with *virtù*, but blame him as a politician who acted with wickedness. Indeed, as Machiavelli implies, the goal of *l'arte dello stato* is not merely the acquisition of empire, but also of glory. And glory at its root is based on the praise of others for one's actions, which in its ultimate sense invokes the respect and admiration even of one's enemies. And if an individual with *virtù* can cover himself in glory for accomplishing great things, a republic can be even more glorious if it is governed with *virtuosi* modes.

### 39 Hiero of Syracuse (P 6)

Machiavelli uses the example of Hiero of Syracuse to illustrate a lesser example than the founders or a principality gained through the politician's *virtù*. Like the founders, Hiero "knew nothing of *fortuna* but the *occasione*" which was when he was elected captain<sup>396</sup> of Syracuse (P 6). "And he had so much *virtù*, furthermore in private *fortuna*, that it was written "that he had everything one would look for in a

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<sup>396</sup> Captain (*capitano*) is the generic term Machiavelli uses for a military leader. Hiero was appointed captain of Syracuse in 269 B.C.

king, except a kingdom” (P 6).<sup>397</sup> Hiero, upon gaining power, proved this to be true by replacing the old militia and his old friends with a new militia and new friends, both completely dependent on him (P 6). Like the founders, Hiero relied on his virtù and his own arms, here expressed as the militia and friends who were completely dependent on him for their rank and station. And so also like the founders, Hiero gained power with difficulty but held it with ease (P 6). If there is some sense to Machiavelli referring to Hiero as less than the founders, it seems to be that, for Machiavelli, founding a principality or republic is one of the most laudable accomplishments and Hiero, because he was a reformer and general but not a founder, was of the next most celebrated type (D1:10). Additionally, Hiero’s reorganization of Syracuse did not last long after his death, while the states founded by the founders lasted for many hundreds of years.

#### **40 Aratus of Sicyon (D 2:32)**

Machiavelli’s use of Aratus of Sicyon as an example comes in his discussion of fraudulent modes of taking walled cities. By this, Machiavelli means through an agreement with a faction inside the city for them to betray the city into your hands with violence. For Machiavelli, these modes are difficult because the slightest error

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<sup>397</sup> I use Wootton’s translation of the quote in Latin. Wootton gives the rest of the passage as “He was so remarkable [*di tanta virtù*], even before he before he became a ruler, history records...”

stroke of ill *fortuna* can cause the expedition to fail. After listing the difficulties, Machiavelli concludes

“Nor was anyone ever found that was more happy in these fraudulent and nocturnal expeditions than Aratus of Sicyon, who had as much worth in these [as] in daytime and in open factions he was pusillanimous; which one could judge was more toughness from a hidden virtù that was in him than because in those there must naturally be more happiness” (D 2:32).<sup>398</sup>

Machiavelli’s claim here is that Aratus of Sicyon benefited from a strangely hidden virtù which only demonstrated itself in furtive missions of surprise but did not manifest in open conflict. My sense is that Machiavelli thinks that the example of Aratus is supposed to demonstrate that these modes are unreliable, and by pointing to the example of Aratus and telling us that he was the most successful of men in these things we would understand that Machiavelli’s claim was valid. However, the sentence that I quoted above is all that Machiavelli has to say about Aratus in this place, which leads me to believe that Machiavelli believed his audience to be familiar enough with Aratus (Plutarch does include him in his *Lives* after all) that further expansion of the examples was unnecessary.

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<sup>398</sup> “Né si trovò mai alcuno che fosse più felice in queste ispedizioni fraudolente e notturne che Arato Sicioneo, il quale quanto valeva in questa tanto nelle diurne e aperte fazioni era pusillanime; il che si può giudicare fosse più tosto per una occulta virtù che era in lui perché in quelle naturalmente dovesse essere più felicità.”

#### 41 Theodorus of Syracuse (D 3:6.6)

A Syracusan citizen named Theodorus who appears in Machiavelli's chapter on conspiracies as arrested and tortured for his involvement in a conspiracy against Hieronymus, the King of Syracuse. According to Machiavelli (citing Livy 24.5), though Theodorus, "was taken, he hid with a great virtù all of the conspirators, and accused the friends of the king; and the other parts of the conspirators had so much confidence in the virtù of Theodorus that none left Syracuse or made any sign of fear" (D 3:6).<sup>399</sup> Theodorus is the only example of virtù that Machiavelli gives in his chapter on conspiracies (D 3:6) which is the longest chapter in all of the *Discorsi*. And, it is immediately apparent that Theodorus's virtù is not manifest in his capabilities of fraud and in imitating the role of the fox; he is caught and, as would be standard operating procedure in those times (and probably still is in ours) he was presumably tortured. But not only did Theodorus (like Machiavelli) not break under torture, his virtù was known and trusted universally by the other conspirators such that none showed an outward sign of worry that he might break under torture and accuse them. And furthermore, he was able to keep his wits about him enough to accuse Hieronymus's friends of being a part of the conspiracy to do his utmost to weaken that king's position by at least making him suspicious of his allies.

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<sup>399</sup> "...preso, celò con una virtù grande tutti i congiurati, e accusò gli amici del re; e dall'altra parte i congiurati confidarono tanto nella virtù di Teodoro che nessuno si partì di Siracusa o fece alcuno segno di timore."

**42 Hannibal (P 17, D 2:27, D 3:21, D 3:21) (compared to 22 Scipio Africanus (D 1:29, D 3:21))**

(See 22 Scipio Africanus above)

**43 Theodoric the (Ostra)goth (IF 1:4)**

King Theodoric of the Ostrogoths invaded Italy with the permission of the Emperor Zeno and ruled it as a king, nominally a client of Constantinople. Machiavelli tells us that

“Theodoric was a man most excellent in war and in peace, whence in the first he was always victorious, in the second he greatly benefitted his cities and peoples. [...] And if so many virtù(s) had not been tarnished [lit: made ugly], in the end of his life, by several cruelties caused by various suspicions about his reign as the death of Symmachus and Boethius, very saintly men, demonstrate, all of his memory would be considered worthy of every part of any honor, because, by means of his virtù and goodness, not only Rome and Italy, but all of the other parts of the Western Empire, freed of the continual battering that for so many years, from so much inundation of barbarians they had sustained, they were raised up, and were reduced in good order and very happy state” (IF 1:4).<sup>400</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> “Fu Teoderigo uomo nella Guerra e nella pace eccellentissimo, donde nell’unafu sempre vincitore, nell’altra beneficò grandemente le città e i popoli suoi. [...] E se tante virtù non fossero state bruttate, nell’ultimo della sua vita, da alcune crudeltà causate da varii sospetti del regno suo come la morte di Simmaco e di Boezio, uomini santissimi, dimostrano, sarebbe al tutto la sua memoria degna da ogni parte di qualunque onore, perché, mediante la virtù e bontà sua, non solamente Roma e Italia, ma tutte le altre parti dello occidentale imperio, libere dalle continue batiture che per tanti anni, da tante inundazione di barbari avevano sopportate, si sollevarono, e in buono ordine e assai felice stato si ridussero.”

So, even though Theodoric was a barbarian himself, Machiavelli mostly praises him because, through his virtù, he managed to settle the tumults associated with the barbarian migrations and restore peace to Italy, which he commanded, and the rest of the former Western Empire, which was, presumably, in his sphere of influence. Theodoric found Italy a in near chaos and managed to bring order and peace to it while he reigned, but once he died it descended back into those disorders which had previously afflicted it until the invasions by Belisarius and Narses. How Theodoric was able to form Italy in his own image demonstrates what is made possible through virtù. However, Theodoric was not a founder in the way that Cyrus, Romulus, or Theseus was because Theodoric's state did not survive him. This is because, in order to be a founder, the politician must establish modes and orders which can outlast their lives and perpetuate their states.

#### **5.1.4 Florentines**

##### **44 Messer Farinata degli Uberti (IF 2:7)**

Messer Farinata degli Uberti was the leader of the Ghibellines who expelled the Guelfs after the founding of the republic. Apparently, it was proposed by a counsel of Ghibellines from across Italy which decided that it was necessary to destroy Florence to preserve Tuscany for the Ghibellines. Messer Farinata spoke against this

plan saying he would not destroy his fatherland which he had just won "... and if among them any who feared his fatherland, would wreck it, because he hoped, with that virtù which he banished the Guelfs, to defend it" (IF 2:7).<sup>401</sup> Machiavelli continues with an assessment saying, "Messer Farinata was a man of great *animo*, excellent in war, head of the Ghibellines, and next to Manfred [King of Naples] was greatly esteemed..."<sup>402</sup> and it was through his influence that the matter of destroying Florence was removed from consideration (IF 2:7). However, though Messer Farinata's virtù works for the good of the city in this instance, we should recall that he has just expelled the Guelfs from the city. And so, as with many of the examples of individuals in *Istorie Fiorentine*, Messer Farinata acts for the good of the city insofar as it is in accord with the good of his party or family, but not when it is in conflict with those factional interests. This is probably not terribly surprising, after all, even in the Roman Republic individuals were interested in their class interests at least in addition to the common good. However, it is one of the major failings of the Florentines that they were never able to capture the energy and virtù which individuals put into the pursuit of their own good and turned that to the pursuit of the common good.

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<sup>401</sup> "...e se di loro alcuno temeva della sua patria, la rovinasse, perché sperava, con quella virtù che ne aveva cacciati i Guelfi, difenderla."

<sup>402</sup> "Era messer Farinata uomo di grande animo, eccellente nella guerra, capo de' Ghibellini, e apresso a Manfredi assai stimato: la cui autorità pose fine a quello ragionamento; e pensarono altri modi a volersi lo stato perservare."

#### **45 Messer Corso Donati (IF 2:18)**

Nearly immediately after the Guelfs exiled the Ghibellines from the city for good, the Guelfs became divided into the White and the Blacks, backed by the rival Cerchi and Donati families respectively. When the eventual conflict between the two finally erupted, “the Cerchi resolved to assault the Donati, and with a great number of men went to pay them a visit; but by the virtù of Messer Corso [Donati] they were thrown back and a great part of them were injured” (IF 2:18).<sup>403</sup> And, while after this the Blacks were exiled by the Signoria at the advice of Dante, soon they were returned by the head of the Guelfs in Italy and it was the Whites and Dante who were exiled, never to return.

#### **46 Michele di Lando (IF 3:17)**

Michele di Lando was an unusual example of a leader with virtù. Michele was a wool carder who was acclaimed Gonfalonier during the Ciompi revolt in 1378 (IF 3:16). However, many of those engaged in the revolt felt that his leadership was not radical enough and turned on him, while the conservative elements of society flocked behind him. Michele then put down the revolt and having done so,

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<sup>403</sup> “...deliberarono i Cherchi di assaltare i Donati, e con gran numero di gente di andarono a trovare; ma per la virtù di messer Corso furono ributtati e gran parte di loro feriti.”

they laid down the tumults, solely by the virtù of the Gonfalonier. He who in animo, in prudence and in goodness surpassed in his time all citizens, and merits to be numbered in the few who have benefited their fatherland; because, if in him was animo either malignant or ambitious, the republic would have lost all its liberty, and would have arrived at a greater tyranny than that with the Duke of Athens;<sup>404</sup> but his goodness never allowed a thought to arrive in his animo that was contrary to the universal good, his prudence guided things in a modo that many of his party gave in and those others could be crushed with arms (IF 3:17).<sup>405</sup>

This is the highest praise that Machiavelli has for any individual in *Istorie Fiorentine*.

Not only did Michele have the virtù necessary to accomplish things politically, but the things which he accomplished were also for the common good. Though he took power in a partisan uprising, once Gonfalonier, Michele's decisions took the whole of the city into account rather than only the *Ciompi* of the *Arte della Lana*<sup>406</sup> who were responsible for putting him in power. And though Michele could have seized tyrannical power for himself, his commitment to the Republic led him to maintain it in a free way of life. For these reasons, Machiavelli names him one of the few men who actually contributed to the good of the Republic. Unfortunately for Michele and for Florence, three years later in further domestic squabbles, he was banished from the city (IF 3:22).

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<sup>404</sup> Who ruled Florence for a time.

<sup>405</sup> “si posorono i tumulti, solo per la virtù del Gonfaloniere. Il quale d'animo, di prudenza e di bontà superò in quel tempo qualunque cittadino, e merita di essere annoverato intra i pochi che abbino benificata la patria loro: perché, se in esso fusse stato animo or maligno o ambizioso, la republica al tutto perdeva la sua libertà, e in maggior tirannide che quella del Duca di Atene perveniva; ma la bontà sua non gli lasciò mai venire pensiero nello animo che fusse al bene universale contraio, la prudenza sua gli fece condurre le cose in modo che molti della parte sua gli cederono e quelli potette con le armi domare.”

<sup>406</sup> *L'Arte della Lana* was the name of the Wool guild in Florence. The *Ciompi*, after whom the revolt is named, were the dependants of that guild.

#### **47 Messer Maso degli Albizzi (then) Niccolò da Uzzano (IF 4:2)**

Machiavelli's next examples of individuals with virtù came in the aftermath of this backlash against the Ciompi revolt, which began with the arrest and execution of Giorgio Scali and was completed with the banishments that included Michele di Lando and the reordering of the state. "I say therefore that the state which was in Florence from the death of Messer Giorgio Scali, in 1381, in its beginning was sustained first by the virtù of Messer Maso degli Albizzi, later by that of Niccolò da Uzzano" (IF 4:2).<sup>407</sup> These men used their virtù to cement the resurgent power of the Guelfs in controlling Florentine politics. At this time, and until the Guelfs are eventually banished by Cosimo de' Medici in 1434, the Guelfs were the party which served the interests of the wealthy while the Ciompi and later the Medici stylized themselves as being in favor of the people.

#### **48 Messer Ringaldo degli Albizzi (IF 4:7) and 49 Bardo Amncini (IF 4:9)**

This conflict continues in Machiavelli's next example, Bardo Mancini, is related in an indirect speech by Rinaldo degli Albizzi, son of Messer Maso degli Albizzi. Rinaldo relates the example of Bardo, who was Gonfalonier in 1387, as one to emulate: saying, "how those who love their fatherland and their honor needed to come

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<sup>407</sup> "Dico per tanto che lo stato il quale in Firenze da la morte di messer Giorgio Scali ebbe, nel 1381, il principio suo fu prima dalla virtù di messer Maso degli Albizzi, di poi da quella di Niccolò da Uzzano sostenuto."

to their senses and recall to their memory the virtù of Bardo Mancini...”<sup>408</sup> and follow his lead in distributing power to the great at the expense of the people (IF 4:9).

Rinaldo’s speech comes in the context of his introduction to the political stage in Florence, which came just after Florence suffered a military defeat which the Signoria worried would result in a popular uprising. Rinaldo “...aspired, with his virtù(s) and with the memory of his father, to the first rank of the city...” (IF 4:7)<sup>409</sup> which he would eventually come very close to achieving by becoming captain of the Guelfs. However, Rinaldo was the head of the Guelfs who oversaw their expulsion from Florence by Cosimo de’ Medici; he was exiled with his party, never to return.

Probably what is important to note from the example of Rinaldo is that he came to political maturity in Florence at a time in which he felt that virtù (even if it needed to accompany family connections) could result in rising to the highest rank of the city. This stands in marked contrast to Florence after the Medici take over, where between Cosimo’s rise to power in 1434 and the expulsion of the Medici in 1494, the highest rank of the city was always a member of the Medici family. Indeed, in the *Discorsi*, one of the benefits of a republic is that it is more meritocratic than other forms of government; that those who demonstrate virtù are given real political power and responsibility because they are suited for it rather than merely because they are wealthy or from well connected families.

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<sup>408</sup> “...come ciascuno che amava la patria el lo onore suo era necessitato a risentirsi e ricordarsi della virtù di Bardo Mancini...”

<sup>409</sup> “...aspirava, con le virtù sua e con la memoria del padre, al primo grado della città...”

## 50 Brunelleschi (IF 4:23)

Machiavelli notes in one place that the Filippo di ser Brunelleschi was an excellent architect. According to Machiavelli, “so much were his merits that, after his death, his image was posted, in marble, in the principal church [lit: temple] of Florence, with letters at its foot that even now give testimony to those who read it of his virtù(s)” (IF 4:23).<sup>410</sup> Machiavelli explains in the remainder of this chapter how Brunelleschi had worked on a plan to flood the rival city of Lucca, which ultimately failed because the Lucchese were able to counter it. Brunelleschi’s inclusion as an individual Machiavelli describes as having virtù is odd as he is not mentioned as a politician or soldier. Thought this plan to flood Lucca was obviously military in nature, this does not seem to be what Machiavelli refers to when he references Brunelleschi’s many virtù(s). Rather, I think Machiavelli is using virtù to describe Brunelleschi here in the same way that he uses it at the beginning of *dell’Arte della Guerra* to describe Cosimo Rucellai and in *il Principe* 21 when he says that the prince should show themselves to be admirers of virtù and excellence in their private undertaking, such as architecture, engineering, and the arts. But, as in those cases, while it does demonstrate that Machiavelli had a concept of virtù which was not political or military, this virtù of private individuals is not what is interesting to us in our goal of learning about politics from Machiavelli.

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<sup>410</sup> “...tanto che meritò, dopo la morte, che la sua immagine fusse posta, di marmo, nel principale tempio di Firenze, con lettere a piè che ancora rendono a chi legge testimonianza delle sue virtù.”

### 51 Niccolò da Pisa (IF 5:30)

In this war, the Visconti duke of Milan employed the great condottiere Niccolò Piccinino (example 69), who sought to invade Tuscany over the Apennines to pressure on the Florentines. At first Piccinino “wanted to passé by the mountain of San Benedetto and through the valley of Montone, he found these places, by the virtù of Niccolò da Pisa, guarded in a mode, that he judged that all of his labor in that direction would be vain” (IF 5:30).<sup>411</sup> However, nearby was a pass guarded by the castle Marradi under the command of Bartolommeo Orlandini. “There Niccolò Piccinino not having judged it possible to overcome the pass of San Benedetto, by the virtù of he who guarded it, he judged it possible to gain that of Marradi by the cowardness of he who had it to defend” (IF 5:30).<sup>412</sup> Piccinino made it through the pass easily.

In this example, the virtù of da Pisa defends his pass against Piccinino in a manner very similar to how virtù is used to resist *fortuna*, as a river, in *il Principe* 25. That is, as da Pisa’s virtù had provided for the contingency of a flood of Piccinino’s soldiers, his passes were safe. But, as Orlandini had not provided for that particular flood, Piccinino send his troops through the path of least resistance, just as flood waters will break the weakest levies. This makes something clear about the nature of virtù in the river metaphor which Machiavelli does not state explicitly in *il Principe*: it is not enough to have prepared somewhat for the flood, or that little preparation will

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<sup>411</sup> “...volendo passare per l’alpe di San Benedetto e per la valle di Montone, trovò quelli luoghi, per la virtù di Niccolò da Pisa, in modo guardati, che giudicò che vano sarebbe da quella parte ogni suo sforzo.”

<sup>412</sup> “Non avendo adunque Niccolò Piccinio per la virtù di chi lo guardava, giudicò di potere vincere quello Marradi per la viltà di chi l’aveva a difendere.”

always fail, what is important is to be more prepared than one's neighbor for the flood is looking for the path of least resistance. To break out of the metaphor: just as Piccinino looked for the least well guarded pass through the mountains to assault, ambitious states looking to expand will attempt to conquer or dominate their weakest neighbors because this can be done with the least expense and the least strain.

### **52 Neri di Gino Capponi (IF 6:6) and 53 Baldaccio di Anghiari (IF 6:6)**

Neri di Gino Capponi was the Florentine who Machiavelli credits with beating Niccolò Piccinino at the Battle of Anghiari and Baldaccio di Anghiari was another of the leaders of the Florentine military. Machiavelli tells us that Cosimo de' Medici feared Neri due to the reputation he had in the city and with the soldiers "because, having been many times captain of the Florentine armies, since he had, with virtù and with merits earned [his reputation]" (IF 6:6).<sup>413</sup> Baldaccio di Anghiari was a "man very excellent in war, because in those times there was no one, in Italy, that surpassed him in virtù of body and of *animo* [*virtù di corpo e d'animo*]; and he had amongst the infantries, because he had always been their captain, so much reputation that"<sup>414</sup> they would all follow him in any undertaking (IF6:6). In fact, "Baldaccio was very friendly

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<sup>413</sup> "...perché, essendo stato molte volte capo degli eserciti fiorentini, se li aveva, con la virtù e con i meriti guadagnati."

<sup>414</sup> "...uomo in guerra eccellentissimo, perché in quelli tempi non era alcuno, in Italia, che di virtù di corpo e d'animo lo superassi; e aveva intra le fanterie, perché di quelle sempre era stato capo, tanta reputazione..."

to Neri, just as [Neri] loved [Baldaccio] for his virtù(s) of which he had always witnessed...” (IF 6:6).<sup>415</sup> And, so Neri and Baldaccio, who were both captains of the Florentine army, and held in great esteem by that army and by the citizens for their virtù and accomplishments, were feared by Cosimo and his allies because they had base of political power independent of him. Baldaccio was killed by some of Cosimo’s allies (IF6:7)<sup>416</sup> while, power politics being what they are, Neri, politically weakened by Baldaccio’s death, formed an alliance with Cosimo which lasted until Neri’s death (IF 7:2).

#### **54 Friar Girolamo Savonarola (D 1:45)**

Girolamo Savonarola’s appearance in the *Discorsi* is because Machiavelli is using his violation of a law he made as an example of why such conduct is bad for the state. Savonarola’s more famous appearance in Machiavelli’s writings comes in Chapter 6 of *il Principe*, where Machiavelli uses him as the example of an unarmed prophet, who always fail, compared to the armed prophets, like Moses and the other Founders, who always succeed. While it is, perhaps, not clear in *il Principe* that when Machiavelli calls Savonarola a prophet, we are to understand that Machiavelli means he is also a Founder, this is certainly clear in the *Discorsi*: “Being Florence after

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<sup>415</sup> “Era Baldaccio amicissimo a Neri, come quello che per le sue virtù, delle quali era sempre stato testimone, lo amava...”

<sup>416</sup> Actually, it was Bartolommeo Orlandini, who was Gonfalonier. Because that was what was really best for Florence.

[14]94 had reordered its state with the help of Friar Girolamo Savonarola, the writings of which demonstrate the learning, prudence, and virtù of his *animo*...” (D 1:45).<sup>417</sup>

So, while in *il Principe* Machiavelli only brings up Savonarola to chastise him for being unarmed, and in the *Discorsi* Machiavelli only brings him up to chastise him for breaking a law he had passed, it is clear that Machiavelli attributes to Savonarola a founding project in Florence. This is supported by the above quote where Machiavelli refers to Savonarola’s virtù of *animo*, which is the same type of virtù that Machiavelli claims the Founders in *il Principe* 6 display. Indeed, Savonarola’s existence as an example here is interesting because he is one of the few individuals who Machiavelli describes as having virtù but has no military experience to speak of. But, with that said, this is the cause of his downfall: virtù of *animo* is not sufficient for a founding project to succeed because, in addition to good laws, the new state will also require the good arms which virtù of body and military virtù provide.

### **55 Cosimo Rucellai (AG 1:8\*/271)**

Of Cosimo Rucellai, the host of the conversation which Machiavelli purports to report on as the dialogue in *dell’Arte della Guerra*, Machiavelli says that one of his purposes for writing the book was for friends of the recently deceased Rucellai, so that “reading it, the friends of Cosimo that were there, the memory of his many virtù(s)

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<sup>417</sup> “Essendo Firenze dopo al 94 stata riordinata nello stato suo con lo aiuto di frate Girolamo Savonerola, gli scritti del quale mostrono la dottrina la prudenza e la virtù dello animo suo...”

will be refreshed in their *animo...*” (AG 1:8\*/271).<sup>418</sup> Cosimo Rucellai is unusual as an example of *virtù* because he was not really involved in politics or warfare. To the extent that Machiavelli portrays him accurately as a character in the dialogue, Rucellai is bright and engaged, but does not seem to have done anything to suggest that he has *virtù* in the same way that Machiavelli says that Cesare Borgia or Marcus Furius Camillus did.

### The Medici

**56 The Medici Family (P 26), 57 Salvestro de’ Medici (IF 3:9), 58 Cosimo de’ Medici (IF 7:5), IF 7:6), 59 Piero de’ Medici (IF 7:23), 60 Lorenzo (*il Magnifico*) de’ Medici (IF 8:36), 61 Pope Leo X (Giovanni de’ Medici) (P 11), 62 Giulio de’ Medici (I F 8:9),**

Machiavelli has a complicated relationship with the Medici. He deplores their subversions of the republican government in Florence, and yet they are the leaders of the Florentine state, to which he is loyal. Further they are his patrons who commissioned him to write, and will eventually pay him a large sum upon the completion of, his *Istorie Fiorentine*. And so, while Machiavelli does criticize the Medici where he thinks appropriate, he usually puts this criticism into the mouth of

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<sup>418</sup> “...leggendo quello, gli amici di Cosimo che quivi convennono, nel loro animo la memoria delle sue virtù rinfreschino...” These are Machiavelli’s words, rather than a character’s, before the dialogue begins.

one of the Medici family's enemies.<sup>419</sup> However, not everything he says about the Medici is critical, and so when Machiavelli talks about a member of the family as having *virtù*, we should take him as being serious.

Machiavelli's first example is Salvestro de' Medici, who was elected Gonfalonier in 1378 in the wake of the rule of the Saints (the Eight of War) and their war against Pope Gregory XI. Salvestro attempted to pass a law that was opposed by the Guelfs and, when it failed, he went to the Counsel and said that he was not able to do any good to the republic in his magistracy, "and because of this he wanted to go home, so that the people [of the Counsel] could put in his place another, that had either more *virtù* or more *fortuna* than him" (IF 3:9).<sup>420</sup> This precipitated a riot in which the guilds demonstrated against some of the major Guelfs and burned some of their houses, to which the Counsel responded by creating a *balìa* (the Florentine name for a general power vested in some group to reform the state), and Salvestro was replaced as Gonfalonier. It would seem that Salvestro's resignation speech before the Counsel was an attempt to rouse them against the Signori, who had rejected his legislation, rather than an actual attempt to resign. However, as Machiavelli notes, Salvestro's attempt to manipulate the situation to his (and his party's advantage) backfired (IF 3:10). Thus, for Machiavelli, *virtù* and *fortuna* are at play in the normal legislative process of republican government and not only in raising an army and fighting a battle. One must

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<sup>419</sup> L.A. Ferrai, "Lettere inedite di Donato Giannotti," *Atti del R. Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti*, ser. 6, 3 (1884-1885), 1952. Quoted in Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr. "Translators' Introduction" in Niccolò Machiavelli. *Florentine Histories*. Trans. Laura F. Banfield and Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988.

<sup>420</sup> "...e per questo se ne volveva ire a casa, acciò che quel popolo potesse porre in suo luogo un altro, che avesse o maggiore *virtù* o migliore *fortuna* di lui."

not read Machiavelli as thinking that only the outcomes of violence are important enough for *virtù* or *fortuna* to play a role, though violence is always a possibility. Salvestro is also interesting because, unlike the other Medici, Machiavelli does not actually describe him as having *virtù*. Further, Machiavelli talks about Salvestro's character while he is alive in the narrative while Machiavelli waits until the other Medici die in the narrative to give an assessment of their character.

The most capable Medici, according to Machiavelli, was Cosimo de' Medici. Cosimo established the Medici as the most powerful family in Florence, rather than as one amongst a group of powerful families, to such an extent that the patriarch of the Medici family was basically the prince of Florence in all but name. "And thus his *virtù* and *fortuna* extinguished his enemies, and exalted his friends" (IF 7:5).<sup>421</sup> For Machiavelli, Cosimo was really a great founder of a new dynasty.

Therefore his prudence, his riches, *modo* of living and fortuna, made him, in Florence, feared and loved by the citizens, and by princes, not only in Italy, but in all Europe, [he was] esteemed marvelously. Whence that he left such a foundation to his posterity that they could with *virtù* equal him and with *fortuna* surpass him by a great length, and this authority that Cosimo had in Florence, they could have not only in that city, but in all of Christendom (IF 7:6).<sup>422</sup>

In *il Principe* 6 and 7, where Machiavelli talks about founding, he discusses the importance of properly laying the foundation for one's power so that it can be held

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<sup>421</sup> "E così la virtù e fortuna sua spense tutti i suoi nimici, e gli amici esaltò."

<sup>422</sup> "Questa sua prudenza adunque, questa sue ricchezze, modo di vivere e fortuna, lo deciono, a Firenze, da' cittadini temere e amare, e dai principi, non solo di Italia, ma di tutta la Europa, maravigliosamente stimare. Donde che lasciò tale fondamento a' suoi posterì che poterono con la virtù pareggiarlo e con la fortuna di gran lunga superarlo, e quella autorità che Cosimo ebbe in Firenze, non solo in quella città, ma in tutta la cristianità averla."

securely by the founder and his successors. This is immensely difficult and requires great virtù to overcome the initial obstacles. However, if the foundations of a regime are not properly laid, the regime will shortly collapse if its leaders are not able to refound it on better principles: Machiavelli likens this to relaying the foundations of a building once the builders have already begun to build the first floor (P 7). However, due to his virtù, Cosimo solidly laid the foundations of a Medici dynasty in Florence and his successors did not have to relay the foundations of their power after he died.

One thing that is interesting here is how differently Machiavelli talks about dynasties in *il Principe* from how he deals with the type of dynasty Cosimo de' Medici founded: it required Cosimo's successors to have virtù to maintain it. In *il Principe* 2, Machiavelli claims that a ruler who has inherited power (especially from a family member) need only be of "ordinary industriousness" in order to maintain the state, which is a good deal lower bar to surpass than having virtù. And so even though Cosimo founded a new dynasty with a good foundation, it was not so good a foundation as it could have been, because neither he nor his heirs were given legal or institutional powers to reflect their actual influence. Thus, it was easy for Florence to expel Piero de' Medici in 1494, because he had no institutionalized authority. It was not until several generations later that the Medici were made Dukes of Tuscany and had the type of institutionalized reign which could count as hereditary in Machiavelli's sense of the word.

Piero di Cosimo de' Medici,<sup>423</sup> Cosimo's son and heir, was only sole de facto ruler for about five years between the death of his father in 1464 and his own death in 1469. Of this Machiavelli says, "Of his virtù and goodness his fatherland could not have entirely known, for having been accompanied in the end nearly to the end of his life by his father Cosimo, and for having those few years that he survived consumed in civil conflict and by his infirmity" (IF 7:23).<sup>424</sup> Piero did not have time to display his virtù (if he did have any to display) because he was overshadowed by his father for most of his life, and in any case too infirm of health to do much more than parry the thrusts of the civil conflict which afflicted his reign. Largely it was Piero's health which prevented him from displaying virtù, which should remind us of the embodied nature of virtù in individuals: it is difficult to display virtù if one is constantly bedridden with illness.

When he discusses the death of Giuliano de' Medici at the hands of the Pazzi conspirators, Machiavelli claims that Giulio de' Medici, Pope Clement VII, has virtù. "He left one natural son, who was born a few months after he died, and was named Giulio; who is filled with that virtù and *fortuna*, that in this present time all the world knows, and which we, when we reach present things, God give life, will broadly

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<sup>423</sup> This is to distinguish him from Piero di Lorenzo de' Medici, Lorenzo il Magnifico's son who was deposed in 1494 by the Florentines after surrendering to the invading French. Presumably after Piero il Gottoso (Piero the Gouty) and Piero Sfortunato (the Unfortunate; also called Piero il Fatou, Piero the Vacuous) the Medici stopped naming sons Piero as they should have considered it an inauspicious name.

<sup>424</sup> "La virtù e bonità del quale la patria sua non potette interamente cognoscere, per essere stato da Cosimo suo padre infino quasi che allo estremo della sua vita accompagnato, e per avere quelli pochi ani che sopravvisse nelle contenzioni civili e nella infirmità consumati."

demonstrate” (IF 8:9).<sup>425</sup> This, of course, he never did because, whether or not Machiavelli ever intended to continue after Book 8 of *Istorie Fiorentine*, he never did.

Machiavelli ends *Istorie Fiorentine* with an account of Lorenzo il Magnifico’s character. Machiavelli, as his friend Francesco Guicciardini would do a decade and a half later in his *la Storia d’Italia*. He credits Lorenzo with maintaining the fragile balance of power in the Italian state system, which duly collapsed after he died. Lorenzo had a great reputation, and was universally admired and respected, for his prudence and *fortuna* in both international relations and the domestic affairs of Florence (IF 8:36). “Nor was it possible to adduce that his vices marred his many virtù(s)...” (IF 8:36).<sup>426</sup> Though Machiavelli goes on to describe Lorenzo’s faults as basically doing things which one does not expect from serious and eminent men, he claims that it was almost as though Lorenzo lived two lives (IF 8:36). So, perhaps we can think of Machiavelli as claiming that Lorenzo’s public virtù(s) were not marred by his private vices. However, with that said, it seems like Lorenzo’s virtù is all wrapped up in his prudence, which Machiavelli praises multiple times in Chapter 36, but Lorenzo is not praised for other qualities aside from being loved by *fortuna* and by God.

Machiavelli’s uses of virtù to describe members of the Medici family are more interesting than instructive. By that I mean they are more interesting for understanding

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<sup>425</sup> “Rimase di lui uno figliuolo naturale, il quale dopo a pochi mesi che fu morto nacque, e fu chiamato Giulio; il quale fu di quella virtù e fortuna ripieno, che in questi presenti tempi tutto il mondo congnoce, e che da moi, quando alle presenti cose perverremo, concedendone Iddio vita, sarà largamente dimostro.”

<sup>426</sup> “Né di quello si possono addurre vizi che maculassero tante sue virtù...”

Machiavelli's general feelings toward the Medici family and their reign in Florence than they are for an understanding of his concept of virtù. What is important to note is that none of the Medici he talks about here possess military virtù (though Machiavelli does mention that some of them participated in jousts as youths), even though they have armed supporters and the city fights wars while they rule it. As far as Machiavelli's descriptions of these wars, it is almost as if the Medici have no hand in determining how the wars were carried out. Perhaps this is prudent on their part: they were not a family of soldiers, but of bankers. Perhaps it was better for them to leave the decisions about the course of war to those who understood them. But, this also rings hollow, especially from Machiavelli's perspective, because those with command over the army could have seized the state from the Medici, if they had wanted to: given the example of Francesco Sforza in Milan it is hard to imagine the Medici giving control over military strategy to anyone outside the family.

The two Medici of note here are Cosimo and Lorenzo because, for Machiavelli, they seem to have broken through the trend of malaise and mediocrity which seems to weigh on Italian politicians like a nightmare. Cosimo transcends this mediocrity, because he almost acted appropriately as a founder in almost founding a new state in Florence. Lorenzo does so because of his masterful diplomacy, while everything fell apart after his death. However, the Medici never seemed to have what Machiavelli wanted Italian politicians to have, though these two seemed to come closest.

Giovanni de' Medici, who became Pope Leo X, and the rest of the Medici family, were, according to Machiavelli, in a position in the 1510s to consolidate power in Italy and drive out the other European powers. Giovanni de' Medici, "Having found [himself] then His Holiness the Pope Leo [X] this all-powerful papacy: that one hopes, if it is made great with arms, this with the goodness and infinite other of his virtù will make the papacy very great and venerated" (P 11).<sup>427</sup> Just as control of the Papacy and its temporal power gave the Borgia family the advantage to Cesare Borgia to begin to conquer Northern Italy a decade earlier, control of the Papacy gave the Medici family a similar advantage. In looking for someone to unite Northern Italy and expel the other European forces, Machiavelli claims that the best hope, at present is the Medici family, "which with its *fortuna* and virtù, is favored by God and the Church"<sup>428</sup> in undertaking this endeavor (P 11). Indeed, I take the final chapter of *The Prince* as an attempt to persuade the Medici that they are presented with the *occasione* to seize power in Italy and act as founders of a new Italian state, if only they have the prudence and virtù to seize the *occasione*.

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<sup>427</sup> Wootton: "Now His Holiness Pope Leo [X] has acquired the papacy, along with all its immense temporal power. We may hope, if his predecessors made it a military power to be reckoned with, he, who is so good and has so many virtues [*virtù*], will not only increase its power, but also make it worthy of respect."

<sup>428</sup> Wootton: "which is fortunate and resourceful [*virtù*], is favored by God and the church..."

### 5.1.5 Non-Florentine Italians

#### 63 Alberic, duke of Tuscany (IF 1:12)

When the Romans were threatened by the Saracens “they made Alberic Duke of Tuscany their captain, and through his virtù, saved from the Saracens” (IF 1:12).<sup>429</sup> About Alberic there is not much to say. Machiavelli’s description of him is typical of his thumbnail sketches of examples of those with virtù who he has no plans to describe in detail: their virtù conquers and everyone expects their virtù to conquer. I think that it is from summaries like these that those commentators on Machiavelli who think virtù a heuristic for success have drawn their interpretations. In these depictions, their virtù is a sort of club that some individuals possess which irresistibly bludgeons troubles into the dirt.

#### 64 Castruccio Castracani (IF 2:30; CC 405/452, CC 406/452, CC 415/458, CC 423/463, CC 424/463)

And because in living [Castruccio] was inferior neither to Phillip of Macedon father of Alexander, nor to Scipio of Rome, and he died at the age of the one and the other; and without doubt he would be been superior to the one and the other if, in exchange of

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<sup>429</sup> “...feciono loro capitano Albergio duca di Toscana, e mediante la virtù di quello, salvarono Roma da’ Saraceni.”

Lucca, he had had for his fatherland Macedonia or Rome (CC 431/466).<sup>430</sup>

Of Machiavelli's ten uses of virtù in the examples in *La Vita di Castruccio Castracani da Lucca* (hereafter *Vita*), unsurprisingly half of them are used to describe the titular character himself. These uses mostly come in the context of virtù as an attribute of Castruccio's that was obvious and recognizable to everyone, and the recognition of it, as much as any particular use of it, gained him success. However, that is not to make light of Castruccio's virtù and actions, which, as I quote in the epigraph, Machiavelli claims are not less than those of Phillip of Macedon or Scipio Africanus except by the circumstance of his fatherland being lesser than theirs.

As with many other examples Machiavelli uses, Castruccio's virtù functions both as a trait he exhibits, and which others observe in him, and a tool he uses. Very early in life, in the physical, pseudo-militaristic play of boys, "here he demonstrated very great virtù of *animo* and of body"<sup>431</sup> far superior to his peers (CC 405/452). And it was this demonstration of such virtù which caused (the fictional) Messer Francesco Guinigi to take Castruccio into his tutelage. Once Castruccio moved in with Messer Francesco it was amazing "how in briefest of times he became full of all those virtù(s)

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<sup>430</sup> "E perché vivendo ei non fu inferior né a Filippo di Macedonia padre di Alessandro, né a Scipione di Roma, ei morì nella età dell'uno e dell'altro; e senza dubbio avrebbe superato l'uno e l'altro se, in cambi di Lucca, egli avessi avuto per sua patria Macedonia o Roma." References to *Castruccio* are in the form of Constantine Page Number/ Capata Page Number where those are: Constantine (English): Niccolò Machiavelli. *The Life of Castruccio Castracani of Lucca in The Essential Writings of Machiavelli*. Trans. and ed. Peter Constantine. New York: The Modern Library. 2007. Capata (Italian): Niccolò Machiavelli. *La Vita di Castruccio Castracani da Lucca in Tutte le opere storiche, politiche, e letterarie*. Ed. Alessandro Capata. Rome: Newton & Compton. 1998.

<sup>431</sup> "...dove ei mostrava virtù di animo e di corpo grandissima..."

and customs that are asked for in a real gentleman” (CC 406/452).<sup>432</sup> Finally, Castruccio’s demonstration of virtù aided him at least one time once he had entered into politics. When he took the city of Pistoia through trickery, Castruccio eliminated those with power who could resist him and made the population loyal through canceling their debts and promising favors “such that each one, filled with hope, moved in good part by his virtù(s), they quieted” (CC 415/458).<sup>433</sup> In each of these instances, Castruccio’s virtù is a quality he possessed and displayed in a manner that was obvious to those around him. However, Machiavelli does not say that Castruccio ever used his virtù to overcome resistance or adversity; rather those who witness his virtù are spurred to admire him, train him, and let him rule them.

By contrast, in Castruccio’s death-bed soliloquy addressed to Pagolo Guinigi, which occurs just after Castruccio has won a great battle against a significantly larger Florentine force, Castruccio describes his virtù as a tool which he has used to achieve his ends. First he explains to Pagolo “And so that you would not only have what your father left you, but also what my fortuna and virtù won for you, I have never taken a wife, so that love of children would not have impeded...”<sup>434</sup> Castruccio’s ability to repay Francesco Guinigi’s kindness through advancing his son, Pagolo (CC 423/463). Here Castruccio has used his virtù, and not the reputation for it, to acquire territory for Pagolo. Second however, later in the soliloquy, Castruccio warns Pagolo that he leaves

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<sup>432</sup> “...in quanto breveissimo tempo ei diventò pieno di tutte quelle virtù e costume che in uno vero gentile uomo si richieggono.”

<sup>433</sup> “...tale che ognuno, ripieno di speranza, mosso in buona parte dale virtù sue, si quietò.”

<sup>434</sup> “E perché non solamente fussi tuo quello che da tuo padre ti era stato lasciato, ma quello ancora ch la fortuna e la virtù mia si guadagnava, non ho mai volute prendere donna, acciò che lo amore de figliuoli non mi avesse a impedire...”

him several weak and disloyal states and with a strong enemy nearby in Florence. “Do not therefore hope in anything, other than in your industry and the memory of my virtù and in reputation that the present victory causes you, which if you know with prudence to use, will give you aid in making an accord with the Florentines...” (CC 424/463).<sup>435</sup>

Here Castruccio’s virtù appears again as a trait which is inactive, but which can be used by Pagolo. This cautions us to be careful with the distinction I am drawing: just because Castruccio’s virtù is an observed trait that Machiavelli does not describe as being actively used in the narrative does not mean that the reputation and memory of this trait cannot be used.

Machiavelli’s discussion of Castruccio Castracani in his *Istorie Fiorentine* is less fictionalized than in *La Vita*. In the third, Pistoia had rebelled against Castracani and there he

moved to camp; where he stayed with so much virtù and obstinacy, that, even though the Florentines several times attempted to help [the Pistoiese], and assaulted now his army now his country, they were never able, neither with force nor with industry, to remove him from his campaign: so much yearning he had to punish the transgressions of the Pistoiese and the Florentines! [I]n such a mode that the Pistoiese were forced to receive him as lord (IF 2:30).<sup>436</sup>

Castruccio’s virtù, in this example, is military in nature, and he possesses the obstinacy that Machiavelli values in politicians, because it allows them to endure

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<sup>435</sup> “Non dei pertanto sperare in alcuna cosa, fuora che nella tua industria e nella memoria della virtù mia e nella reputazione che ti areca la presente vittoria, la quale se tu saprai con prudenza usare, ti darà aiuto a fare accordo con i Fiorentini...”

<sup>436</sup> “...andò a campo: dove con tanta virtù e ostinazione stette, che, ancora che i Fiorentini facessero più volte prove di soccorrerla, e ora il suo esercito ora il suo paese assalissero, mai non posserono, né con forza né con industria, dalla impresa rimuoverlo: tanta sete aveva di gastigare i Pistoiesi e i Fiorentini sgarare! di modo che i Pistoiesi furono a riceverlo per signore constretti.”

hardships. Indeed, Machiavelli does not fault the Florentine response to Castruccio's siege of Pistoia: they first attacked his besieging force in an attempt to trap it against the city walls; this is fairly standard practice, because it is both direct and advantageous for the army attacking the besiegers. When this failed, the Florentines attacked Lucca and Pisa, Castruccio's countries, in an attempt to draw him off of his siege of Pistoia by making him fight to protect his own lands, also a fairly standard response. But, the virtù and obstinacy of Castruccio allowed him to defend against the first and ignore the second until he was able to take Pistoia. And so, with Castruccio, we get a sense of the details of why his virtù allowed him to overcome a specific set of obstacles.

**65 Messer Francesco Guinigi (CC 405/452) and 66 Pagolo Guinigi (CC 424/463)**

(See 63 Castruccio Castracani above)

The only two individuals Machiavelli associates with the term virtù in *La Vita*, in addition to Castruccio himself, are two members of the Guinigi family. These are Messer Francesco Guinigi, who is Castruccio's mentor and benefactor, and Pagolo Guinigi, who is Francesco's son and for whom Castruccio acts as his benefactor and guardian.<sup>437</sup> Of the first, Machiavelli says, "There was in the city of Lucca a

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<sup>437</sup> Both Guinigi are fictional embellishments of Machiavelli's narrative; they were not part of the life of the historical Castruccio.

gentleman of the family of Guinigi, who was called Messer Francesco, who in riches and in grace and in virtù far surpassed all the other Lucchesi” (CC 405/452).<sup>438</sup> In Machiavelli’s narrative, it was this man who recognized Castruccio’s boyhood virtù *di animo e di corpo* took him in, trained him, and gave him his first military command. Francesco’s son Pagolo Guinigi, on the other hand, did not have the virtù or his father or of Castruccio. This is (probably) why Castruccio, in his death soliloquy addressed to Pagolo, Castruccio advises him to make peace with the Florentines rather than fight them as Castruccio had. However, about Pagolo, Machiavelli concludes that “But virtù and *fortuna* were no already enough friends of Pagolo, as much as of Castruccio; because not long after he lost Pistoia, and then Pisa, and with struggle maintained dominion of Lucca, which was preserved in his house finishing with Pagolo, his great grandson” (CC 424/463).<sup>439</sup> The two Guinigi reconfirm that virtù is not transferred genetically from parent to child as Francesco’s virtù is praised while Pagolo’s is only commented on to say that it was insufficient. Additionally, Pagolo demonstrate that the virtù necessary to take and maintain a new state is not necessarily present in those who make fairly competent lieutenants, as the narrative demonstrates that Castruccio believed Pagolo to be.<sup>440</sup> It is unclear (to me at least), if Francesco’s virtù would have been sufficient to hold what Castruccio had taken, or if Pagolo’s virtù would have

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<sup>438</sup> “Era nella città di Lucca uno gentile uomo della famiglia de’ Guinigi, chiamato messer Francesco, il quale per ricchezze e per grazie e per virtù passava di lunga tutti gli altri Lucchesi.”

<sup>439</sup> “Manon furono già la virtù e la fortuna tanto amiche a Pagolo Guinigi, quanto a Castruccio; perché non molto di poi perdé Pistoia, e appresso Pisa, e con fatica si mantenne il dominio di Lucca, il quale perseverò nella sua casa infino a Pagolo suo pronipote.”

<sup>440</sup> See esp. Pagolo’s role in the first taking of Pistoia, by trickery (CC 415/458) where he led both sides in a dispute to believe he sided with them. On the night the plot was to be executed, he sent Pagolo as his representative to one side while he went himself to the other.

been praised were he a private citizen though it was insufficient for a new prince. But, in these things, context matters. And while Pagolo did not rise to meet his challenges, Francesco had fewer and easier challenges to which he rose, and did not undertake those to which he could not.

### **67 the Castellan of Pavia (IF 1:34)**

Machiavelli tells us that when Giovan Galeazzo Visconti died, his son Giovan Maria was killed and his son Filippo “was for a time pent up<sup>441</sup> in the citadel of Pavia, where, by the faith and virtù of that castellan he was saved” (IF 1:34).<sup>442</sup>

### **68 Carmagnola (P 12, IF 4:13) and 69 Niccolò Piccinino (IF 5:32, IF 6:8)**

In addition to Francesco Sforza, Machiavelli has several further examples of condottieri with virtù. These were Francesco Carmignuola, and Niccolò Piccinino and his sons. Unlike Francesco Sforza, these men either did not have the ambition to use their armies in an attempt to seize greater states for themselves, or if they had the ambition, they did not have the ability.

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<sup>441</sup> Banfield-Mansfield render this as imprisoned, but the Italian appears to me to be more equivocal.

<sup>442</sup> “...stette un tempo rinchiuso nella rocca di Pavia, dove, per fede e virtù di quello castellano si salvò.”

### 68 Carmagnola (P 12, IF 4:13)

In *il Principe*:

Francesco Bussone the Count of Carmagnola appears in a section where Machiavelli describes why mercenaries are always a poor choice as soldiers. This is because they will likely lose, but if they win they are a danger to those who hired them. Carmagnola was a mercenary captain employed by the Venetians once they began to make conquests on the Italian mainland and abandoned their old practice of using their own forces.<sup>443</sup> This was extraordinarily dangerous for the Venetians “[b]ecause they recognized him to be virtuosissimo”<sup>444</sup> but feared they could no longer win battles with him because they believed he had lost the will to win (41). Yet, because they did not have their own arms, but only Carmagnola’s soldiers whom they had hired, the Venetians realized that they could not dismiss him or else he would instantly become a threat to them. Thus, they had to have Carmagnola killed (41). The example of Carmagnola and the Venetians is demonstrative of two principles held by Machiavelli. One, already stated, is that it is dangerous to hire mercenaries instead of fighting with one’s own troops. The other is that it is dangerous for a virtuoso captain to fight for others because those who hire the virtuoso will become aware of the first principle. Thus, they will fear him more and more until they feel obliged to kill the virtuoso captain they hired to preserve themselves. This is exactly what happened with the Venetians and Carmagnola.

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<sup>443</sup> See my discussion of Venetian virtù above.

<sup>444</sup> Wootton: “They recognized he was a first-rate [*virtuosissimo*] general...”

*In Istorie Fiorentine:*

The first example is of how Carmignuola proceeded in fighting wars for his employers. In the first, the Venetians and the Florentines formed a league to wage war on the Duke of Milan "... and Carmignuola was captain general of the league. They limited the whole war by this accord, to Lombardy where it was governed by Carmignuola virtuosamente..." (IF 4:13).<sup>445</sup> And while, after five years of war, the peace favored the league as a whole, Machiavelli estimates that Venice gained some towns from Milan, but Florence gained nothing and spent an enormous amount of money on the wars (IF 4:15). Thus, this was one of the many wars which Machiavelli derides as not being dangerous enough to cause virtù to be developed, but was still draining of the resources of those who participated.

### **69 Niccolò Piccinino (IF 5:32, IF 6:8)**

Another example of condottieri is Niccolò Piccinino<sup>446</sup> and, later, his sons. Machiavelli introduces Niccolò Piccinino as one of the leaders, with Niccolò Fortebraccio, of the other major group of mercenaries in Italy than the one controlled by Francesco Sforza (IF 5:2). When Fortebraccio died, Niccolò Piccinino became the

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<sup>445</sup> "...e il Carmignuola fu capitano generale della lega. Ridussesi per tanto la guerra mediante questo accordo, in Lombardia dove fu governata da Carmignuola virtupsamente..."

<sup>446</sup> Also, a note on the spelling of his name: "Piccinino" seems to be the accepted spelling in both English and modern Italian, however, Machiavelli spells his name "Piccino", which I am forced to assume is a Tuscan dialectical variant.

second most powerful condottieri in Italy. In the lead up to the Battle of Anghiari, Piccinino, who was trying to invade Tuscany on behalf of the Duke of Milan, came upon the town of Borgo, in the Apennines, and “drew two thousand men, these confident in the virtù of the captain and in his promises, desirous of plunder, they followed him” (IF 5:32).<sup>447</sup> So, even though Piccinino’s reputation was not as great as Sforza’s, it still had real world effects. And even if these effects were not as great as with Sforza’s reputation — the Venetians did not even want to do battle with Sforza, so great was his reputation for virtù — these effects were real and tangible, such as being able to raise two thousand new soldiers while in what was ostensibly enemy territory. However, Piccinino lost the upcoming battle of Anghiari, and died not long after. According to Machiavelli, Niccolò “was a more virtuoso than happy captain. And from him remained Francesco and Jacopo, who had less virtù and more evil *fortuna* than their father...”<sup>448</sup> which caused their power and influence to shrink (IF 6:8). Despite Piccinino’s virtù, his *fortuna* was bad and he was frequently pitted against the more virtuoso Francesco Sforza. Piccinino’s sons were no match for Sforza and the reputation of their family as condottieri subsequently fell.

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<sup>447</sup> “...trasse di quella terra dumila uomini, i quali confidando nella virtù del capitano e nelle promesse sue, desiderosi di predare, lo seguirono.”

<sup>448</sup> “stato più virtuoso che felice capitano. E di lui restorono Francesco e Iacopo, i quali ebbono meno virtù e più cattiva fortuna deal padre...”

## 70 Francesco Spinula (IF 5:6)

Francesco Spinula was a citizen of Genoa who helped the Duke of Milan gain control over that city. However, Spinula quickly fell from the Duke's favor despite participating in the Duke's war against Alfonso, King of Naples "and having born himself virtuosamente in the services of that campaign..." (IF 5:6).<sup>449</sup> Machiavelli give us no further detail about the actions of Francesco Spinula in that war which he describes as virtuosamente. However, with the case of Spinula, we should note that Machiavelli claims that the Duke of Milan did not trust him because, though he helped give him control over the city, according to Machiavelli, the Duke believed that a man who was willing to betray his country for his own gain would betray the Duke for that same reason (IF 5:6). And so, while we should assume that Spinula's virtuosamente actions in that war were in line with what Machiavelli claims constitute military virtù in his writings (he is consistent across all his major works on this), Spinula did not display extraordinary virtù, nor did it manifest itself in an unusual way. If it was out of the ordinary in any sort of exemplary way, Machiavelli would have gone out of his way to describe it. The example of Spinula should be read as part of Machiavelli's larger discussion of how princes are, generally, ungrateful to those who aid them and fearful of those who display virtù.

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<sup>449</sup> "...ed essendosi portato ne' servizi di quella impresa virtuosamente..."

**71 Francesco Sforza (P 7, IF 5:2, IF 6:24, IF 7:12) and 72 Galeazzo Sforza (IF 7:12, IF 7:30)**

Francesco Sforza was another ruler whom Machiavelli uses as an example of one who acquired rule through his own virtù as contrasted with the example of Cesare Borgia, who came through *fortuna* (P7). “Francesco, through the appropriate means and with his great virtù, from a private citizen he became Duke of Milan” (P 7).<sup>450</sup> Sforza started out as a mercenary commander in the employ of the Milanese, turned on them, and established his rule of Milan (P 7). Because Sforza had virtù and his own troops, he held power with ease (P 7), but his descendants lost Milan because they would not be soldiers in addition to being Dukes (P 7). In comparison to Borgia, Sforza seems to stand in as a contemporary Hiero of Syracuse, who acquired rule through virtù, but whose state did not last long after his death.

Much of the second half of *Istorie Fiorentine* is taken up with following the rise of Francesco Sforza, the most powerful and best regarded condottiero of his day, Count of the Marches, and, eventually, Duke of Milan. Francesco’s mercenary career and then rise to power in Milan is understood by Machiavelli in a wider net of Italian power politics, as it rightly should be. In contrast to Francesco, whose reputation for virtù was widespread, his son, Galeazzo Sforza, was harmed, because he did not have that same reputation.

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<sup>450</sup> “Francesco, per li debiti mezzi e con una grande sua virtù di privato diventò duca di Milano...”

Machiavelli's discussion of the two Sforzas demonstrates how important a reputation for virtù can be in a politician's success, independent of the direct effects of his virtù itself. Machiavelli introduces Francesco Sforza by explaining that, of the condottieri in Italy at the time, Sforza "...was more esteemed, for the virtù of the Count [Francesco Sforza], for the promise to him that the Duke of Milan had made of Madonna Bianca his natural daughter, the hope of this relationship caused him [to acquire] very great reputation" (IF 5:2).<sup>451</sup> Francesco Sforza's reputation continued to grow as his career progressed, and he eventually married Bianca. When the last Visconti Duke of Milan died, the Milanese created a republic, but Sforza wanted to make himself duke of Milan. Against him, the Milanese sought aid from the Venetian republic, but "Pandolfo [Malatesta] their captain judged that he would not make that experiment, knowing the virtù of the Count and of his army" (IF 6:24).<sup>452</sup> Thus, through his virtù and his reputation for virtù, Francesco Sforza was able to go from condottiero to Count of the Marches, and then become Duke of Milan.

The reputation of Galeazzo Sforza for having less virtù than his father harmed him. Galeazzo is never described as having virtù in *Istorie Fiorentine* rather, both times Machiavelli uses the term in relation to him are to report that at least some Florentines questioned his virtù. First, they argued that they should not renew the treaty that Florence had with his father, "because in Galeazzo there was not that virtù

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<sup>451</sup> "...era in maggiore region, sì per la virtù del Conte, sì per la promessa gli aveva il duca di Milano fatto di madonna Bianca sua naturale figliuola; la speranza del quale parentado reputazione grandissima gli arrecava."

<sup>452</sup> "...Pandolfo loro capitano giudicò che e' non fusse da farne questa esperienza, conoscendo la virtù del Conte e del suo esercito."

that was in Francesco, and by consequence of this if they could not hope for that utility they [had not cause] to oblige themselves...” (IF 7:12).<sup>453</sup> Second, Tommaso Soderini counseled that the Florentines could not rely on their treaties with either Venice or Duke Galeazzo Sforza, because “he was neither confident in the friendship of the Venetians, nor in that of the Duke, for he did not know how much faith was in the one and how much virtù was in the other...” (IF 7:30).<sup>454</sup> And so, in both of these cases, Galeazzo Sforza’s reputation for lacking the virtù of his father harmed him in his dealings with the Florentines because, at first, they were not certain if it was even worth being his ally, and once they were his ally, they were not certain that it did them any good.

The different reputations of the Sforzas also had different impacts. For ironically, Galeazzo’s less than stellar reputation among foreign powers, like the Florentines, had little impact in the end because he was a hereditary ruler and turned out not to be a weak or incompetent one. And so, as a mediocrity like most of his contemporaries, he was able to muddle through being Duke of Milan without much difficulty. For Francesco, on the other hand, reputation amongst other powers had a bigger impact, because he was not yet established in his authority as Duke of Milan. If his reputation had been less, it might have been impossible for Francesco to become Duke of Milan in the first place. But, Francesco was one of the very few men, from Machiavelli’s Italy’s recent past, who stood out as being exceptional in their virtù,

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<sup>453</sup> “...perché in Galeazzo non era quella virtù che era in Francesco, e per conseguente non se ne doveva né poteva sperare quello utile...”

<sup>454</sup> “né confidava nella amicizia de’ Viniziani, né in quella del Duca, per non sapere quante fede si fusse nell’una e quanta virtù nell’alta...”

ambition, and general competence. Indeed, in *il Principe* 7, before Machiavelli begins his discussion of Cesare Borgia, who came to power through *fortuna* and the arms of others, Machiavelli mentions that Francesco Sforza came to power through his *virtù*. Indeed, it seems that Francesco Sforza and Cesare Borgia are the only contemporary politicians with careers that Machiavelli thinks should be imitated by Italian Princes.

### **73 Ferdinand of Naples (IF 6:28)**

(See also the discussion of 97 Florentines)

Potentially, the last flash of Florentine *virtù* came when the town of Foiano in Val di Chiana, which Machiavelli notes had substandard fortifications, was defended by only a 200 man Florentine garrison against Prince Ferdinand of Naples's twelve thousand troops "and so much was, either the *virtù* of those inside was great or his was so little, that not before after thirty-six days was he master of it" (IF 6:28).<sup>455</sup> But, even if this was the last flash of Florentine *virtù*, it is notable that it was in an ultimately losing minor battle that served as a delaying action. However, I tend to think that Machiavelli means this example to point more to the incompetence and laziness of Ferdinand than to the heroic strength and *virtù* of the two hundred Florentines. In general, Machiavelli's discussion of the wars in Italy in the 15<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>455</sup> "...e fu tanta, o la gran virtù di quelli di dentro o la poca sua, che non prima che dopo trentasei giorni se ne insignorì."

Century does little to hide his disgust at the weak, lazy, undisciplined armies who, because they are mostly all mercenaries, can hardly even be bothered to kill any number of the enemy's mercenaries during battle.<sup>456</sup>

#### **74 Pope Sextus IV (Francesco da Savona) (IF 7:22)**

Pope Sextus IV earned his reputation within the Church. "Pope Paul died, and Sextus IV was created to succeed him, before called Francesco da Savona, a man of very humble and base condition; but by his virtù(s) became general of the Order of St. Francis, and afterwards Cardinal" (IF 7:22).<sup>457</sup> While from this it appears that Sextus IV's fame came from his piety as a great monk, this is not true. Machiavelli continues his discussion of Sextus IV (born Francesco della Rovere) by telling us that his preferential treatment of the two men who were rumored to be his sons was the first example of Popes using their power and influence to attempt to establish a dynasty for their family. This was the example that the popes of Machiavelli's political career followed. Alexander VI's (Francesco Borgia) preference for his son Cesare, Julius II's (Giuliano della Rovere; the son of one of the nephews of Pope Sextus IV who

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<sup>456</sup> See Machiavelli's description and commentary on the Battle of Anghiari (5:33). According to Machiavelli, only one person died in the battle of several thousand soldiers. Banfield and Mansfield (Note 3 in that chapter) claim that Machiavelli's source for this, Biondo, claims there were at least 70 casualties in the battle; this is still a very light casualty count for pitched battle between two armies each numbering in the thousands.

<sup>457</sup> "Morì papa Paulo, e fu a lui creato successore Sisto IV, detto prima Francesco da Savona, uomo di bassissima and vile condizione; ma per le sue virtù era diventato generale dell'ordine di San Francesco, e di poi cardinale."

Machiavelli claimed was widely believed to be his son) conquests as a pope almost always under arms, and Leo X's (Giovanni de' Medici) and Clement VII's (Giulio de' Medici) aid of their family's consolidation of power in Florence during their papacy's. Though, obviously, Machiavelli cannot ridicule these men too much because Clement VII is his patron in writing *Istorie Fiorentine*.

### **75 Caterina Sforza (AG 7:187\*/355 (F.C.))**

(See also 77 Cesare Borgia below and the Introduction)

Caterina Sforza is strange inclusion into the pantheon of individuals who Machiavelli uses as examples of virtù for one simple reason: she is a woman. This is strange because Machiavelli's use of virtù tends to be closer to the uses which mean 'manliness' than those which mean 'goodness.' Caterina Sforza is, to my knowledge, the only woman who Machiavelli speaks of as having virtù. Sforza was the Countessa of Forlì, who eventually lost her rule to Cesare Borgia. However, according to Machiavelli, she "...had *animo* to wait for an army..." to lift Borgia's siege of Forlì, which never came, and though she did not come to a "good end, nevertheless she received that honor which her virtù merited" (AG 7:187\*/355).<sup>458</sup> Machiavelli is, I think, doing two things with his reference to Sforza. First, he is reminding the reader

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<sup>458</sup> "...aveva avuto animo ad aspettare uno esercito...buono fine, nondimeno ne riportò quello onore che aveva meritata la sua virtù."

that not everyone with virtù succeeds and we can still recognize, and learn from, those with virtù who fail. Second, Machiavelli is warning us of the unreliability of fortresses in warfare and politics. Caterina Sforza twice relied on the citadel at Forlì to protect her, first from the would-be usurpers who killed her husband, and second from Cesare Borgia. The first time she was famously able to trick the would-be usurpers and use the fortress to defeat them because her uncle, the duke of Milan, sent a relief army. The second time, politics prevented her uncle from sending a relief army and Borgia was eventually able to take the city. While in the first instance, Caterina Sforza was able to display her virtù, it was not the sort of great virtù that Machiavelli tends to exhort his readers to imitate.

#### **76 Antonio Tassino of Ferrara (IF 8:18)**

Antonia Tassino of Ferrara, the chamberlain of the Duchess of Milan: “This man, either by being handsome of body, or by another secret virtù of his, after the death of the Duke he rose to so much reputation in the presence of the Duchess, that he almost governed the state...” (IF 8:18).<sup>459</sup>

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<sup>459</sup> “Questi, o per essere bello di corpo, o per altra sua segreta virtù, dopo la morte del Duca salì in tanta reputazione apresso alla Duchessa, che quasi lo stato governava...”

## 77 Cesare Borgia (P 7)

Perhaps more than any other of Machiavelli's many examples of individuals with virtù, Cesare Borgia's person and career has come to be identified with Machiavelli and his *arte dello stato*. Montesquieu, when summarizing the motives of legislators, wrote, "Machiavelli was full of his idol, Duke Valentino" (Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* XXIX.19).<sup>460</sup> Nowadays, in addition to the lively debate in the scholarly<sup>461</sup> and popular literature<sup>462</sup> on Cesare Borgia's role in Machiavelli's thought, Cesare's likeness sometimes appears as the cover art of editions of Machiavelli's books.<sup>463</sup>

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<sup>460</sup> Charles de Secondat, *baron de Montesquieu, The Spirit of the Laws*. Trans. and Ed. By Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller, and Harold Samuel Stone. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 1989 [1748]. Though the chapter is titled "On legislators", the text of the chapter consists of a list of the motivations of different political thinkers and concludes that, "The laws always meet the passions and prejudices of the legislator. Sometimes they pass through and are colored; sometimes they remain there and are incorporated."

<sup>461</sup> As Pocock (1975, p. 173) writes of how interpreters view Machiavelli's analysis of Cesare Borgia: "Machiavelli was notoriously fascinated by this figure; and so much had been written on the assumption that he is the hero of *Il Principe*, and that its main themes are all to be understood by reference to his role..."

<sup>462</sup> E.g. Jean Zimmerman. "In The Name Of The Family' Probes The Lives Of An Infamous Clan." *NPR*. NPR, 04 Mar. 2017. Web.. <http://www.npr.org/2017/03/04/515438391/in-the-name-of-the-family-probes-the-lives-of-an-infamous-clan> (Accessed 16 May 2017).

<sup>463</sup> E.g. In English: the Kindle Edition of *The Prince and the Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livy (Illustrated)*. [https://www.amazon.com/Prince-Discourses-Decade-Livius-Illustrated-ebook/dp/B0015FJF3M/ref=sr\\_1\\_6?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1489076755&sr=1-6&keywords=the+prince+machiavelli+borgia](https://www.amazon.com/Prince-Discourses-Decade-Livius-Illustrated-ebook/dp/B0015FJF3M/ref=sr_1_6?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1489076755&sr=1-6&keywords=the+prince+machiavelli+borgia) (Accessed 9 March 2017). In Italian the Einaudi edition of *il Principe* edited by Giorgio Inglese. [https://www.amazon.it/Il-principe-Niccol%C3%B2-Machiavelli/dp/8806221957/ref=sr\\_1\\_3?ie=UTF8&qid=1489076584&sr=8-3&keywords=il+principe](https://www.amazon.it/Il-principe-Niccol%C3%B2-Machiavelli/dp/8806221957/ref=sr_1_3?ie=UTF8&qid=1489076584&sr=8-3&keywords=il+principe) (Accessed 9 March 2017). The Inglese edition is the standard Italian edition of *il Principe* and is the edition of *il Principe* on which that in the Capata edition of *Tutte le opera* is based (and is the one that I use).

Cesare Borgia's most prominent appearance in Machiavelli's texts is as the principal example in the chapter of *il Principe* titled "Of New Principalities One Acquires with the Arms and the *Fortuna* of Others" (P 7).<sup>464</sup> Machiavelli tells us that

These men are those given a *stato* by someone either for money, or by the grace of who gives it: just as happened to many in Greece in the cities of Ionia and of the Hellespont, where they were made princes by Darius, so that they would keep those cities for his security and glory: just as those emperors were made who from private citizens, by corrupting the soldiers, attained the empire (P 7).<sup>465</sup>

Thus, Machiavelli begins the chapter by writing that this category of prince comes to power as either a client to a more powerful prince or as the conduit through which the soldiers who allowed him to take power enrich themselves.

Such princes cannot *mantenere lo stato* because they have neither the knowledge nor the ability: "they do not know how, because if one is not a man of great ingenuity and virtù, it is not reasonable that, having always lived in private *fortuna*, one would know how to command; they cannot, because they do not have forces that could be friendly and faithful" (P 7).<sup>466</sup> This leaves these princes in a state

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<sup>464</sup> "*De Principatibus Novis Qui Alienis Armis et Fortuna Acquiruntur*" (Chapter titles in *il Principe* are in Latin.) Cesare Borgia also is referenced elsewhere in Machiavelli's writing as someone who conquered states that were defended by fortresses (P 20, D 2:24, AG 7:354), who was able to take cities by coming upon them suddenly by surprise (AG 7:358), who was initially given power and arms by the French (P 3), who famously tricked and murdered his mercenary commanders when they revolted (P 8), who realized the wisdom of only relying on his own men and arms (P 13), and whose cruelty brought order and peace to the Romagna (P 17).

<sup>465</sup> "E questi tali sono quando è concesso ad alcuno uno stato o per denari o per grazia di chi lo concede: come intervenne a molti in Grecia nelle città Ionia e di Ellesponto, dove furono fatti principi da Dario, acciò le tenessero per sua sicurezza e gloria: come erano fatti ancora quelli imperadori che di privati, per corruzione de' soldati, pervenivano allo imperio."

<sup>466</sup> "... non sanno, perché s'e' non è uomo di grande ingegno e virtù, non è ragionevole che, sendo vissuto sempre in privata fortuna, sappia comandare; non possono, perché non hanno forze che gli possano essere amiche e fedeli."

of dependency on those who put them in power and who have friendly and faithful troops who they know how to command. As either clients of more powerful princes or tools of greedy and corrupt soldiers, if these princes remain in power, it is not because they *mantenere lo stato*, but because those whose *fortuna* or arms put them in power see fit to keep them there.

Cesare Borgia is the grandest example of those who become princes through the *fortuna* and arms of others, because he actually had the *virtù* to know how to command and acquired his own forces who could be friendly and faithful to him. Cesare used his *virtù*, his ability to command, and his own troops to lay the appropriate foundations for his rule independent of the *fortuna* of his father and the arms of the French, which had put him in power.<sup>467</sup> Unlike other examples of those who acquired principalities through the arms or *fortuna* of others and whom Machiavelli could have cited, Cesare Borgia had at least attempted to (and nearly did) achieve the independence of action and self-reliance required to *mantenere lo stato*, rather than rely on the arms and *fortuna* of those who gave him power to do so for him. This is why, although Cesare ruled for no more than five years, Machiavelli claimed that he “does not know any precept better for him to give, to a new prince,

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<sup>467</sup> Pocock characterizes this somewhat differently: “The legislator’s *virtù* endows him with almost complete independence, but in Cesare we see combined the maximum *virtù* with the maximum dependence on fortune. He is presented as a man of extraordinary ability who got his chance only because his father happened to become pope, and whose *virtù* was displayed in the efforts he made to establish his power in the Romagna on an independent basis before his father should happen to die. Alexander VI’s election, clearly, was the *occasione*, for Cesare’s *virtù* to manifest itself, but the case is quite different from that of the seizure of *occasione* by the legislator. ... Cesare’s seizure of *occasione* merely made him a rider on the wheel; he entered a situation in which he owed much to *fortuna* that might at any moment be taken away, and this dependence on *fortuna* endured while he endeavored by his *virtù* to establish a power independent of the wheel’s next turn” (*Machiavellian Moment*, 173-174).

than the example of his actions”<sup>468</sup> that should be imitated by “all of those who by *fortuna* and with the arms of others have ascended to empire” (P 7).<sup>469</sup>

### The Example of his Actions

Machiavelli’s description of the political and military career of Cesare Borgia is brief and lacking in detail. Presumably Machiavelli felt that he did not need to (and should not) spend time on the biography of a contemporary to his politically engaged audience. However, as five centuries have elapsed since Machiavelli wrote *il Principe*, the details of Cesare’s career that Machiavelli assumed his audience knew as a matter of course are now only familiar to a small group of specialists. For this reason, I have integrated details of Cesare Borgia’s career recounted by Francesco Guicciardini in his work *la Storia d’Italia* into Machiavelli’s account in *il Principe*.<sup>470</sup>

Cesare was the son of Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia, who became Pope Alexander VI in 1492 (Guicciardini 1.2/9).<sup>471</sup> Cesare was made a cardinal in 1494<sup>472</sup> and

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<sup>468</sup> “...non saprei quali precetti mi dare migliori, a uno principe nuovo, che lo esempio delle azioni sua...”

<sup>469</sup> “...a tutti colore che per fortuna e con le arme di altri sono asceti allo imperio...”

<sup>470</sup> I have not yet incorporated Machiavelli’s account of Cesare’s career from Machiavelli’s diplomatic correspondence.

<sup>471</sup> Francesco Guicciardini, *La Storia d’Italia*. Italian: 3 vols. Ed. Ugo Dotti. Torino, Italia: Nono Aragno Editore. 2015. English: *The History of Italy*. Trans., Ed., and abridged by Sidney Alexander. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP. 1969. Although I consulted Alexander’s translation when possible, all translations are my own. Citations are in the form of Book.Chapter (of the Italian edition)/page number (of the English edition). I use an asterisk (\*) to indicate when the English page number referenced is a summary of the Italian. Guicciardini does not fail to note that Rodrigo Borgia was elected because of the conflict between Cardinals Ascanio Sforza and Giuliano della Rovere (the future Pope Julius II) and because Rodrigo “with a new example in that age, conspicuously bought, partially with money partially with promises of offices and their benefices, which were the greatest, many votes of cardinals: these, scorning the teachings of the Gospel, did not feel ashamed to sell their

immediately became a part of the Borgia family<sup>473</sup> political apparatus. He was granted the benefices of King Alfonso of Naples's realm as part of negotiating a mutual defense alliance with Pope Alexander VI (Guicciardini 1.6/33) and was, later in 1494, forced by Charles VIII, King of France, to serve "as Apostolic Legate, for three months, to the King, but in truth as hostage for his father's promises" (Guicciardini 1.17/70).<sup>474</sup>

With the death of his brother in 1497,<sup>475</sup> Cesare Borgia became Pope Alexander VI's only son and thus only hope to establish a family dynasty in Italy.

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discretion to traffic with the name of the divine authority the sacred treasures, in the more exalted part of the temple / con esempio nuovo in quella età, comperò palesemente, parte con danari parte con promesse degli uffici e benefici suoi, che erano amplissimi, molti voti di cardinali: i quali, disprezzatori dell'evangelico ammaestramento, non si vergogarono di vendere la facoltà di trafficare col nome della autorità celeste i sacri tesori, nella più eccelsa parte del tempio" (1.2/9). Guicciardini's loathing of Alexander VI and his son Cesare Borgia is noteworthy in contrast to Machiavelli's favorable treatment of them because Guicciardini's account is much more in line with the balance of contemporary views of the Borgia family. In addition to my analysis that Machiavelli appreciates Cesare's use as an example of virtù, Machiavelli may have viewed them favorably because Alexander VI demonstrated how a Pope could use his office to increase the Church's temporal powers. See Daniel Pellerin, "Machiavelli's Best Fiend", *History of Political Thought*. Vol. XXVII. No. 3. (Autumn 2009): 423-453. It is also worth noting that whereas, "The humanists believed that history taught by examples. In Guicciardini's *History of Italy* there are hardly any examples which ought to be imitated." Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth-Century Florence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965. Page 282.

<sup>472</sup> Guicciardini continues that "to remove the impediment of being a bastard, who were not customarily granted such dignity, was done with false testimony to prove that he was someone else's legitimate son / per rimuovere lo impedimento di essere spurio, a' quali non era solito concedersi tale dignità, fatto con falsi testimony provare che era figliuolo legittimo di altri" (1.6/33).

<sup>473</sup> Pellerin would argue that we should be focusing our attention on Alexander VI rather than on Cesare because "first, so far as Machiavelli is concerned, the Duke acted as the Pope's instrument; and second, Valentino, unlike his father committed a serious, even fatal mistake whose censure at the hands of Machiavelli is especially pertinent: Valentino blundered in the maneuvering over papal succession" ("Machiavelli's Best Fiend", 442). I find Pellerin's evidence for this (all drawn from P 7) unconvincing and present my own interpretation in what follows. Cesare was probably, at least initially, the junior partner in the Borgia family, but for Machiavelli he was the more important figure because his actions demonstrated virtù, whereas his father's actions only demonstrated cunning and deceit.

<sup>474</sup> "...come legato apostolic, tre mesi, il re, ma in verità per statico delle promesse paterne."

<sup>475</sup> Guicciardini reports as fact that Cesare had his brother Don Goffredo, Duke of Candia (Gandia in Alexander's translation), killed out of jealousy of his younger brother's position as a soldier while he had to be a Cardinal and out of envy that their sister, Madonna Lucrezia Borgia, loved Goffredo more than she loved Cesare (3.13/123-124). Machiavelli does not mention this killing nor the reports of the

Pope Alexander wanted to advance Cesare's secular career, but faced many difficulties. According to Machiavelli, Pope Alexander "did not see a way he could make him [Cesare] master of any *stato* that did not belong to the Church",<sup>476</sup> but also knew that the Venetians and Duke of Milan would oppose any move to give any substantial Church property to Cesare (P 7). This Church property—the Papal States—at least in the Romagna, was no longer directly governed by the Church or by Church appointed governors,<sup>477</sup> but was functionally a collection of city states ruled by hereditary noble families who would militarily resist any attempt at deposing them in favor of the Pope's son (Guicciardini 4.12/150). Further, Pope Alexander understood that the Italian troops which would have been available to him for undertaking any sort of action were under the command of the Orsini and Colonna<sup>478</sup> families who had reason to fear the increasing power of the Pope (P 7). There was simply no opportunity in the domestic Italian political landscape for the Borgia family to establish hereditary rule over a territory in Italy.

But, in 1498 Charles VIII died and Louis XII became the King of France.

Louis XII asserted his claim to the ducal throne of Milan (Guicciardini 4.1/135) and

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incestuous relationship between Cesare and Lucrezia. Guicciardini goes even further, claiming in this same passage that Goffredo, Cesare, and their father Roderigo (Pope Alexander VI) all competed for Lucrezia's incestuous affections. This is probably all slander.

<sup>476</sup> "...e' non vedeva via di poterlo fare signore di alcuno stto che non fussi stato di Chiesa..."

<sup>477</sup> In another decade, after the papal careers of Alexander VI and Julius II, many of the important cities of the Papal States would be ruled by Papal Governors sent from Rome. Guicciardini spent much of his political career as the Papal Governor of several of these cities.

<sup>478</sup> The Orsini and Colonna families were the two most powerful noble families in the city of Rome and over the years produced many influential cardinals and condottieri. Although the two families were closely associated with the Church (through their members who were high ranking ecclesiastics, but also through their services to the Church as condottieri), their relationship with the Church (and with each other) was as often one of rivalry as of partnership as each jockeyed for greater political influence and power over the city of Rome. The Orsini and Colonna feared Borgia's power. This fear was justified, in retrospect, by Cesare nearly destroying both families.

wanted to divorce his wife and marry Anne of Bretagne, widow of Charles VIII, because that would give Louis control over the Duchy of Brittany (Guicciardini 4.1/137). He needed papal dispensation for both his divorce and the marriage; Louis also wanted allies for the coming campaign against Duke Sforza of Milan, creating the opportunity for Pope Alexander to give his son Cesare temporal power (P 7). Seizing the opportunity, “the Pope, arranged to transfer his son Cesare from Cardinal to secular greatness,”<sup>479</sup> by sending ambassadors to Louis through whom “he offered to sell him spiritual graces, receiving as a price temporal *stati*”<sup>480</sup> for Cesare (Guicciardini 4.1/137). Louis XII, in compensation for Pope Alexander’s dispensation and support in the upcoming invasion of Milan, transformed Cesare Borgia, “from Cardinal and Archbishop of Valencia, into a soldier and Duke Valentino, because the king had given him the command of one hundred lancers and twenty thousand Francs for provisions, and granted him, with the title of Duke, the city of Valence in the Dauphiné with twenty thousand Francs of revenue” (Guicciardini 4.5/139-140).<sup>481</sup> Thus, Cesare Borgia acquired a (mostly nominal) principality through the *fortuna* of his father and the favor of Louis XII.

However, neither Alexander VI nor Cesare Borgia was satisfied with this nominal principality, and both still wanted to secure an Italian territory for the Borgia

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<sup>479</sup> “...il pontefice, disposto di trasferire Cesare sul figliuolo dal cardinalato a grandezza secolare...”

<sup>480</sup> “...disegnò di vendergli le grazie spirituali, ricevendone per prezzo stati temporali...”

<sup>481</sup> “...di cardinale e di arcivescovo di Valenza, soldato e duca Valentino, perché il re gli aveva data la condotta di cento lance e ventimila franchi di provivione, e concedutogli, con titolo di duca, Valenza città del Dalfinato con ventimila franchi di entrata.” Guicciardini, characteristically, goes on to describe how Cesare, acting on his father’s instructions, attempted to sneakily trick Louis XII into further concessions by lying and saying that he did not actually have the Papal Bull, which gave dispensation for Louis to marry Anne. This attempt was undermined by the Bishop of Sette, who told Louis XII the truth and whom Guicciardini tells us Cesare later had killed in revenge (Guicciardini 4.5/140).

family. Therefore, pretending to want to reintegrate them into church possessions, “but with the true intention of allocating them to his son Cesare”,<sup>482</sup> the Pope had included in his agreement with Louis XII that, once he gained control of the Duchy of Milan, Louis XII would help the Pope reassert control over some of the functionally independent Papal States in the Romagna (Guicciardini 4.12/150). Of Louis XII, Machiavelli wrote, “no sooner was he in Milano than he gave the Pope men for the campaign in Romagna, which were accorded to him by [*per*] the reputation of the King” (P 7).<sup>483</sup> In late 1499 “when Valentino obtained the men from the King, and added those to the men from the Church, he entered Romagna, and immediately obtained the city of Imola by accord” (Guicciardini 4.12/150).<sup>484</sup> Then in early 1500, “he obtained without resistance the city of Forlì” (Guicciardini 4.13/151)<sup>485</sup>, which Machiavelli attributes to Caterina Sforza’s reliance on her fortress for defense (P 20) and the poor design of the fortress (AG 7:354). Furthermore, Machiavelli suggested that it seemed that Caterina was the only defender with the courage to defend it (AG 7:354, Guicciardini 4.13/152).<sup>486</sup>

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<sup>482</sup> “...ma con intenzione veramente di attribuirle a Cesare suo figliuolo...”

<sup>483</sup> “...nè prima fu in Milano che il papa ebbe da lui gente per la impresa di Romagna, la quale gli fu acconsentita per la reputazione del re.” The “*per*” in this sentence is ambiguous and can either mean “by” or “for”. There is disagreement among translators: Gilbert: “these the King granted for the sake of his own reputation.”; Musa: “they were given to him because of the King’s reputation.”; Wootton: “which was ceded to him out of fear of the King of France.”; Mansfield: “which was granted to him because of the reputation of the king.”; Price: “which was made easier because of the standing of the King.” I think the best translation is “by” because that renders “*per la reputazione del*” as “by the reputation of”. This formulation is similar to a formulation that Machiavelli used often to identify the cause of something: “*per virtù di*”, which translates to “by virtù of”.

<sup>484</sup> “Ottenute adunque il Valentino le genti dal re, e aggiunte a quelle le genti della Chiesa, entrato in Romagna, ottenne subito la città d’Imola per accordo...”

<sup>485</sup> “...ottenne senza resistenza la città di Furlì...”

<sup>486</sup> Caterina Sforza was the Countess of Forlì and (illegitimate) daughter of Duke Galeazzo Sforza of Milan. Although Machiavelli praises Caterina’s virtù in bravely attempting to defend herself against

Because he was worried about the reaction of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I to his conquest of Milan, Louis XII decided to curry more favor with Pope Alexander VI by deepening their alliance. In exchange for Papal support of Louis's planned invasion of the Kingdom of Naples, Louis sent Cesare

three hundred lancers and two thousand infantry, signifying to everyone that he would consider himself injured if anyone opposed the campaign of the Pope. With that reputation, and with his own forces that were seven hundred men at arms and six thousand infantry, Valentino entered Romagna, he took without any resistance the cities of Pesero and Rimini... (Guicciardini 5.2/156).<sup>487</sup>

When Cesare went to besiege Faenza, Giovanni Bentivoglio, ruler of Bologna, was forbidden by Louis to intervene to help his nephew retain Faenza, and the Venetian Republic, which had previously offered to protect Faenza, withdrew that protection and, to curry favor with him, made Cesare a Venetian Gentleman (Guicciardini 5.2/156). Cesare was now in control of most of the Romagna. However,

finding it had been commanded by impotent lords, - who had been quicker to despoil their subjects than govern them, and had given them matter [*materia*] for disunion, not for union, - so much that that province was totally full of robbery, of discord and of every other reason for insolence, he judged it was necessary, to want to

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invasion when the King of Naples and Duke of Milan had fled rather than fight (AG 7:354-355: this is the only occasion where Machiavelli says that a woman has *virtù*!), he implies that Caterina should not have relied on the fortress for defense, but should have made herself no longer hated by her people and relied upon them (P 20). Guicciardini wrote that Cesare was able to take Forlì so easily because Caterina Sforza had determined that she could not hold the entire city, but only the fortress against him. "But being that many defenders were full of feminine *animo* and she alone with manly *animo*, it was quickly, through the cowardice [*viltà*] of the captains who were within, it was conquered by Valentino" (Guicciardini 4.13/152).

<sup>487</sup> "...trecento lancie e dumila fanti, sigificando a ciascuno che rputerebbe per propria ingiuria se alcuno si opponesse alla impresa del pontefice. Con la quale reputazione, e con le forze proprie che erano settecento uomini d'arme e seimila fanti, entrato il Valentino in Romagna, prese senza resistenza alcuna le città di Pesero e di Rimini..."

reduce it to peace and obedience to the royal arm, to give it good governance (P 7).<sup>488</sup>

Thus, Cesare put Rimirro de Orco<sup>489</sup> in charge of the territory and mandated that he bring law and order to the Romagna, which de Orco did efficiently, if cruelly (P 7). De Orco was so successful in bringing the rule of law and honest administration of justice to the Romagna that Cesare acquired the friendship and loyalty of its people (P 7, Guicciardini 6.4/168).<sup>490</sup>

His thirst for territorial conquest yet unquenched, Cesare moved on to Bologna, but was ordered to stop by Louis XII of France, who said that Giovanni Bentivoglio was under his protection (Guicciardini 5.4/157\*). Cesare came to an accord with Bentivoglio and invaded Florentine territory, but had to break off this invasion because he was no longer able to resist pressure from Louis XII to join him in his preparations to invade the Kingdom of Naples. Cesare did, however, capture territories surrounding Piombino on his way to join the king (Guicciardini 5.4/157\*).

Cesare Borgia was at the French siege of Capua, where he served “with the title of

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<sup>488</sup> “...trovandola suta comandata da signori impotenti, - e’ quali più presto avevano spogliati e’ loro sudditi che corretti, e dato loro materia di disunione, non d’unione, - tanto che quella provincia era tutta piena di latrocini, di brighe e d’ogni altra ragione di insolenzia, iudicò fussi necessario, a volerla ridurre pacifica e ubbidiente al braccio regio, dargli buono governo”

<sup>489</sup> Musa (p. 64 note 11) and Burd (p.222 note to line 4) asserts that Cesare made Rimirro de Orco Lieutenant General of the Romagna in 1501. I cannot find a more precise date. I use the spelling “Rimirro de Orco” from the Capata edition. Capata notes the alternate spelling “Ramiro de Lorqua” (p. 19 note 28). Musa’s Italian spelling is the same as Capata’s, but his English language spelling uses the variant “Remirro de Orca” (p.57). Wootton has “Remiro d’Orco” (p.24). Burd’s Italian has “Ramiro d’Orca” (p. 222) while offering the alternative spelling of “Ramiro de Lorqua” (p. 222 note to line 4).

<sup>490</sup> But see Pocock “The measure of his dependence on *fortuna* is not the uncertainty of the Romagna’s reactions to his rule, but the uncertainty of Alexander VI’s tenure of life. It is true that that measure of his *virtù* is the excellence which Machiavelli ascribes to his military and other techniques of assuring that his power in the Romagna will survive Alexander’s death, but in fact it remains wholly dependent on papal and curial politics and Machiavelli was unable to assert convincingly that it does not” (*Machiavellian Moment*, 174). I will return to Rimirro de Orca below, following my account of Sinigaglia.

Lieutenant of the King”<sup>491</sup> (Guicciardini 5.5/161) before returning north and capturing the city of Piombino (Guicciardini 5.6/161-163). Cesare pursued further designs against Florentine holdings in Tuscany through clandestinely inducing the citizens of Arezzo to revolt (Guicciardini 5.8/163\*).<sup>492</sup> However, Louis XII intervened yet again to prevent Cesare from fully executing his plan and taking Arezzo from Florence (P 7). Stymied again in his attempt to peel away Florentine territory, Cesare turned south and east, capturing both the Duchy of Urbino and city of Camerino (in the Marches) through deception,<sup>493</sup> and capturing most of the land and castles in the Valdichiana (Guicciardini 5.9/163\*).<sup>494</sup> At this time, Cesare Borgia controlled most of the

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<sup>491</sup> “...con titolo di luogotenente del re...” Guicciardini claims that in the sack of Capua, Cesare heard that many women had taken refuge in a tower and “with no other people but with his gentlemen and with his guard, he wanted to see all of them, and he diligently considered them retaining forty of the most beautiful / non con altre genti che co’ suoi gentiluomini e con la sua guardi, le volle vedere tutte, e consideratele diligentemente ne ritenne quaranta dell più belle” (5.5/161). Guicciardini ends the sentence there, implying but never stating that Cesare and his men raped them. Guicciardini also passes along the rumor that Cesare and his men assassinated the wounded Renuccio da Marciano, who they had as a prisoner (5.5/161).

<sup>492</sup> Condottieri under Cesare’s command clandestinely caused a (failed) rebellion in the Florentine controlled city of Arezzo in favor of the return of the Medici. The Florentines were helped by Louis XII of France in retaining control of Arezzo. Guicciardini writes that Louis felt that his honor was at stake in maintaining Arezzo under Florentine control because he had previously declared that Florence was under his protection (5.8/163\*).

<sup>493</sup> According to Guicciardini, Guidobaldo, Duke of Urbino, already had worked out an arrangement for tribute with Pope Alexander VI and did not think that the Pope had a reason to break the agreement. Guicciardini does not go into specifics about how Cesare deceives Giulio da Varano, the lord of Camerino, but Guicciardini does make sure to point out that Cesare “having Giulio with his two young sons come into his power, they were, with the same inhumanity he used against the others, strangled /essendo Giulio con due figliuoli venuto in potestà sua, gli fece, con la medesima immanità che usava contro agli altri, strangolare” (Guicciardini 5.9/163\*). According to this same passage, these betrayals made Cesare’s *condottieri* fearful. This fear will eventually cause them to revolt against him. Cesare will deceive his *condottieri* and capture them all at Sinigaglia, eventually executing them all.

<sup>494</sup> The Valdichiana is a valley that runs south from the plain of Arezzo to just west of Lake Trasimene. At the time the Valdichiana was filled with marshland. For a depiction of the Valdichiana contemporary to Cesare Borgia and perhaps commissioned by him, see Leonardo da Vinci, “A Map of the Valdichiana c. 1503-4”, in *The Drawings and Misc Papers of Leonardo da Vinci in the Collection of HM the Queen at Windsor Castle, Vol 1 Landscapes, Plants, and Water Studies*. Ed. Carlo Pedretti (1982). RL 12278 <https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/912278/a-map-of-the-valdichiana>. For the potential relationship between Da Vinci and Machiavelli, see Roger Masters, *Fortune is a River: Leonardo da Vinci and Niccolò Machiavelli’s Magnificent Dream to Change the Course of Florentine*

Romagna, the northern third of the Marches, and parts of Tuscany; he possibly controlled more territory in 1502 than that controlled by the Florentine Republic.

However, Cesare had problems with his two most important allies which revealed the weakness of the foundations upon which his power was built: King Louis XII of France and the *condottieri* who led the papal troops under his command. Cesare consistently threatened Louis's other Italian allies, including the Florentine Republic and Giovanni Bentivoglio, tyrant of Bologna (which lay just to the northwest of the extent of Cesare's conquered territory in the Romagna). These actions by Cesare were straining the relationship with Louis, who was losing patience with Cesare Borgia (and his father). However, despite his misgivings, Louis still needed Cesare and his father, Pope Alexander VI, as allies to maintain his supply lines for his on-going war against the Spanish in the Kingdom of Naples. So Louis and Cesare met in Milan and renewed their alliance, much to the surprise Louis's other allies and Cesare's *condottieri* (Guicciardini 5.10/163-164\*).

The *condottieri* who led the papal troops under Cesare's command were concerned about the means Cesare was using to grow his domains. Cesare's most important *condottieri* were Vitellozzo Vitelli and Oliverotto Efferducci (da Fermo)<sup>495</sup> of the Vitelli and Pagolo Orsini and Francesco Duke of Gravina Orsini of the Orsini. Specifically, they were concerned that Cesare's betrayals of the lords of Urbino and

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History. New York: Penguin Publishing. 1998. Though I am persuaded that they must have known of each other, I remain unconvinced that there is sufficient evidence to support Master's claims that Machiavelli and da Vinci had a more substantial relationship.

<sup>495</sup> Oliverotto da Fermo (example 78) is one of Machiavelli's examples of individuals with virtù. He is discussed in *il Principe* 8 as the contemporary example of those who have come to power through wickedness.

Camerino would serve as a model for Cesare's future betrayal of them, his *condottieri* (Guicciardini 5.9/163\*).<sup>496</sup> Their concern was even more acute because they were rulers of lands within or near those that they were helping Cesare conquer in the name of the Church.<sup>497</sup> This concern was heightened after Louis XII conceded to Cesare, during the most recent renewal of their alliance, the right to conquer Bologna in the name of the Church (Guicciardini 5.10/163\*). The Orsini had even further cause for concern because Cesare was weakening their position in Rome by winning over their noble supporters: "...he gained them, making them his noble men and giving them grand salaries, and honored them, according to their qualities, with military [*condotte*] and civil offices" (P 7).<sup>498</sup> Worried that, upon conquering Bologna, he would betray his *condottieri* and seize their lands, on 8 October 1502 they<sup>499</sup> preemptively rebelled against Cesare and allied themselves with Bentivoglio and sought an alliance with Florence (*Descrizione*, Guicciardini 5.11/163-164\*).<sup>500</sup> "But the Florentines, because

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<sup>496</sup> Machiavelli gives credence to their fears where he describes Cesare as waiting to rid himself of the Orsini captains (P 7).

<sup>497</sup> The Orsini family's land and power was centered in Rome; Vitellozzo ruled Città di Castello and some surrounding towns, all of which were situated between Cesare's recently conquered territory in the Valdichiana and the Duchy of Urbino; Olliverotto was tyrant of Fermo, which is only about 40 miles due east of Camerino, which Cesare had just conquered.

<sup>498</sup> "...gli guadagnò, faccendoli suoi gentili uomini e dando loro grandi provisioni, e onorògli, secondo le loro qualità di condotte e di governi..." *Condotte* were the military/mercenary contracts held by *condottieri*. Machiavelli adds that Cesare also pursued this policy of winning over to him the noble supporters of the other major Roman family, the Colonna (P 7).

<sup>499</sup> Machiavelli and Guicciardini agree that Vitellozzo Vitelli, Olliverotto da Fermo, Paolo Orsini, and Francesco Duke of Gravina Orsini were joined by two other erstwhile Borgia allies at Magione, near Perugia, to plot their rebellion: Giampagolo Baglione, tyrant of Perugia, and an emissary of Pandolfo Petrucci, lord of Siena. Guicciardini adds that Ermes Bentivoglio was there to represent his father Giovanni Bentivoglio of Bologna (5.10/163-164\*).

<sup>500</sup> I will cite Machiavelli's *Descrizione del mondo tenuto dal duca Valentino nello ammazzare Vitellozzo Vitelli, Oliverotto da Fermo, il Signor Pagolo e il duca di Gravina Orsini* as simply "*Descrizione*" because the full title is too long. Machiavelli bases this description primarily on his own eyewitness account (he was the Florentine emissary to Cesare Borgia from 7 October 1502 – 18 January 1503) and learned some of the other information from Cesare Borgia himself (see Gilbert's introduction (p. 163) and note 2 (p. 164) in his English edition). There is some question as to when Machiavelli

of the hatred they had for the Vitelli<sup>501</sup> and the Orsini for different reasons, not only did they not join them, but they sent Niccolò Machiavelli, their secretary, to offer to the Duke [Cesare Borgia] asylum and help against his new enemies” (*Descrizione*).<sup>502</sup>

The rebellion of his *condottieri* against him was a turning point for Cesare Borgia, in Machiavelli’s view.<sup>503</sup> When Machiavelli found Cesare in Imola he was “full of fear...because all of a sudden and outside all of his expectations, his soldiers having become enemies, he found himself with a war upon him and disarmed” (*Descrizione*).<sup>504</sup> But upon Machiavelli’s arrival with Florentine offers of friendship, Cesare took heart and began to prepare for war by sending to Louis XII for aide and by beginning to raise his own troops, which he spread around Romagna so that his enemies would not learn of his full strength (*Descrizione*).<sup>505</sup> At the same time Cesare

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wrote *Descrizione*. Capata suggests it was written between June and August 1503 (p. 374), whereas Gilbert reports that Ridolfi (Roberto Ridolfi, *Vita Di Niccolò Machiavelli*, Rome, 1954, second edition, p. 98) says he wrote it as part of the hinted continuation of *Istorie Fiorentine*, as thus dated it to the 1520s.

<sup>501</sup> The Florentines had employed the Vitelli in their war against Pisa. However, they later turned on the Vitelli and executed Pagolo Vitelli for treason.

<sup>502</sup> “Ma e Fiorentini, per l’odio havanon con e Vitegli et Orsini per diverse cagioni, non solo non si adherirno loro, ma mandorno Nicholo Machiavegli, loro secretario, ad offerire al duca ricepto et aiuto contro ad questi suoi nuovi inimici.”

<sup>503</sup> The diplomatic mission to Cesare Borgia also marked an important turning point in Machiavelli’s own career. See Quentin Skinner, *Machiavelli: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000. [1981], “The mission marks the beginning of the most formative period of Machiavelli’s diplomatic career, the period in which he was able to play the role that most delighted him, that of a first-hand observer and assessor of contemporary statecraft. It was also during this time that he arrived at his definitive judgments on most of the leaders whose policies he was able to watch in the process of being formed. It is often suggested that Machiavelli’s *Legations* merely contain the ‘raw materials’ or ‘rough drafts’ of his later political views, and that he subsequently reworked and even idealized his observations in the years of his enforced retirement. As we shall see, however, a study of the *Legations* reveals that Machiavelli’s evaluations, and even his epigrams, generally occurred to him at once and were later incorporated virtually without alteration into the pages of the *Discourses* and especially the *Prince*” (pages 10-11).

<sup>504</sup> “...pieno di paura... perché in un tracto et fuori d’ogni opinione, sendogli diventati inimici e soldati sua, si trovava con una guerra propinqua et disarmato.”

<sup>505</sup> Though Skinner (*Machiavelli*, 20) comments that “Next, Borgia resolved that in future he ought never make use of such treacherous allies, but ought instead to raise his own troops. This policy—

opened negotiations with the rebellious *condottieri*, and Cesare, “being the greatest dissembler,”<sup>506</sup> convinced them that he bore them no ill will and that he was actually ready to let them rule the lands they had conquered in his name as long as he retained the title of prince (P 7, *Descrizione*, Guicciardini 5.11/163-164\*). Reconciled, Cesare’s *condottieri* went on to capture the port town of Sinigaglia<sup>507</sup> in his name. But the castellan of the fortress would only consent to surrender it directly to Cesare himself and the *condottieri* requested that Cesare come to accept the surrender. Cesare seized the *occasione* their request presented and went to Sinigaglia, arriving on 31 December 1502, pretending to be friendly to his *condottieri* until he was able to corner and arrest them later that day (*Descrizione*, Guicciardini 5.11/163-164\*).<sup>508</sup> Cesare’s

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almost unheard of at a time when practically every Italian prince fought with hired mercenaries—seems to have struck Machiavelli at once as being an exceptionally far-sighted move”, Skinner goes on to assert that forming a citizen militia had been a goal of Florentine humanists since Leonardo Bruni (36-37).

<sup>506</sup> “...essendo grandissimo simulatore...”

<sup>507</sup> The contemporary spelling is “Senigallia”. Senigallia is a little less than 40 miles east of Urbino, on the coast of the Adriatic. The destination of the conquest was part of the negotiations between Cesare and his *condottieri*. Cesare agreed to not attack Bentivoglio in Bologna and his *condottieri* offered to attach either Sinigaglia or Tuscany. Though he had spent the last two years acquiring territory in Tuscany and attempting to acquire more, Cesare said that he did not want to make war on Tuscany because he and the Florentines were now friends. Machiavelli was still at Cesare’s court as the representative of the Florentines at this time (*Descrizione*).

<sup>508</sup> For an interpretation of Machiavelli’s discussion of Cesare Borgia that makes more of his abilities as a dissembler than I do, see Victoria Kahn, *Machiavellian Rhetoric: From the Counter-Reformation to Milton*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1994. According to Kahn, “If chapter 7 shows Borgia’s use of representation as ruse and thus the mutual implication of representation and force, chapter 8 stages its own forceful misrepresentation in pretending to distinguish between *virtù* and crime. And it does so in order to suggest a possible response to the ironies of Innovation dramatized in the example of Borgia. As we will see, the longevity of Agathocles’s reign is related to a different sort of ruse of representation, according to which the exigencies of representing oneself to one’s subjects proves to be a forceful constraint on tyrannical power” (27). Kahn goes on to argue that Agathocles and Cesare Borgia are equivalent except that Agathocles rules for a longer time (35). See also John P. McCormick, “Machiavelli’s Inglorious Tyrants: On Agathocles, Scipio and Unmerited Glory” *History of Political Thought* XXXVI No. 1. (Spring 2015): 29-52; John P. McCormick, “The Enduring Ambiguity of Machiavellian Virtue: Cruelty, Crime, and Christianity in *The Prince*” *Social Research: An International Quarterly*. Vol. 81, No. 1 (Spring 2014): 133-164; and John P. McCormick, “Machiavelli’s Agathocles: from criminal example to princely *exemplum*” in *Exemplarity and Singularity: Thinking through Particulars in Philosophy, Literature, and Law*. Eds. Michèle Lowrie and

forces then scattered theirs, and that night he had Vitellozzo Vitelli and Olliverotto da Fermo executed; he waited until 18 January 1503, when he received news that his father had arrested the Orsini in Rome, to execute Pagolo Orsini and Francesco Duke of Gravina Orsini (*Descrizione*, Guicciardini 5.12/163-164\*).

Cesare's ability to raise a loyal army in the Romagna, which he had conquered only twelve to eighteen months before, is a testament to the goodness of his government and the effectiveness of Rimirro de Orco (P 7). De Orco's tactics were effective at bringing law and order to the previously lawless Romagna, but these tactics were deployed with such cruelty that there was a real risk that Cesare would be hated by the people of the Romagna if he was associated with them. Thus, once De Orco had succeeded in returning order to the Romagna, Borgia replaced his excessive authority with a robust civil court in which every city in the Romagna was represented (P 7). And to further distance himself from the cruel methods, before he left the Romagna for Sinigaglia, Cesare arrested Rimirro de Orco, and on the morning of 26 December 1502, the people of Cesena awoke to find his body cut in half next to a

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Susanne Lüdemann. London and New York: Routledge, 2015. Pages 123 – 139. For the exact opposite view, see Stacey (*Roman Monarchy*, 297) and Hannah Arendt, Courses---University of California, Berkeley, Calif.---"History of Political Theory," lectures---Machiavelli, Niccolò---1955 (Series: Subject File, 1949-1975, n.d.), Hannah Arendt Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mharendt&fileName=04/040580/040580page.db&recNum=0&itemLink=/ammem/arendthtml/mharendtFolderP04.html&linkText=7>. "M's foremost concern is to teach "how not to be good." This "how not to be good" is the prerequisite for all action: for foundation & preservation. M. does not teach people how to be bad. There is a distinction between Cesare Borgia who was not good and the wicked ones, i.e. the infamous..." (024015). Arendt's comment sounds like a retort to Strauss's claim that "...Machiavelli was a teacher of evil" in Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958. Page 9. Arendt's lecture notes are dated 1955. Strauss's 1958 book is based on lectures delivered at the University of Chicago in the fall of 1953 (p. 5), but it is not clear to me if Arendt was familiar with the content of the lectures or if Strauss's lectures had included material from the "Preface" of his book, where the famous quote resides.

knife in a cutting board (P 7). This grisly bit of political theater allowed Cesare to dissociate himself from De Orco's cruelty by cruelly punishing De Orco for it. Thus, Cesare was not blamed for the cruelty and was able to enjoy its chief benefit: the population of Romagna was lawful, well governed, and loyal enough that Cesare could raise an army of his own soldiers from its citizenry.<sup>509</sup>

After Sinigaglia, Cesare added a portion of the troops formerly loyal to the Orsini to his growing army (P 7). Rather than an army of French soldiers loyal to their king or of mercenaries loyal to their *condottiero*, whose own loyalties were dubious, Cesare had, for the first time in his career, an army of his own troops, which were loyal to and would fight for him (P 13). Thus, the rebellion of Cesare's *condottieri* caused him, in Machiavelli's estimations, to do much of the hard work of laying the good foundations for rule several years after he had become Duke and begun his conquests of Romagna.

Both to continue their conquest of central Italy and for further revenge themselves, the Borgia seized the lands of their betraying *condottieri*. Pope Alexander VI, in the name of the Church, seized lands belonging to the Orsini, whom he was busily imprisoning, while his son Cesare seized Città di Castello and Perugia, which had formerly been ruled by the Vitelli and Giampagolo Baglione, respectively (Guicciardini 5.12/163-164\*). At about this time Cesare faced a setback when King Louis XII of France, in response to Sieneese and Florentine lobbying, and against Cesare's wishes, caused the city of Montepulciano (in southeast Tuscany, near the

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<sup>509</sup> Skinner (*Machiavelli*, 46) agrees that Cesare killed de Orco to avoid being hated.

southern end of the Valdichiana) to be returned to Florentine control (Guicciardini 5.12/163-164\*). Guicciardini implies that the Borgia had wanted to use Montepulciano as a gateway to further conquest in Tuscany; a gateway that was shut when the city was returned to Florentine control. In the wake of Louis's decision, Cesare Borgia and Pope Alexander VI realized that they would never be able to fulfill their ambition for territorial gain while the junior partners in an alliance with France (Guicciardini 6.2/165\*).

For Machiavelli, rethinking the French alliance was another important step in Cesare gaining the independence of action and self-reliance required for him to *mantenere lo stato*, rather than relying on *fortuna* or the arms of others to do this for him. Since he had been made Duke Valentino in 1498 Cesare Borgia had been a consistent, if troublesome, ally for Louis XII. While Cesare had tested the limits Louis put on his conquests and schemed to subvert them clandestinely, Cesare had never openly defied his benefactor by expanding into the French allied territory of the Florentines or Bologna as he clearly so badly wanted to do. Indeed, when only six months before his *condottieri* had rebelled against him, Cesare had sent to Louis XII for military aid. But in the wake of the most recent confrontation between Cesare and Louis XII, Cesare “decided to depend no more on the arms and *fortuna* of others” (P 7).<sup>510</sup> He would abandon his French alliance so that he could expand territorially to the extent he thought necessary to be able to successfully *mantenere lo stato* without the protection of the French. Thus, Cesare began to seek to replace his burdensome French

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<sup>510</sup> “...deliberò di non dependere più da le arme e fortuna di'altri...”

alliance with an alliance with Spain that would have allowed him to continue his expansion in central Italy, “in which he would have quickly succeeded, if Alexander lived” (P 7).<sup>511</sup> The nature of this potential Spanish alliance would have been significantly different from the French alliance for Cesare, because it would have allowed him to expand his territorial holdings.<sup>512</sup> Further, whereas Cesare’s alliance with the French is what brought him to power, he would be able to enter into his alliance with Spain as a fellow prince. Cesare would not have relied on Spain to guarantee his rule, but it would have allowed him the freedom of movement to finish remaking the foundations of his power, which, had Cesare had time to complete it while his father lived, would mean Cesare “would no longer have depended on the *fortuna* and forces of others, but on his power and virtù” (P 7).<sup>513</sup> But, on 18 August 1503 Cesare’s father, Pope Alexander VI, died (Guicciardini 5.3/165) and shortly after that Cesare failed to *mantenere lo stato* and fell from power.

Machiavelli seems to be of two minds about how to judge Cesare’s failure to *mantenere lo stato*. On the one hand, he wrote that Borgia’s fall from power “was not his fault, because it was born from an extraordinary and extreme malice of *fortuna*”<sup>514</sup> because Alexander VI died not even five years after Cesare had begun his conquests (P 7). According to Machiavelli, Cesare’s plan for how to *mantenere lo stato* after the

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<sup>511</sup> “...il che gli sarebbe presto riuscito, se Alessandro viveva.”

<sup>512</sup> France and Spain both claimed the Kingdom of Naples to the south of the Papal States, which meant that Cesare could not hope to expand to the south. France was allied with Florence, Siena, and Bologna, north of the Papal States. Louis XII had consistently prevented Cesare from conquering his allies, but Ferdinand of Spain was not allies with these states (but rather enemies of these states) and would have encouraged Cesare to eliminate the allies of his enemy.

<sup>513</sup> “...non sarebbe più dependuto da la fortuna e forze di altri, ma da la potenza e virtù sua.”

<sup>514</sup> “non fu sua colpa, perché nacque da una straordinaria ed estrema malignità di fortuna.”

death of his father was nearly complete, because all that remained was to ally with Spain and conquer the cities of Siena, Pisa, and Lucca in Tuscany (P 7). Machiavelli believes that Cesare would have quickly and easily acquired these cities had his father lived a little longer. Further, Cesare suffered from extremely bad *fortuna*, because he was himself deathly ill at the time his father died.<sup>515</sup> According to Machiavelli,

But if at the death of Alexander he had been healthy, everything would have been easy for him: and he told me, on the day that Julius II<sup>516</sup> was elected, that he had thought of what would arise

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<sup>515</sup> Machiavelli's version of events (and he was present for some of them) seems to accept that Cesare was sick with the illness that killed his father. Guicciardini, on the other hand, attributes the Pope's death to an accident that occurred while Cesare was attempting to poison a Cardinal for the purpose of confiscating his land and wealth. Guicciardini continues that Cesare was also poisoned but survived because of his youthful vigor and because he took an antidote to the poison once he realized he had ingested it (Guicciardini 6.4/165). So while Machiavelli can call Cesare's illness at the time of his father's death bad *fortuna*, for Guicciardini it is just deserts. Guicciardini continues, with what is possibly a rebuke of Machiavelli, that "All of Rome converged at the body of Alexander in Saint Peter's with incredible delight, not being able to satiate the eyes of any by seeing extinguished a serpent who with his immoderate ambition and noxious perfidy, and with all the examples of horrible cruelty of monstrous lust and of unheard of avarice, selling without distinction the sacred things and the profane, had poisoned the whole world; and nevertheless had been exalted, with the rarest and almost perpetual prosperity, from first youth until the end of his life, always desiring the greatest things and obtaining more than that which was desired. A powerful example to confound the arrogance of those who, presuming themselves to glimpse with the weakness human eyes the profundity of divine justice, they affirm that prosperousness or adversity that comes to men proceeds either from their merits or demerits: as if every day there has not appeared many good being oppressed unjustly and many of perverse *animo* to be exalted wrongfully; or as if, otherwise interpreting, one disregards the justice and the power of God; whose scope, is not restricted by brief and present ends, in other time and in other place, with a broad hand, with rewards and with eternal punishment, distinguishes the just from the unjust. /Concorse al corpo morto d'Alessandro in San Piero con incredibile allegrezza tutta Roma, non potendo saziarsi gli occhi d'alcuno di vedere spento un serpente che con la sua immoderata ambizione e pestifera perfidia, e con tutti gli esempi di orribile crudeltà di mostruosa libidine e di inaudita avarizia, vendendo senza distinzione le cose sacre e le profane, aveva attossicato tutto il mondo; e nondimeno era stato esaltato, con rarissima e quasi perpetua prosperità, dalla prima gioventù insino all'ultimo di della vita sua, desiderando sempre cose grandissime e ottenendo più di quello desiderando. Esempio potente a confondere l'arroganza di coloro i quali, presumendosi di scorgere con la debolezza degli occhi umani la profondità de' giudici divini, affermano ciò che di prospero o di avverso avviene agli uomini procedere o da' meriti o da' demeriti loro: come se tutto di non apparisse molti buoni essere vessati ingiustamente e molti di pravo animo essere esaltati indebitamente; o come se, altrimenti interpretando, si derogasse alla giustizia e alla potenza di Dio; la amplitudine della quale, non ristretta a' termini brevi e presenti, in altro tempo o in altro luogo, con larga mano, con premi e con supplici sempritermi, riconosce i giusti dagli ingiustisti" (Guicciardini 6.4/166).

<sup>516</sup> Julius II (Giuliano della Rovere) was pope from 1503 – 1513 when he was succeeded by Leo X (Giovanni de Medici). Julius II had previously been the Cardinal of San Pietro in Vincoli. Julius II did

when his father died, and for everything he had found a remedy, except that he never thought, that on his [father's] death, he would also be near death (P 7).<sup>517</sup>

On the other hand, Machiavelli claims that in allowing Julius II to become pope, “The Duke [Cesare] therefore erred in this election, and it was the reason for his ultimate ruin” (P 7).<sup>518</sup> According to Machiavelli, although Cesare did not have enough influence in the College of Cardinals to select a new pope of his choice, he had enough influence to have prevented a candidate odious to him from being elected (P 7).<sup>519</sup> But Cesare consented to Julius II's election despite the previous enmity between Julius and Cesare's father because Julius had promised to confirm him as the Captain General of the armies of the Church and to make a familial alliance with him (Guicciardini 6.5/174). But Cesare made the mistake of thinking that “with grand personages new benefits make them forget old injuries” (P 7);<sup>520</sup> Julius II was deceiving him (Guicciardini 6.5/174) and soon arrested Cesare (Guicciardini 6.6/175).<sup>521</sup>

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not immediately succeed Alexander VI: Pius III was elected despite being (or because he was) very ill and died within a month (Guicciardini 6.4/170-171).

<sup>517</sup> “Ma se nella morte di Alessandro fussi stato sano, ogni cosa gli era facile: e lui mi disse, ne' di che fu creato Iulio II, che aveva pensato a ciò che potessi nascere morendo el padre, e a tutto aveva trovato remedio, eccetto ch'e' non pensò mai, in su la sua morte, di stare ancora lui per morire.” See also Guicciardini's account of this (6.4/168): Guicciardini's account of Cesare's lament is so similar to Machiavelli's that Guicciardini is probably using Machiavelli as his main source (which makes sense as Machiavelli is citing a conversation he had with Cesare).

<sup>518</sup> “Errò adunque el duca in questa elezione, e fu cagione dell'ultima ruina sua.”

<sup>519</sup> In contrast to Machiavelli's claim that Cesare had an effective veto over prospective popes, Guicciardini claims that Julius already had all the votes he needed to be elected pope when the conclave began (Guicciardini 6.5/172).

<sup>520</sup> “...ne' personaggi grandi e' benefizi nuovi faccino sdimenticare le iniurie vecchie...”

<sup>521</sup> Skinner (*Machiavelli*, 18-19) adds that this is one of the contemporary examples of statecraft that influenced Machiavelli.

However, Machiavelli only seems to be of two minds about how to judge Cesare's failure to *mantenere lo stato* after his father's death. Machiavelli's positions that Cesare fell from power because of "an extraordinary and extreme malice of *fortuna*" and that allowing Julius II to be elected Pope was the ultimate cause of his ruin are consistent. According to Machiavelli, had it not been for the bad *fortuna* of his father's death occurring before he could finish consolidating his power, Cesare would have been able to rely only on himself and had it not been for the very bad *fortuna* of being so ill himself when his father died, Cesare could have acted and would still have been able to *mantenere lo stato*, because he had managed to consolidate his rule in Romagna and still had significant political sway with the Cardinals and secular nobility in Rome. But the malice of *fortuna* that rendered Cesare so ill when his father died prevented Cesare from being able to act to preserve his rule independently. Thus, he had to rely temporarily on a friendly pope replacing his father to *mantenere lo stato*.

### **Precepts for a New Prince**

Machiavelli begins the conclusion to *il Principe* 7 by writing, "Having summarized all of the actions of the Duke [Cesare], I would not know how to reprimand him: on the contrary it seems to me, as I have done, to put him forward to be imitated by all of those who by *fortuna* and with the arms of others have ascended

to empire” (P 7).<sup>522</sup> Unlike Romulus, Cesare did not become prince through his virtù but through the *fortuna* of his father and the arms of King Louis XII of France. Because Cesare was a new prince and because he came to power with the arms of another, he was initially not able to *mantenere lo stato*. According to Machiavelli, a state so acquired is like a building built on a shaky or non-existent foundation. A prince without foundations for his power, like a building without a foundation, would easily collapse.

What is clear from the example of Cesare Borgia is how hard it is to maintain power gotten easily. Those who become princes through “virtuose ways...acquire the principality with difficulty, but hold it easily” (P 6),<sup>523</sup> whereas those who become princes through *fortuna* and arms of others “do not have any difficulty along the way, because they fly there, but all the difficulties are born when they are placed” (P 7).<sup>524</sup> One who becomes prince through their own virtù and their own arms, such as Romulus or Francesco Sforza, has built their rule on the foundation of their virtù and the loyalty of their soldiers. For Machiavelli, this is the only firm foundation on which a new prince can base their power and on this foundation they can *mantenere lo stato* easily.<sup>525</sup> However, Machiavelli notifies those who come to power through the arms of others that such a person “who does not lay foundations before, could with great virtù lay them after, although one does this with difficulty for the architect and danger to the

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<sup>522</sup> “Raccolte io adunque tutte le azioni del duca, non saprei riprenderlo: anzi mi pare, come io ho fatto, di preporlo imitabile a tutto coloro che per fortuna e con le arme di altril sono ascisi allo imperio...”

<sup>523</sup> “...vie virtuose [...] acquistano el principato con difficoltà, ma con felicità lo tengono”

<sup>524</sup> “...non hanno alcuna difficoltà fa via, perché vi volano: ma tutte le difficoltà nascono quando e’ sono posti.”

<sup>525</sup> Skinner’s brief analysis concurs. Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1998 [1978]. Page 120.

building” (P 7).<sup>526</sup> Cesare Borgia attempted such a feat, because though his rule was initially without a solid foundation, once Cesare became prince, he “used every endeavor and did everything that a prudent and virtuoso man needed do put down his roots in the states that the arms and *fortuna* of others had granted to him” (P 7).<sup>527</sup> In this way, Cesare was attempting to transform himself, after the fact, from the sort of prince who came to power based on the *fortuna* and arms of others into the sort of prince who came to power through his own arms and virtù.<sup>528</sup>

Cesare’s career served Machiavelli as the most recent example of a prince who appropriately sought to base his rule on his virtù and on his own arms.

Who therefore judges it necessary in his new principality to safeguard himself against enemies, to earn himself friends; to win either by force or by fraud; to make himself loved and feared by the people, followed and revered by the soldiers; to extinguish those who can or must offend you [him]; innovate with new modes the ancient *ordini*, to be strict and grateful, magnanimous and liberal; to extinguish unfaithful troops, to create new ones; to maintain the friendships of kings and princes in mode that they have to benefit you with favor or offend with caution; one could

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<sup>526</sup>“... chi non fa e’ fondamenti prima, gli potrebbe con una grande virtù fali poi, ancora che si faccino con disagio dello archetettore e periculo dello edifisio.”

<sup>527</sup> “si usassi ogni opera e facessinisi tutte quelle cose che per uno prudente e virtuoso uomo si doveva fare per mettere le barbe sua in quelli static he l’arme e fortuna di altri gli aveva concessi.”

<sup>528</sup> Breiner (“Machiavelli’s “new prince”, 78) agrees, writing, “Although Machiavelli describes Borgia as relying on the fortune and arms of others and thus as the prince most far removed from the perfect prince who relies on his virtù alone, he, among many examples in *The Prince*, in fact, represents the prototypical “new prince” in “effective” reality. For although he gains the arms and the occasion for acquiring a state from his father, Pope Alexander, he skillfully turns his borrowed resources into his own while conquering a state in Romagna for himself. That is, he exemplifies the highest virtù, at least potentially, in a double sense; first, as if by a kind of alchemy of statecraft, he transforms borrowed resources into his own; and second, having done so he begins to impose durable foundations—laws, arms, and examples—for a state in Italy that will not be subject to foreigners.” See also Benner (“Machiavelli’s Ironies”, 72).

not find a more recent example than the actions of this person (P 7).<sup>529</sup>

The example of Cesare's career can be usefully imitated by all new princes who ought to judge these actions necessary. Cesare's actions, described in detail above, were aimed at acquiring new territory and to *mantenere lo stato* with his own virtù. His example stands in marked contrast to the example of "those gentlemen who in Italy have lost *lo stato* in our time",<sup>530</sup> because they did not have their own troops nor made appropriate preparations for war, nor did they know how to keep the people their friend, or how to protect themselves from their nobles (P 25). While both Cesare and these nobles failed to *mantenere lo stato*, Machiavelli's judgment of them is very different. These Italian nobles lost power because they did not know how to keep it or, even worse, because they were too lazy to prepare for war and too cowardly to fight to keep their principality (P 25). Thus, they ought not blame *fortuna* for what was their own fault. By contrast, Borgia did almost everything right in attempting to *mantenere lo stato* through his virtù and that his failure "was not his fault, because it was born from an extraordinary and extreme malice of *fortuna*" (P 7).<sup>531</sup> Even a virtuoso like

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<sup>529</sup> "Chi adunque iudica necessario nel suo principato nuovo assicurarsi delli inimici, guadagnarsi delli amici; vincere o per forza o per fraude; farsi amare e temere da' populi, seguire e reverire da' soldati; spegnere quelli che ti possono o debbono offendere; innovare con nuovi modi gli ordini antiqui, essere severo e grato, magnanimo e liberale; spegnere la milizia infedele, creare della nuova; mantenere l'amicizie de' re e de' principi in modo che'e' ti abbino a benificare con grazia o offendere con rispetto: non può trovare e' più freschi esempi che le azioni di costui."

<sup>530</sup> "...quelli signori che in Italia hanno perduto lo stato ne' nostri tempi..."

<sup>531</sup> "non fu sua colpa, perché nacque da una straordinaria ed estrema malignità di fortuna."

Cesare can be overcome by sufficiently bad *fortuna*, but that is much less likely than the failure of the lazy and cowardly princes Machiavelli saw failing all over Italy.<sup>532</sup>

I take Machiavelli's deployment of the example of Cesare Borgia to be specifically targeted at the Medici. From both the "Letter to Vettori" and Machiavelli's dedicatory letter to *il Principe*, it is well known that Machiavelli hoped that his manuscript would be read by members of the Medici family. Cesare was an especially good example for the Medici for two reasons. First, like the Medici (P 11), Cesare's base of power came from his family's control over the papacy.<sup>533</sup> Second, when the Medici returned to power in Florence in 1512, it was primarily by the arms of the Spanish rather than by their own arms.<sup>534</sup> The Medici were unable to *mantenere lo stato* without the aid of their Spanish patrons.<sup>535</sup> But the Medici had the opportunity not only to learn from Cesare's example, but also, by imitating him, to

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<sup>532</sup> Breiner ("Machiavelli's "new prince"", 80) comes to a different conclusion, writing, "It would appear therefore that while Machiavelli suggests all of Borgia's actions but one are worthy of imitation, he also leave [sic] us with a warning on the limits of exemplary imitation." I am also, I think, partially disagreeing with Victoria Kahn, *Rhetoric Prudence, and Skepticism in the Renaissance*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press. 1985. Kahn writes, "Machiavelli represents the political alternative to Castiglione's aesthetic redefinition of prudence. In *il Principe*, prudence has become what its critics always feared it would: a technical skill divorced from ethical considerations...there is a politics of rhetorical invention in *il Principe*, and the examples that are introduced are presented not so the prince will imitate one or the other of them, but so that his own faculty of *virtù* will be exercised" (186). See also Kahn (*Machiavellian Rhetoric*).

<sup>533</sup> Pellerin ("Machiavelli's Best Fiend", 433, 445) would agree with this interpretation of Machiavelli's analysis of how the temporal power of the Papacy should be used.

<sup>534</sup> Skinner (*Machiavelli*, .27) concurs with this interpretation.

<sup>535</sup> But see David Wootton, "Introduction" to *Machiavelli: Selected Political Writings*, trans. and Ed. by David Wootton. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 1994. Pages xx-xxi.

surpass him and potentially acquire all of Italy as founders of a new Italian kingdom (P 26).<sup>536</sup>

### 78 Oliverotto da Fermo (P 8)

(See also the description of 77 Cesare Borgia, above)

Oliverotto da Fermo is Machiavelli's second example of a ruler who acquired power through wicked actions. Before seizing power in Fermo, Oliverotto was the second in command to the mercenary captain Vitellozzo Vitelli "who had been his teacher of his virtù and villainy" (P 8).<sup>537</sup> With Vitelli's aid, Oliverotto gained power through wickedly tricking and murdering the leading citizens of Fermo and managed to consolidate this power within a year (P 8). Despite this, Oliverotto and Vitelli were

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<sup>536</sup> For an account of the (hotly contested) Renaissance understanding of how an imitator can surpass the object of imitation, G. W. Pigman III, "Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance" *Renaissance Quarterly*. Vol. 33, No. 1 (Spring 1980): 1-32. For an extended discussion of imitation in *il Principe* see Kahn *Machiavellian Rhetoric*. My claim that one of Machiavelli's goals in writing *il Principe* was to inspire the Medici family to be the founders of a new Italian state is shared by Hannah Arendt, Courses--Wesleyan University, Middletown, Conn.--Machiavelli, Niccolò, seminar--1961 (Series: Subject File, 1949-1975, n.d.), Folder Title, Hannah Arendt Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mharendt&fileName=04/040820/040820page.db&recNum=0&itemLink=/ammem/arendhtml/mharendtFolderP04.html&linkText=7> (Accessed May 16, 2017) Page 024254. See also Wootton ("Introduction", xix) who believes this is a secondary goal and one that Machiavelli only would have thought possible in the first half of 1515. For the claim that Machiavelli believed only Cesare (and not the Medici) had been capable of uniting Italy, see Neal Wood, "Machiavelli's Concept of *Virtù Reconsidered*", *Political Studies*, Vol. XV, No. 2, 1967. Page 165. For the assertion that "The liberation of Italy which Machiavelli has primarily in mind is not the political liberation of Italy from barbarians but the intellectual liberation of Italy from a bad tradition" see Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958. Page 81.

<sup>537</sup> Wootton: "from whom he had learned how to be bold [*virtù*] and how to be wicked."

both captured and killed by Cesare Borgia at Sinigallia (P 8). Oliverotto is the first example of one virtuoso being overcome by another, in this case Borgia. Borgia captured and killed Oliverotto with the leaders of the Orsini and Vitelli by tricking them into believing that Borgia desired peace with them (P 8).<sup>538</sup> So it seems that Oliverotto, despite his wickedness, was not cunning enough to see Borgia's trap, or else was compelled to go to Sinigallia by circumstances that Machiavelli does not describe.

### **79 Gonsalvo Ferrante (D 1:29)**

Gonsalvo Ferrante appears as an example of how ungrateful princes can be of those who served them with virtù. Antonius Primus (example 25) served as Machiavelli's Roman example of this. "In our time, everyone that is at present alive knows with how much industry and virtù Gonsalvo Ferrante, serving in the military in the kingdom of Naples against the French, for Ferdinand king of Aragon he conquered and defeated that kingdom..."<sup>539</sup> but, according to Machiavelli, Ferdinand later snubbed and dishonored Gonsalvo (D 1:29).<sup>540</sup> Here, Machiavelli is using the example

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<sup>538</sup> Machiavelli does not use virtù or wickedness to describe this trickery.

<sup>539</sup> "Ne' nostri tempi, ciascuno che al presente vive sa con quanta industria e virtù Consalvo Ferrante, militando nel regno di Napoli contro a' Franciosi, per Ferrando re di Ragona conquistassi e vincessi quel regno..."

<sup>540</sup> Guicciardini, in his *Considerazioni interno ai Discorsi del Machiavelli* points out that Machiavelli's account of this is false. It is unclear to me, as it was to Guicciardini, why Machiavelli got these facts so wrong, when his history is usually fairly accurate.

of Gonsalvo to add on to that of Antonius Primus<sup>541</sup> in his demonstration that princes are more ungrateful to their captain than republics. Gonsalvo's military virtù was great enough for him to beat the French and conquer the Kingdom of Naples. Machiavelli does not expand on his description of Gonsalvo because, as quoted, 'everyone alive knows' about him and his deeds. So, like his use of the example of Aratus of Sicyon, Machiavelli is writing for an audience which would, as a matter of course, be familiar with the life and accomplishments of Gonsalvo Ferrante.

#### **80 Ottaviano Fregoso (D 2:24)**

The example of Ottaviano Fregoso of Genoa is described by Machiavelli as part of his claim that forts do more harm than good. In 1512, Fregoso threw the French out of Genoa except for the fortress of the city, which he had to take by siege. According to Machiavelli, upon completion of the siege, everyone advised Fregoso to keep the fort, "but being, [how] very prudent, he know that not fortresses but the will of men maintains princes in [their] state, he destroyed it. And thus without founding his state in the fortress but in his virtù and prudence, he maintained and [continues to] maintains it" (D 2:24).<sup>542</sup> Machiavelli's description of Fregoso is the highest praise

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<sup>541</sup> It should be noted that Guicciardini also takes issue with Machiavelli's account of how Vespasian treats Antonius Primus.

<sup>542</sup> "...ma esso, come prudentissimo, conoscendo che non le fortezze ma la volontà degli uomini mantenevono i principi in stato, la rovinò. E così senza fondare lo stato suo in su la forteza ma in su la virtù e prudenza sua, la ha tenuto e tiene."

which he gives to a contemporary in the *Discorsi*, because Fregoso knows the true foundations of political stability (at least in new principalities) are in the ability of the virtù and prudence of the prince to convince the wills of their subject to support them in the state, and Fregoso has the virtù and prudence to accomplish this. This places Ottaviano Fregoso in the small company of Machiavelli's contemporary Italians (including Federico Sforza and Cesare Borgia) whose modes of acting are worthy of imitation.

### **5.1.6 Non-Italian Moderns**

#### **81 Charles Martel and Pepin (I) (IF 1:10)**

The combined reigns of the Franks Pepin I, his son Charles Martel, and finally Pepin II, son of Charles Martel and grandson of Pepin I, when combined, founded the Kingdom of France. However, what is interesting about this family is that Pepin II, called Pepin the Short, was the least impressive of these three, but became the first King of France. According to Machiavelli,

...Pepin II, who, from lord of Austrasia and Brabant, had become King of France, not so much through his virtù, as much through that of Charles Martel his father and of Pepin his grandfather. Because Charles Martel, being governor of that kingdom, gave that memorable beating to the Saracens near Tours, on the river of Loire, where more than two hundred thousand of them were slain;

whence Pepin his son, by the reputation and virtù of his father,  
became after king of that kingdom (IF 1:10).<sup>543</sup>

Charles Martel's virtù in winning the Battle of Tours in 732 was viewed as saving Christendom from the expanding Muslim empire. The reputation which he garnered for himself and his family was inestimable, and his son, Pepin the Short, was able to convert the reputation of his father into becoming King of France. Further, as Machiavelli goes on to detail, this reputation caused the Pope to request his aid against the Lombards, which further enhanced his reputation. Additionally, it was upon the state left to him by his father Pepin that Charlemagne built his empire (IF 1:11).

## 82 Charles VII of France (P 13)

Machiavelli uses the example of Charles VII of France to demonstrate the superiority of using one's own troops over using either mercenaries or auxiliaries. In 1453, "Charles [...], having with his *fortuna* and virtù liberated France from the English, recognized this necessity of arming himself with his own arms, and arranged in his rule the organization of the armed nobles and of the infantry" (P 13).<sup>544</sup>

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<sup>543</sup> "...Pipino II, I; quale, di signore di Austrasia e Brabante, era diventato re di Francia, non tanto per la virtù sua, quanto per quella di Carlo Martello suo padre e di Pepino suo avolo. Perché Carlo Martello, sendo governatore di quello regno, dette quella memorabile rotta a' Saraceni presso a Torsi, in sul fiume dell'Era, dove furono morti più che dugento milia di loro; donde Pipino suo figliuolo, per la reputazione del padre e virtù sua, divenò poi re di quel regno."

<sup>544</sup> Wootton: "Charles VII [...], having through good luck and valor [*virtù*] driven the English out of France, recognized that it was essential to have one's own weapons and, so, issued instructions for the establishment of a standing army of cavalry and infantry." The "armed nobles" were, of course, the cavalry.

Machiavelli goes on to explain that Charles VII's son disbanded the infantry and replaced it with Swiss mercenaries, upon which the French became so dependant that they stopped believing they could wage war without the Swiss (P 13). Military virtù depends on using one's own troops, both because it means that a ruler can have complete confidence in the loyalties of their armies and because the training of soldiers and experience of fighting produces virtù in those who undergo it. Just as in the example of Roman virtù transferring to the Goths (above), French virtù partially transferred to the Swiss after they began to employ Swiss mercenaries.

### **83 Saladin (IF 1:17)**

The final king who is an example of an individual with virtù in Book one of *Istorie Fiorentine* is Saladin<sup>545</sup> According to Machiavelli, the Crusades were mostly celebrated and those who participated gained great reputations “and they fought with various *fortuna* until the times of the Saracen Saladin, the virtù of whom and the discords of the Christians deprived them in the end of all that glory that they had

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<sup>545</sup> It seems that there is something about Saladin that makes him the one Muslim who Medieval and Renaissance Christians seem to respect and admire for his character. He is cited favorably both here and in several stories in Boccaccio's *Decameron*. However, perhaps this is a case of inflating his capabilities and reputation to explain how he, a mere Muslim, could defeat the Holy Crusaders, commanded by Richard Coeur de Leon, the flower of European chivalry. (Though, actually, I think Richard won the preponderance of the battles, the Crusaders lost the war and eventually all of Ultramar, the Crusader States.)

acquired in the beginning” (IF 1:17).<sup>546</sup> By which, Machiavelli means, that because of the disorder and discord amongst the Christian Crusaders and through his virtù, Saladin was able to reconquer Jerusalem from the Christians about ninety years after the Crusaders had first conquered it from the Muslims. Taking and holding the Holy Land for Christendom had been the aim of the Crusades, the loss of Jerusalem was a loss of all the glory which the original crusaders had earned in taking it. Saladin had managed this through the savvy exploitation of the divided Christians as much as through victory on the battlefield.

#### **84 Walter, Duke of Athens (IF 2:33)**

The government of Florence made Walter, the Duke of Athens, their captain in the hopes that doing so would placate the people and chasten the nobles, because his “virtù was known to the one and [his] insolence to the other, he would constrain the one, and reward the other...” (IF 2:33).<sup>547</sup> About Walter, Duke of Athens, there is not much to say. Machiavelli’s description of him is typical of his thumbnail sketches of examples of those with virtù who he has no plans to describe in detail: their virtù conquers and everyone expects their virtù to conquer. I think that it is from summaries

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<sup>546</sup> “...e con varia fortuna insino a’ tempi del Saladino saraceno combatterono, la virtù del quale e la discordia de’ Cristiani tolse alla fine loro tutta quella gloria che si avevono nel principio acquistata, e furono dopo novanta anni cacciati di quello luogo che’eglino avevono con tanto onore felicemente recuperato.”

<sup>547</sup> “...il quale, conosciuta la virtù dell’una parte e la insolenza dell’altra, frenasse l’una, e l’altra remunerasse...”

like these that those commentators on Machiavelli who link virtù a heuristic for success have drawn their interpretations. In these depictions, their virtù is a sort of club that some individuals possess which irresistibly bludgeons troubles into the dirt.

### **85 Cardinal Egidio Albornoz (IF 1:32)**

Machiavelli says that Pope Innocent VI “sent to Italy the Cardinal Egidio of the Spanish nation, who with his virtù, not only in Romagna and in Rome, but in all Italy restored the reputation of the Church...” (IF 1:32).<sup>548</sup> However, Egidio did not restore the reputation of the Church through prayer and piety, but through war and diplomacy. According to Machiavelli, he recovered the city of Bologna for the Church, from the Visconti. Additionally, though this may not have occurred, Machiavelli claims that Egidio fought and beat the English condottiero John Hawkwood (IF 1:32).

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<sup>548</sup> “...mandò in Italia Egidio cardinal di nazione spagnuolo, il quale con la sua virtù, non solamente in Romagna e in Roma, ma per tutta Italia aveva renduta la reputazione alla Chiesa...”

### 86 Kings of France and Spain and the order of those Kingdoms (D 1:55)

The virtù of the kings of France and Spain is discussed in relation to Machiavelli's discussion of the effects of the people in a country being corrupt. According to Machiavelli, the people of France and Spain are corrupt, though potentially not as corrupt as the people of Italy, but that the same disorders do not occur in France and Spain as in Italy because they "have one king that maintains them united, not solely by his virtù but by the *ordini* of those kingdoms, that are not ruined so far" (D 1:55).<sup>549</sup> So, for Machiavelli, these countries have kings with virtù, but it is the orders of the kingdoms and the fact that they are united, more than the virtù of the kings, that prevents the disorders of Machiavelli's contemporary Italy from ruining those kingdoms. This passage recalls us to the understanding that, though virtù is the centerpiece of Machiavelli's theory of statecraft, it is not the only piece.

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<sup>549</sup> "...avere uno re che gli mantiene uniti, non solamente per la virtù sua ma per l'ordini di quegli regni, che ancora non sono guasti."

## Appendix 2: Machiavelli's Examples of Peoples with Virtù

### 5.2.1 Romans

87 Romans (P 3, P 13, AG 2: 46/288 (F.C.), AG 2:78/304 (F.C.), AG 2:78/304 (F.C.), AG 3:88\*/308 (F.C.), AG 6:164\*/345 (F.C.), AG 6:182\*/353 (F.C.), AG 7:201/361 (F.C.), IF 1:1, IF 1:31, IF 3:1, D 1:1, D 1:4, D 1:5, D 1:15, D 1:18, D 1:20, D 1:23, D 1:30, D 1:43, D 1:60, D 2:1, D 2:1, D 2:2, D 2:6, D 2:8, D 2:16, D 2:18, D 2:19, D 2:19, D 2:20, D 2:24, D 2:24, D 2:24, D 2:29, D 2:30, D 3:1, D 3:1, D 3:12, D 3:13, D 3:15, D 3:16, D 3:25, D 3:31, D 3:31, D 3:33, D 3:36, D 3:38)

(See also Chapter 1)

In *il Principe*:

The Romans are Machiavelli's most commonly cited case with the exception of his contemporary Italy, but most of Machiavelli's analysis of the Romans is in the *Discorsi* and *dell'Arte della Guerra* rather than in *il Principe*. This is because when Machiavelli talks about the Romans, as a people with virtù, he is usually referring to the Roman Republic, while in *il Principe*, Machiavelli generally refers to individual Romans with virtù. Machiavelli's first reference to the Romans in *il Principe* is to refute the claim made by "the wise: "Take advantage of the passage of time"" (P 3). The Romans understood that time brings both good and ill, as everyone can take advantage of the passage of time, so they did not delay in making war against a foe when they knew one was inevitable (P 3). "[T]hey relied on their virtù and

prudence...”<sup>550</sup> to choose when to wage an inevitable war on the best of possible terms for them (P 3). These favorable terms were when they saw an emergent enemy, not yet powerful enough to challenge them outright; they sought to destroy him before he might acquire that power. The second time *virtù* is used to describe the Romans (which is also the use of *Virtù* to describe the Goths), is to describe how the Romans lost their *virtù* to the Goths because the Romans stopped using their own soldiers and begin employing Gothic mercenaries (P 13). Machiavelli claims that this is the cause of the fall of the Roman Empire, because “without having one’s own arms, no principality is secure, in fact it is totally obliged to *fortuna*, not having *virtù* to defend it with faith in adversity” (P 13).<sup>551</sup> It is for the same reason that foreign European powers were able to invade Italy so easily in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

*In Discorsi:*

### **Introduction**

Rome as a polity is the most frequently cited example of *virtù* in the *Discorsi*. As befits a republic, much more than any individual virtuoso captain or politician, what made Rome great and glorious, and what made it the exemplary political actor that Machiavelli exhorts his readers to imitate above all others, was the *virtù* of the citizens as a whole. For Machiavelli, it seemed as if all the *virtù* in the world was gathered in Rome (D 2: Proemio). But, unlike in other instances when it seemed like

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<sup>550</sup> Wootton renders this as “Rather they relied on their strength [*virtù*] and prudence...”

<sup>551</sup> “sanza avere arme proprie, nessuno principato è sicuro; anzi è tutto obligato alla fortuna, non avendo virtù che nelle avversità con fede lo difenda.”

this was the case, in the case of Rome, “Those who read of the founding of the city of Rome, and of the givers of its laws and how it was ordered, will not marvel that so much virtù was maintained for many centuries in that city; and that afterwards that empire was born of what the republic attained” (D 1:1).<sup>552</sup> That is, Rome had at least as much virtù as any other city in history (though probably it had the most), but even more than that, what really sets Rome apart is its sheer size and longevity. The empire conquered by the Republic was simply massive, and the state itself, if not its mode of governing, was basically the most durable state ever founded.

It is not difficult to understand why Machiavelli thought of Rome as the exemplary polity all should attempt to imitate. However, to understand Machiavelli’s admiration of the factors which made Rome so great, it is necessary to break down this greatness. I will attempt to divide Machiavelli’s understanding of the example of Rome’s virtù into three aspects: first, the sources of Roman virtù; second, Roman virtù in acquiring more territory; third, Roman military virtù, to which Machiavelli devotes the most time. In exploring Machiavelli’s use of the example of Rome, I think it worth keeping in mind that Machiavelli did not believe his contemporaries capable of achieving Rome’s greatness. But, as with the exemplar of Hannibal above, for Machiavelli, at least if they fell short of Rome’s example, they would still have built a great republic.

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<sup>552</sup> “Coloro che leggeranno quale principio fusse quello della città di Roma, e da quali datori di leggi e come ordinate, non si maraviglieranno che tanta virtù si sia per più secoli mantenuta in quella città; e che dipoi ne sia nato quello imperio al quale quella republic aggiunse.”

## Sources of Roman Virtù

In the *Discorsi* there are four sources of Roman virtù: the laws and *ordini*, the discord between the patricians and the plebeians, accidents of *fortuna*, and exemplary citizens. These sources are not totally separate, but contribute to each other in a mutually supporting cycle that filled the city with virtù. While these examples do not form the bulk of Machiavelli's analysis of Rome, they are in a sense foundational to his analysis, because they provide the source of virtù that Rome would use to stave off corruption and enemies the decline of the republic set in.

Rome's first source of virtù was the laws and *ordini* given at its founding and renewed throughout the republic. As discussed above in my analysis of the example of the first three Roman kings, it was these laws, and the necessities they imposed on the citizens, that filled the city with virtù and staved off the corruption which all of the city's success tempted (D 1:1). These laws and orders were modified many times throughout the republic, but continued to produce virtù in Rome for many centuries. They are the heart of why Rome is the exemplar of what a republic and empire can be. The founding project of the Kings and of the founders of the Republic is so great an example, because Rome long survived its various founders. This was only possible because the virtù of these founders was, so to speak, institutionalized into the laws, modes, and orders of Rome and became Roman virtù.

The orders that Machiavelli uses as the example of a source of virtù in Rome was the composition of her armies and the selection of their leaders. With the

exception of the brief peaceful pause of the reign of Numa, Rome was always at war with her neighbors. “Because there were always soldiers occupied outside of the city, there was always a place for the virtù of men, nor could rank be torn from one who merited it and given to one who did not merit it”<sup>553</sup> because if the republic ever did so err, the disorder caused them to quickly return to their true *modo* of proceeding (D 3:16). And, as was discussed in the examples of Cincinnatus and Corvinus above, the Romans (usually) honored this virtù which was displayed on the battlefield, through electing these virtuoso soldiers to consulships, to the great benefit of the republic.

Because the sum of imperium<sup>554</sup> was adapted to the consuls, who, arrived at this imperium not for hereditary or for misleading or for violent ambition, but by free elections, and these were always the most excellent men: Rome benefited from this virtù and fortuna from time to time, it could bring to her ultimate greatness in as many years that they remained under the kings (D 1:20).<sup>555</sup>

In other societies, such men of virtù would be a threat to the state, because, were they to turn on the state, there would be no one of comparable virtù to oppose them. But in Rome “because, they used the whole city, the nobles and the ignoble, in war, there were always in Rome in every era so many virtuoso men and honors of various victories that the people never had reason to doubt anyone of them”, because each

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<sup>553</sup> “Perché, tenendo fuori quella città sempre eserciti, sempre vi era luogo alla virtù degli uomini, né si poteva torre il grado a uno che lo meritasse e darlo a uno che non lo meritasse...”

<sup>554</sup> Imperium, in the Republic, meant the absolute command of the military, the power over life and death, and the slightly less than absolute command over civil affairs.

<sup>555</sup> “Perché la somma dello imperio si ridusse ne’ consoli, i quali, non per eredità o per inganni o per ambizione violente, ma per suffrage liberi venivano a quello imperio, ed erano sempre uomini eccellentissimi: de’ quali godendosi Roma la virtù e la fortuna di tempo in tempo poté venire a quella sua ultima grandezza in altrettanti anni che la era stata sotto i re.”

could keep watch on all the others (D 1:31).<sup>556</sup> Thus, Rome derived a double benefit from this order. First, it had a plethora of virtuoso citizens to be its soldiers and captains. Second, none of them had the opportunity to seize the state, because there were so many other men of virtù in the city that they were held in check.

Further, the military virtù of the Romans was sustained over time because it was constantly in use and its good order was maintained.

If therefore a city is armed and ordered as Rome, and which every day of its citizens, both in particular and in public, touches to make experience both of their virtù and of the power of *fortuna*; it participates always that in every condition of time [they are] of the same *animo* in and maintain their same dignity. But when [they are] disarmed, and who only relies on the vehemence of *fortuna* and non on their own virtù vary with its varying, and always give an example of themselves such as that given by the Venetians (D 3:32).<sup>557</sup>

Machiavelli had criticized the Venetians for having poorly ordered arms which lead their situation and attitude to change with the varying of *fortuna*. The Romans, on the other hand, had well ordered arms, and, while their situation varied somewhat with *fortuna*, their attitude never varied with the variations of *fortuna*. From this we see that, eventually, habitual reliance on their own virtù became a continuing source of virtù for the Romans.

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<sup>556</sup> “...perché, adoperandosi tutta la città, e gli nobili e gli ignobili, nella guerra, surgeva sempre in Roma in ogni età tanti omini virtuosi e ornate di varie vittorie che il popolo non aveva cagione di dubitare d’alcuno di loro...”

<sup>557</sup> “Se adunque una città sarà armata e ordinata come Roma, e che ogni dì ai suoi cittadini, e in particolare in publico, tocchi a fare isperienza e della virtù loro e della potenza della fortuna; interverrà sempre che in ogni condizione di tempo ei fiano del medesimo animo e materranno la medesima loro degnità. Ma quando e’ fiano disarmati, e che si appoggeranno solo agl’imeti della fortuna e non alla propria virtù varieranno col cariare di quella, e daranno sempre di loro esemplo tale che hanno dato i Viniziani.”

The second source of Roman virtù that Machiavelli identifies is the conflict between the patricians and the plebeians. This conflict is basically an indirect source of virtù in Rome, because, as we will see later, examples an important source of virtù. And, “examples of virtù...are born from good education, good education from good laws, and good laws from the tumults”<sup>558</sup> between patrician and plebeian (D 1:4). Here Machiavelli puts into play much of what he claims made Rome great and claims that it derived from the conflict between patrician and plebeian. While virtù seldom comes up in Machiavelli’s discussion of this conflict,<sup>559</sup> it is clear that for Machiavelli, the outcome was the perfection of the laws and orders of the republic which created virtù.<sup>560</sup> However, these laws and orders occasionally needed to be brought back to their foundings to respond to changes over time and keep the republic free of corruption.

The last two types of sources of virtù in Rome, accidents of *fortuna* and exemplary virtuoso individuals, are responses to a degradation of virtù and of the orders of the republic. For Machiavelli, the republic will lapse into complacency about its modes and orders which will in turn sap its virtù unless treated to the occasional shock. This shock can come from within the citizen body or from without in the form of a catastrophic accident. Clearly the former is preferable to the latter.

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<sup>558</sup> “...esempi di virtù... nascono dalla buona educazione, la buona educazione dalle buone leggi, e le buone leggi da quelli tumulti...”

<sup>559</sup> From my reading, the only other example of virtù put into relationship with this conflict is in (D 1:5.4) where the patricians accuse the plebs of not trusting their own virtù and resorting to extraordinary modes to oppress the patricians.

<sup>560</sup> Indeed, I take this to be the thesis of D 1:3-8.

Machiavelli's main example of a catastrophic accident of *fortuna* which restored virtù to the republic is the Gaulic sack of Rome. By the time the Gauls sacked Rome (Livy dates this as 390 B.C.E) the republic had strayed so far from its founding that "it was necessary that Rome was taken by the Gauls to want that rebirth and, reborn, retake new life and new virtù and retake the observation of religion and of justice, which were in her beginning to be tainted" (D 3:1).<sup>561</sup> So powerful was this medicine that it demonstrated to Rome the need to "esteem its good citizens, and be more content with their virtù than the comforts that appear to them as missing through their works" (D 3:1).<sup>562</sup> The result of this, as explained in my presentation of the example of Camillus, was basically to give him the governance of the city, which he steered to safety and renewed its ancient modes, orders, and respect for virtù. However, this is strong medicine indeed. It is obviously preferable to have the founding renewed internally through prudence than by relying on such a catastrophe. The Romans only emerged from the Gaulic capture of Rome through the virtù of Camillus and Manlius Capitolinus added to a good *fortuna* and the ransom they paid the Gauls to leave.

The safer and more prudent path for bringing the republic back to its founding, and the last source of Roman virtù in the *Discorsi*, is through the example of a citizen with virtù. For Machiavelli, the republic can be brought back to its foundings "either

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<sup>561</sup> "...era necessario che Roma fussi presa dai Franciosi a volere che la rinascesse e, rinascendo, ripigliasse nuova vita e nuova virtù e ripigliasse la osservanza della religione e della giustizia, le quali in lei cominciavano a macularsi."

<sup>562</sup> "...simare i suoi buoni cittadini, e fare più conto della loro virtù che di quegli commodi che e' paresse loro mancare mediante le opera loro."

through virtù of a man or through virtù of an order” (D 3:1).<sup>563</sup> However, Machiavelli immediately goes on to claim that “These orders have need of being brought to life from the virtù of a citizen, who *animosamente* contributes to their accomplishment against the power of those who trespass them” (D 3:1).<sup>564</sup> For this reason I include the bringing back to foundings done by the virtù as a part of the examples of virtù as a source of virtù; the order could not succeed where there is no man of virtù there to guard it. Machiavelli lists some specific examples of this, including the death of the sons of Brutus, the execution of Manlius Capitolinus, the death of the son of Manlius Torquatus, and the accusations against Scipio Africanus and his brother (D 3:1). These are truly extraordinary acts, which Machiavelli claims helped bring to life these laws and orders which periodically renewed the republic and punished those too ambitious to live in a republic (D 3:1).

The second sort of example which is a source of virtù in Rome is simply an excellent example of a virtuous citizen. According to Machiavelli, this arises “from these simple virtù[s] of a man...of such reputation and is so exemplary that good men desire to imitate his virtù and the bad feel ashamed to have a life contrary to his virtù” (D 3:1).<sup>565</sup> Just as the orders which are a source of virtù need men of virtù to protect them, these men need the orders to allow them to gain reputation such that their simple virtù will be known as an exemplar for others to follow. Machiavelli lists a number of

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<sup>563</sup> “...o per virtù d’un uomo o per virtù d’uno ordine.”

<sup>564</sup> “I quali ordini hanno bisogno di essere fatti vivi dalla virtù d’uno cittadino, il quale animosamente concorra a eseguirli contro alla Potenza di quegli che gli traspasano.”

<sup>565</sup> “...dalle semplice vitù d’un uomo...sono di tale riputazione e di tanto esempio che gli uomini buoni desiderano imitarle e gli cattivi si vergognano a tenere vita contraria a quelle.”

these men, in which he includes Horatius Coclus, the Decii, and the two Catos D (3:1). Horatius Coclus and the Decii gained their reputation on the battlefield. Horatius gained fame for defeating the Curiatii and the Decii for sacrificing their lives to win battles.<sup>566</sup> Their examples not only served to inspire their contemporaries to virtù, but because they were made into legends, their examples could inspire future generations to come.

The great virtù of Rome came from the laws and orders, which in turn came from the lawgiving founders and the conflict between the patricians and the plebeians, from catastrophic accidents, and from exemplary virtuoso citizens. In the next section I will evaluate the role this virtù played in Rome's expansion.

### **Roman Virtù in Acquisition**

That the maintenance of empire is so difficult is attested to by how infrequently they are made and even less frequently survive the life of their founder. The importance of Roman virtù in acquisition is that Rome was able to expand so much while maintaining itself relatively uncorrupt for centuries. By expand, I mean both to conquer new territory and, for the expansion to be even minimally successful, to hold on to it. For Machiavelli, a republic must expand or it will become prey to its stronger neighbors who are expanding (D 2:19). However, this expansion must

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<sup>566</sup> See examples 14-21 in Appendix 1.

proceed with virtù akin to that of the Romans' mode of expansion or it will overstretch the resources of the republic and cause it to fail.

For Machiavelli, the Roman mode of acquisition was superior to that of his contemporaries. Machiavelli's main treatment of the differences between the Roman and contemporary modes of acquisition comes in his (D 2:19) titled "That the acquisitions of republics not well ordered, and that do not follow the Roman virtù of proceeding, bring to ruin, not to exultation of [those republics]."<sup>567</sup> One of the reasons for the failure of polities contemporary to Machiavelli is that they do not follow the good modes of acquisition of the Romans. Machiavelli details these when he says,

that increasing the inhabitants of one's city, making for one's self partners and not subjects, sending colonies to guard lands acquired, making capital of plunder, suppressing the enemy with raids and with battles and not with sieges, keeping rich the public, poor the private, maintaining with highest study the military practices, is the right way to make great a republic and to acquire empire (D 2:19).<sup>568</sup>

For Machiavelli, it is important to increase the number of men that one can put to use as soldiers, which is the chief reason why it is good for the city to gain inhabitants and to make friends rather than subjects of those conquered. Friends, and potentially new citizens, can be armed without fear, but subjects cannot be armed, because that would give them the *occasione* to try and retake their former liberty. Sending colonies to guard acquisitions is important, because it is the method least taxing on the resources

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<sup>567</sup> "Che gli acquisti nelle repubbliche non bene ordinate, e che secondo la romana virtù non procedano, sono a ruina, non a esaltazione di esse."

<sup>568</sup> "...che lo accrescere la città sua di abitatori, farsi campagni e non sudditi, mandare colonie a guardare I paesi acquistati, fare capital delle prede, domare il nimico con le scorrerie e con le giornate e non con le ossidioni, tenere ricco il public, povero il private, mantenere con sommo studio gli esercizi military, fusse la vera via a fare grande una republica e ad acquistare imperio."

of the conqueror and least offensive to the conquered (P 3). Keeping the public rich and private (citizens) poor assures that the republic will always have the means necessary for war while at the same time preventing individual citizens from acquiring the root of corruption (idle time spent in luxury) and means to challenge the public. Quick wars that avoid sieges allow for the use of part time citizen soldiers, rather than professional soldiers, or worse still, mercenaries or auxiliaries. Finally, the reason for studiously maintaining good military practices is both so that the republic can expand and defend itself, and also so that there is always a place for virtuoso men, as explained above.

Another way in which Machiavelli's contemporaries have deviated from the good *modi* of acquisition according to virtù is in their practice of building forts to hold conquered territory. In contrast to the judgment of Florence, who built forts to hold Pisa and other territories, the Romans "were of another virtù, of another judgment, of another power. And while Rome lived freely and while she followed her orders and virtuous constitutions, never did she erect [forts] to hold either cities or provinces; but usefully saved any already built" (D 2:24).<sup>569</sup> The Romans and those who were prudent enough to imitate them, "not thinking of fortresses, secured themselves with more virtuous *modi* and more wisdom" (D 2:24).<sup>570</sup> These more virtuoso modes were with the modes of military virtù. For Machiavelli, forts are essentially useless, because for them to be of use, one needs a good army. Without a good army, the garrison of a

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<sup>569</sup> "...gli erano d'altra virtù, d'altro giudizio, d'altra potenza, e' non le edificarono. E mentre che Rome visse libera e che la seguì gli ordini suoi e le sue virtuose costituzioni, mai n'edificò per tenere o città o provincie; ma salvò bene alcuna delle edificate.

<sup>570</sup> "...non pensando a fortezze, con più virtuosì modi e più savi se ne assicurarono."

fort can easily be trapped inside by a siege which could only be lifted by a good army outside the fort, in which case the fort was not useful (D 2:24). Rather, possessing a fort in a conquered territory has the potential to lull the conqueror into a false sense of security, believing that it can abuse the conquered population and still hold the territory by means of the fort (D 2:24), while it is much better to govern them well and hold the territory through means of benevolence and rely on military virtù, which acquired the territory in the first place, if benevolence fails (D 2:24). The bedrock of Roman virtù in expansion was their military virtù and prudent modes of incorporating these acquisitions.

Yet, for Machiavelli, acquisition, though necessary, will always eventually corrupt a republic however virtuoso its modes and orders. The reason is that republics with virtù that expand will inevitably conquer their corrupt neighbors and adopt some of their corrupting customs. At the end of his chapter on the Roman virtù in acquisition (D 2:19), Machiavelli cites Juvenal (*Satires* VI 293) to say that “in exchange for frugality and for other very excellent virtù[s]”<sup>571</sup> the Romans adopted the gluttony and luxury of those they conquered (D 2:19). Machiavelli asks, “If therefore the acquiring was pernicious for the Romans in the time that they proceeded with so much prudence and so much virtù, what therefore will be for those that distance themselves from the modes [in which the Romans] proceeded...?” (D 2:19).<sup>572</sup>

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<sup>571</sup> “...in cambio di parsimonia e d’altre eccellentissime virtù...”

<sup>572</sup> “Se adunque lo acquistare fu per essere pernizioso a’ Romani ne’ tempi che quegli con tanta prudenzia e tanta virtù procedevono...?”

Acquisition is necessary for a republic to defend itself, but also inevitably carries with it the corrupting seeds of that republic's destruction.

However, the good modes and virtù with which the Romans acquired new territory forestalled the worst corruptions much longer than would have been possible if they had proceeded with the less virtuoso modes of Machiavelli's contemporaries. And even when the corrupting customs of their conquered peoples was incorporated into Roman habits, the result was the fall of the Republic, but not the loss of Rome's empire which continued to dominate the Mediterranean for several more centuries. The reason is that, the republican orders and virtù were corrupted when Rome no longer had to face the necessity of an enemy who could match her for strength and virtù after the fall of Carthage and Antiochus "no longer fearing wars, it appeared they could commit armies to any [Rome] wanted, not regarding so much of the virtù so much as the other qualities that gave one favor with the people" (D 3:16).<sup>573</sup> Thus, there was no longer always a place for men of virtù, nor were they always given the highest honor in the city. Importantly, for Machiavelli, the Roman mode of only electing consuls who ran for office began to hurt the city at this time, when it became corrupt, "because not those who had more virtù, but those that had more power requested the magistracies; and the impotent, although virtuosi, abstained from asking for them for fear" (D 1:18).<sup>574</sup> The Romans no longer immediately needed to value virtù, because they no longer had an external enemy that posed an existential threat to

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<sup>573</sup> "...non temendo più le guerre, pareva potere commettere gli eserciti a qualunque la voleva, non riguardando tanto alla virtù quanto alle altre qualità che gli dessono grazia nel popolo."

<sup>574</sup> "...perché non quelli che avevano più virtù, ma quelli che avevano più potenza domandavano i magistrati; e gl'impotenti, comeche viruosi, se ne astenevano di domandarli per paura."

the state. “This security and this weakness of the enemies made it so that the Roman people in giving the consulship no longer regarded virtù but elegance, raising to that rank those that better knew to entertain the men, not those that knew better how to defeat the enemies...” (D 1:18).<sup>575</sup> Thus, the Romans no longer rewarded men of virtù with the highest magistracies, election to which were some of the highest honors available to citizens. In reaction, the loyalty of the men of virtù was no longer to their fatherland and, through this, the republican orders and virtù were corrupted. However, it was another several hundred years before the Romans let this corruption set into the bedrock of their success, their great military virtù.

### **Roman Military Virtù**

More than all of the other causes for Machiavelli’s esteem of the Romans and more than all the other Roman practices which Machiavelli exhorts his contemporaries to imitate, Roman military virtù gains Machiavelli’s highest praise. Indeed, one could, only somewhat facetiously, summarize the argument of his *dell’Arte della Guerra* as “for everything in war, imitate the Romans, because they were the best.” But this summary is only facetious because Machiavelli updates the Roman *modi* and *ordini* of making war to deal with new technology and practices. For Machiavelli — and there is good reason to agree with him — the Romans *were* the best. For half a millennium

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<sup>575</sup> “Questa sicurtà e questa debolezza de’ nimici feve che il popolo romano nel dare il consolato non riguardava più la virtù ma la grazia, tirando a quel grado quelli che meglio sapevano intrattenere gli uomini, non quelli che sapevano meglio vincere i nimici...”

roman military virtù had few equals, and no betters, in the whole of Europe, Asia, and Africa. Even if a polity fell far short of the mark when imitating Roman military virtù, that would still make it a truly excellent military power.

Machiavelli's discussion of the modes and sources which made the Romans have so much military virtù is largely left for *dell'Arte della Guerra*. In *Discorsi*, Machiavelli mostly focuses on how necessary this virtù was for the acquisition of their empire. Book Two of begins with a chapter (D 2:1) titled "What was more the cause of the empire that the Romans acquired, either virtù or *fortuna*."<sup>576</sup> Machiavelli opens by citing Plutarch as claiming "that the Roman People in acquiring the empire were more favored by *fortuna* than by virtù"<sup>577</sup> and mentioning that Livy seems to agree "because rare are the times that he makes speak any Roman, where they recount of virtù, that they do not add *fortuna*" (D 2:1).<sup>578</sup> According to Machiavelli, Plutarch and Livy claim "that not being pulled into two very potent wars at the same time was from *fortuna* and not the virtù of the Roman People" (D 2:1).<sup>579</sup>

Interestingly, this opinion of Livy and Plutarch contrasts in part with "the opinion of the many that say Rome was a tumultuous republic, and full of so much confusion that had not good *fortuna* and military virtù not provided for the defects, she

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<sup>576</sup> "Quale fu più cagione dello imperio che acquistarono i Romani, o la virtù o la fortuna."

<sup>577</sup> "...che 'l Popolo romana nello acquistare lo imperio fosse più favorite dalla fortuna che dalla virtù."

<sup>578</sup> "...perché rade volte è che facci parlare ad alcuno Romano, dove ei racconti della virtù, che non vi agginga la fortuna."

<sup>579</sup> "...che non averre mai accozzate due potentissime guerre in uno medesimo tempo fu fortuna e non virtù del Popolo romano..."

would have been inferior to every other republic” (D 1:4).<sup>580</sup> I have already discussed Machiavelli’s claims that the conflict between patrician and plebeian actually worked to produce good laws and virtù in Rome in the section on the sources of Rome’s virtù, above. While Livy and Plutarch seem to downplay the role of virtù in Roman success, whoever these many are, to whom Machiavelli refers in the quote, want to claim that the military virtù offset the bad domestic orders of the republic. However, both groups, if their opinions are combined, put an emphasis on the role of *fortuna* as playing a greater role in Rome’s success than her modes and virtù.

But for Machiavelli both of these opinions of Rome’s expansion are unsupportable. “Because of the virtù of soldiers they acquired the empire; and the orders of proceeding and their own modes found by their first giver of laws maintained what was acquired” (D 2:1).<sup>581</sup> As for their relative roles, Machiavelli concludes “one sees within mixed with *fortuna* a very great virtù and prudence” (D 2:1).<sup>582</sup>

As was noted earlier, unlike in *il Principe*, in the *Discorsi*, *fortuna* and virtù are not opposed but work hand in hand, because the Romans had both great virtù and great *fortuna*. I have already discussed above how fortunate Rome was that her first three kings came in the order that they did and that it was partially due to *fortuna* that the Gaulic sack of Rome was not the end of the city. However, according to

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<sup>580</sup> “...la opinione di molti che dicono Roma essere stata una republica tumultuaria, e piene di tanta confusion che se la buona fortuna e la virtù militare non avesse sopperito a’ loro difetti, sarebbe stata inferior a ogni altra republica.”

<sup>581</sup> “Perché la virtù degli eserciti gli fecero acquistare lo imperio; e l’ordine del procedure e il modo suo proprio e trovato dal suo primo datore delle leggi gli fece mantenere lo acquistato.”

<sup>582</sup> “...vi vedrà dentro mescolate con la fortuna una virtù e prudenza grandissima.”

Machiavelli, it was not mostly due to *fortuna* that the Romans never had to fight two powerful enemies at the same time. Rather, it was because their *virtù* in war was matched by an equal *virtù* and prudence in diplomacy. As Machiavelli notes, when the Latin War broke out (after the First Samnite war) the Romans had the Samnites as allies and when the Second Samnite War came after the Latin War, the subdued Latins fought for Rome (D 2:1). This was not the result of *fortuna* alone, but of prudent diplomacy and planning. “In this manner I believe that *fortuna*” which the Romans enjoyed would belong to any prince who had “proceeded similarly to the Romans, and had the same *virtù* as them” (D 2:1).<sup>583</sup> Just as in *il Principe* 25, energetic republics and princes with *virtù* can, in a sense and to some degree, make their own *fortuna*.

Machiavelli moves to prove decisively that Roman *virtù* had more to do with acquiring the empire than *fortuna* by, demonstrating that only extraordinary *virtù* could have conquered Rome’s Italian neighbors. However, as always Machiavelli’s concerns are not merely antiquarian, but “so that everyone can better know how much more *virtù* could do than their *fortuna* to acquire that empire” (D 2:1).<sup>584</sup> In Machiavelli’s discussion of the difficulties of Rome’s conquests of her neighbors and of the reasons for her eventual success, Machiavelli never once mentions *fortuna*. For Machiavelli, the Romans faced neighbors who were much more difficult to conquer than most of the states contemporary to him, because the neighbors of Rome, like Rome herself, loved their liberty, and a love of liberty causes the soldiers fighting to

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<sup>583</sup> “In modo che io credo che la fortuna... procedessono come I Romani, e fossero della medesima virtù che loro.”

<sup>584</sup> “...perché ciascuno possa meglio conoscere quanto possa più la virtù che la fortuna loro ad acquistare quello imperio...”

defend it with great obstinacy. “How much the love that in those times many people had for liberty; they very obstinately defended that never but from an excessive virtù could have subjected them” (D 2:2)<sup>585</sup> and “that the Roman People without a rare and extreme virtù never could have beaten them” (D 2:2).<sup>586</sup> This is especially true for the Samnites: “they had so much order and so much force that they were insurmountable, if a Roman virtù had not assaulted [them]” (D 2:2)<sup>587</sup> but they too were eventually overcome “because of Roman virtù” (D 1:15).<sup>588</sup> From this it can be seen that, for Machiavelli, in the conflict between two peoples of virtù, while the winner can be determined by *fortuna*, it is also possible for the winner to be the people that simply has greater virtù.

The Romans and their allies came to rely on their great military virtù. The Samnite wars began when the Capuans asked for Roman aid in the fight they had picked with the Samnites, but realized they did not have the military virtù to win. The Romans “with their military virtù defended”<sup>589</sup> Capua from the Samnites (D 2:21) and, a century and a half later, when Capua had defected to Hannibal, the Romans “with

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<sup>585</sup> “...quanto lo amore che in quelli tempi molti popoli avevano alla libertà; la quale tanto ostinantamente difendevano che mai se non da una eccessive virtù sarebbero stati soggiogati.”

<sup>586</sup> “...che il Popolo romano senza una rara ed estrema virtù mai non le avrebbe potute superare.”

<sup>587</sup> “...vi era tanto ordine e tanta forza ch’egli era insuperabile, se da una virtù romana non fosse stato assultato.”

<sup>588</sup> “...perché la virtù romana...”

<sup>589</sup> “...con la loro virtù avevano difeso...” Machiavelli is here describing the brief insurrection of the legions which garrisoned Capua, who thought to make themselves lords of the land they had defended because the Capuans did not have the virtù to defend themselves.

the virtù of their army reacquired it” (D 2:24).<sup>590</sup> Another example of this reliance is when, in the First Punic War,

Marcus Regulus Attilius presumed with his infantry to withstand not only cavalry but elephants; and if the plan did not succeed, it was not however that the virtù of his infantry was not so great that he could not have much confidence in it [but] that belief exceeded the difficulty (D 2:18).<sup>591</sup>

Or, that it was not the case that Regulus’s infantry did not have enough virtù for him to be confident in its abilities, but that Regulus was overconfident and, thus, lost the battle. This self confidence was one of the defining factors of the Roman psyche, and perhaps one of the reasons that the Romans “never acquired land with money, never made peace with money, but always with the virtù of arms”<sup>592</sup> which Machiavelli tells us is very rare (D 2:30). This reliance on their military virtù kept the Romans from employing mercenaries or engaging in other practices which worked to weaken their military virtù for many centuries. But, when their confidence faltered, and they engaged in these practices, their lack of confidence was soon justified.

Machiavelli’s use of Marcus Regulus Attilius’s infantry’s virtù comes in a discussion of the superiority of infantry to cavalry. Rome’s legions, and her confidence in them, were based on heavy infantry, where the Romans were always confident that their superior arms, orders, and virtù would give them victory. So

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<sup>590</sup> “...per virtù dello esercito la riacquistarono...” Machiavelli’s point here is that the Romans did not need forts to defend their territory.

<sup>591</sup> “Presunse Marco Regolo Attilio non solo con la fanteria sua sostenere I cavagli ma gli elefanti; e se il disegno non gli riuscì, non fu però che la virtù della sua fanteria non fosse tanta ch’e’ non confidasse tant in lei che credesse superare quella difficoltà.”

<sup>592</sup> “...mai acquistarono terre con danari, mai feciono pace con danari, ma sempre con la virtù dell’armi...”

central was the heavy infantry to Rome's battle plan that Livy reports several examples in which the cavalry dismounted in order to support a flagging infantry. For Machiavelli, "[i]t is not possible for there to be a greater example in demonstrating how much more virtù is in the infantry than in the cavalry..."<sup>593</sup> than this example of the Roman cavalry suddenly being able to turn the tide in battle only once it dismounts (D 2:18).

The Romans did not need their military virtù only for conquering their neighbors and protecting their allies; they also needed it to defend themselves against the barbarians. When making this argument Machiavelli refers to the three barbarian invasions of Italy during the republic: the first when the Gauls sacked Rome around 390 B.C., the second, another Gaulic invasion, between the two Punic wars, and the third when the Cimbri and the Teutones invaded and were defeated by Gaius Marius (D 2:8).

Nor was less virtù necessary to beat them; because one sees later, when the Roman virtù ran out and that those armies lost their ancient valor, that empire was destroyed by similar peoples, there were the Goths, the Vandals and similar, that occupied everything of the Western Empire (D 2:8).<sup>594</sup>

While some eight hundred years had passed for *fortuna* to intervene between the Gaulic sack of Rome and when the Gothic and Vandal sackings of Rome, for

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<sup>593</sup> "Non può essere questo esempio maggiore in dimostrare quanto sia più virtù nelle fanterie che ne' cavagli..."

<sup>594</sup> "Né era necessario minore virtù a vincerle; perché si vide poi, come la virtù romana mancò e che quelle armi pederono il loro antico valore, fu quello imperio distrutto da simili popoli; I quali furono Gotti, Vandali, e simili, che occuparono tutto lo Imperio occidentale."

Machiavelli, much more than the intervention of *fortuna*, the decline of Rome is due to the decline of her military virtù.

By then the Roman military orders had so strayed from their former virtù that much of the army consisted of barbarian auxiliaries and mercenaries. It is easy to imagine that to Machiavelli's eyes, the army of the late Empire looked much more like an army from his contemporary Europe than like a Roman army at all.<sup>595</sup> To draw a broad conclusion from this, for Machiavelli, when the Romans organized their armies according to their military virtù, they won battles, expanded, and were able to defend the empire; when Rome stopped organizing their armies in this manner, they lost battles, lost territory, and were overrun. As was said earlier, much of Machiavelli's discussion of how Roman armies were organized appears in *dell'Arte della Guerra*, but he does not give any mention of the orders which were central to Roman military virtù.

In addition to the encouragement of virtù in its citizens,<sup>596</sup> two Roman orders which augmented their military virtù were the three lines of the maniple system and the practice of paying conscripted soldiers. The three lines of the maniple system represent, for Machiavelli, the most important order of the Roman military when pertaining to the battlefield. “[B]ecause from order [*ordine*] is born fury and virtù”<sup>597</sup> the orders of the three lines allowed the Romans to “firmly and obstinately combat

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<sup>595</sup> And here I am using the word Roman to include the entire citizen body of the Empire, not just citizens of the city or even of the Italian peninsula.

<sup>596</sup> Which is discussed above in the section on Sources of Virtù.

<sup>597</sup> “[P]erché dall’ordine nasce il furore e la virtù...”

with the same *animo* and with the same virtù in the end [of a battle] as in the beginning”<sup>598</sup> because the Roman fury “was sustained by an ordered virtù” (D 3:36).<sup>599</sup> To state briefly the order of the maniple: there were three lines ordered as the *astati*, *principi*, and *triari* which arrayed themselves in that order facing the enemy when battle was joined. They were spaced such that the *astati* could retreat into gaps within the line of the *principi* when pushed back and both could do the same with the *triari* if necessary (D 2:16). By maintaining this order, the Romans always had fresh troops to face the enemy, who were often worn out battling the *astati*, as generally was the case with the Gauls who lacked this “ordered virtù” (D 3:36).<sup>600</sup>

The second *ordine* that Machiavelli discusses is the practice of paying conscripted soldiers. It is important to point out here that Machiavelli is *not* describing a professional army, a thing which he claims, in *dell’Arte della Guerra*, is harmful to a republic. Rather, in order to lay siege to Veii, the Romans instituted something akin to combat pay for conscripted soldiers “and that by virtù of this they could make war for longer...” (D 2:6).<sup>601</sup> While Machiavelli hurries to reassure his reader that, though they were now capable of making war for longer, the Romans, whenever they could, retained their practice of attempting to fight their wars as quickly as possible. However, this order is important for later Rome, because it is what allowed them to

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<sup>598</sup> “...fermi e ostinati combattevano col medesimo animo e con la medesima virtù nel fine che nel principio...”

<sup>599</sup> “...sostenuto da una virtù ordinata...” Machiavelli is actually talking about how Gaulic armies did not follow this practice in this sentence, but he is comparing them to Roman armies which did.

<sup>600</sup> I feel that though Machiavelli does not mention it, it is important to note that when the Marian reforms eliminated the maniple system in the late second century B.C.E. (in favor of the cohort system), Marius retained the three lines with their accustomed names.

<sup>601</sup> “...e che per virtù di questo ei potessono fare la guerra più lunghe...”

field armies in the multiple year conflicts they would later engage in against the Samnites, Carthaginians, Macedonians and others. The empire could never have expanded far beyond Rome had they not instituted this virtù, because the Romans drew their conscripts from its landowning population, who would have otherwise needed to return to their farms to supply their livelihood.

Though Machiavelli does not say this, the importance of these two orders of military virtù is that they gave Roman captains strategic and tactical flexibility. While the Romans preferred to fight short wars, if it was necessary in the situation, they could fight long wars. The importance of this could not have been better exemplified in the by the over a decade the Romans used Fabian tactics against Hannibal after their defeat at Cannae. The Romans were not foolish enough to accept battle again on terms of Hannibal's choosing — and Hannibal always had too much virtù and prudence to accept battle on ground of Rome's choosing — but were able to field an army for years to harass the Italian allies of Hannibal. Similarly, it was not ideal for the *astati* or *principi* to be pushed back, but if it happened, the three lines of the maniple system allowed a captain the tactical flexibility to withdraw them in an orderly fashion behind fresh troops.<sup>602</sup> However, such an orderly retreat required well disciplined soldiers

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<sup>602</sup> This aspect of the maniple's increased flexibility over the phalanx system it replaced does not even capture another aspect which Machiavelli does not discuss. This is that, unlike the phalanx which drew its strength from its unbroken shield wall, each individual maniple was an independent tactical unit. While it was very difficult for the phalanx to respond quickly to a flanking maneuver, a Roman captain could detach a maniple to do so with ease. Also, individual maniples could be detached to take strategic high ground or flank an enemy. Also, a phalanx had difficulty forming its lines in broken terrain, which was not a problem at all for the maniple system. After all, the Romans developed the maniple system while fighting the Samnites, who were a hill tribe.

with military virtù, which the Romans had, but which Machiavelli often claims that his contemporary Italians do not.

### **Roman Military Virtù: Captains and Soldiers**

The last set of examples Machiavelli uses of Roman military virtù center around the question of whether virtù is more important in captains or in soldiers. Machiavelli mostly deals with this question in his chapter (D 3:13) titled “Where there ought to be more trust, either in a good captain that has a weak army, or in a good army that has a weak captain.”<sup>603</sup> Machiavelli approaches this question by noting that Livy believed that “the Roman Republic grew more from the virtù of the captains than of the soldiers” (D 3:13).<sup>604</sup> This is not surprising considering the legendary virtù of Camillus, Corvinus, Torquatus, Decius, Scipio and the others discussed above.

However, Machiavelli claims that “one sees in many places in [Livy’s] history, had made marvelous proof of the virtù of the soldiers without a captain”<sup>605</sup> and as a specific example “in the army that the Romans had in Spain under the Scipiones; which, when the two captains died, could with their virtù not only save themselves but defeat the enemy” (D 3:13).<sup>606</sup> And, when the three Tribunes with consular power

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<sup>603</sup> “Dove sia più confidare, o in una buono capitano che abbia lo esercito debole, o in uno buono esercito che abbia il capitano debole.”

<sup>604</sup> “...la Republica romana crebbe più per la virtù de’ capitani che de’ soldati...”

<sup>605</sup> “...si vede in molti luoghi della istoria, la virtù de’ soldati senza capitano averre fatto maravigliose pruove...”

<sup>606</sup> “...nello esercito che i Romani avevano in Ispagna sotto gli Scipioni; il quale, morti I due capitani, poté con la virtù sua non solamente salvare se stesso ma vincere il nimico...”

were divided against each other at Fidenae as to how to proceed, “the dishonor was for that reason theirs, as the reason for receiving [the dishonor] was not the virtù of the soldiers” (D 3:15).<sup>607</sup> Machiavelli gives another example where the two consuls blundered against the Volsci and “from that peril not from the prudence of the Consuls but the virtù of their soldiers were they saved”<sup>608</sup> about which Machiavelli quotes Livy (6.30) as saying “The steady virtù of the soldiers even without a leader protected it”<sup>609</sup> (D 3:33). Finally, Machiavelli gives the example of a confusing battle against the Aequi in which “Tempanius, a centurion, by whose virtù that Roman army that day was not broken entirely” (D 3:18).<sup>610</sup> So to add to the examples of excellent captains, we have examples of weak captains who lose with a virtuoso army and of a virtuoso army succeeding either without or despite its captains.

One last example that is important is the losses of the Roman armies under the Decemvirate. “The Roman soldiers under the Ten had the same virtù [as other Roman soldiers]: but because there was not in them the same disposition, they did not produce the usual effects” (D 1:43).<sup>611</sup> That is, the other examples of the virtù of Roman soldiers presented in this deliberation have been of soldiers who believed they were fighting for their own glory and that of their fatherland. But, because this example came from the time in which the Decemvirs were seen as having overstepped the

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<sup>607</sup> “...del disonore ne furono cagione loro, del non ricevere danno ne fu cagione la virtù de’ soldati.”

<sup>608</sup> “...dal quale pericolo non la prudenza de’ Consoli ma la virtù de’ propri soldati gli libero.”

<sup>609</sup> “Militum, etiam sine rectore, stabilis virtus tutata est.” I use the Mansfield/Tarcov translation of Livy’s Latin, giving “virtù” for their “virtue.”

<sup>610</sup> “...uno Tempanio centurione, per la virtù del quale lo esercito romano quel giorno non era stato rotto interamente.”

<sup>611</sup> “Avevano gli eserciti romani sotto i Dieci quella medesima virtù: ma perché in loro non era quella medesima disposizione, non facevano gli usiati loro effetti.”

original bounds of their power in an attempt to establish themselves as tyrants, the soldiers did not want to fight for their glory alone. And so, here is an example of captains with virtù, leading an army with virtù, but because the captains are not capable of maintaining discipline, the army still lost.

Thus, there are many examples of very virtuoso Roman captains and many other examples of Roman armies with virtù when their captains seemed to have none. Machiavelli concludes that “one finds many examples where only the virtù of the soldiers won the day, and many others where only the virtù of the captains made the same effect” (D 3:12).<sup>612</sup> But, it is, of course, preferable that both the army and its captain have virtù, for though much can be accomplished by the one without the other, much more can be accomplished by both together (D 3:12).

As demonstrated in the previous two subsections, Rome’s military virtù was produced by her good orders and was the bedrock for her prudent policies of acquisition. This section has served to reinforce these claims and to demonstrate just how much can be done with a military with as much virtù as the Roman army. Rome was the first power to unite the entire Italian peninsula under one political entity, a feat not accomplished again for another 1 300 years after the fall of the Western Roman Empire and 350 years after Machiavelli’s death. And Rome held the Italian peninsula for 800 years. But even more impressively, Rome united the entire Mediterranean under one political entity for 500 years; a feat that is without precedent and without

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<sup>612</sup> “...si troverà molti esempi dove solo la virtù de’ soldati arà vinta la giornata, e molti altri dove solo la virtù de’ capitani arà fatto il medesimo effetto...”

successors. I opened this section by saying that it would be facetious to claim that one could summarize Machiavelli's *dell'Arte della Guerra* as “for everything in war, imitate the Romans, because they were the best.” But, upon review, it would be better to say that one could enthusiastically summarize the book in that way, because, when comparing Rome to Machiavelli's contemporary Italy — which had been overrun by ultramontanes (whom Machiavelli refers to as barbarians) for his entire adult life — it seems to be sage advice.

### **Conclusions about Rome in the *Discorsi***

Rome accomplished that which made her great, her size and her longevity, above all through her military virtù. If the preparations for bad *fortuna* that Machiavelli likens to preparing for a flood by building dikes and levees (P 25) are related to military preparedness, then when Rome had its good institutions, she was always prepared for bad *fortuna*. However, as Machiavelli warns, “If one considers well how human things proceed, one sees many times things are born and accidents arrive of which the heavens do not desire one has totally provided for. And when these that I say intervened in Rome (where there was so much virtù, so much religion, and so much order), do not marvel that they intervene much more often in a city or province that is missing these above named things” (D 2:29).<sup>613</sup> And so even though

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<sup>613</sup> “Se e' si considererà bene come procedono le cose umane, se vedrà molte volte nascerre cose e venire accidenti a' quali i cieli al tutto non hanno volute che si provvegga. E quando questo che io dico intervenne a Roma (dove era tanta virtù, tanta religione e tanto ordine), non è maraviglia che gli intervenga molto più spesso in una città o in una provincia che manchi delle cose sopradette.”

Rome was constantly prepared for bad *fortuna*, there are some accidents of bad *fortuna* which cannot be prepared for, such as the Gaulic sack of Rome, or much later, the coming of the Antoine plague. But, in so much as it is possible for a republic to owe nothing to good *fortuna* — and everything to good orders, laws, and virtù — the Romans did.

*In dell'Arte della Guerra:*

As with Machiavelli's other theoretical works, in *dell'Arte della Guerra* the most important exemplar of virtù is Rome. In some ways the entire book could be read as a description of how to update the Roman *modi* and *ordini* for use by Machiavelli's contemporaries. This should be unsurprising both because Rome still existed in the European consciousness as the most glorious example which one could aspire to imitate and because even falling short in an attempt to imitate their virtù would still result in an excellent army. But Machiavelli only specifically discusses Roman virtù six times in the text. In this section I will examine those specific examples.

Machiavelli begins his discussion of what sort of weapons soldiers should be armed with by explaining why he would mostly advocate imitating the Romans modes for arming soldiers. "And Titus Livy in his History opined many times where, coming to comparison of the enemy armies, says, 'But the Romans in virtù, in generation of arms and discipline were superior'; and yet I have more particularly reasoned of the

arms of the victors than of the vanquished” (AG 2:46/288).<sup>614</sup> Machiavelli’s reasoning here, following Livy, is that the Romans were superior in virtù to their enemies, yes, but they were also superior to their enemies in other ways, including in how they armed their legionnaires and generated discipline in the ranks. According to Machiavelli’s logic of imitating the modes and orders of those who have been successful, he advocated imitating the Roman model of a heavy infantry-centered army relying on swords and shields more than on pikes.<sup>615</sup>

In terms of Roman discipline, one mode of encouraging virtuosi actions in combat was the Roman practice that “Any virtuoso act was made know to the consuls, and publicly praised by them” (AG 6:164\*/345).<sup>616</sup> Public praise was as valued by men in Machiavelli’s time as in Camillus’s, and if, as was suggested above, Machiavelli believed that men were faced with the choice between acting virtuosamente and action with laziness or cowardness, the public praising of the virtuoso and public shaming or punishment of the lazy and cowardly could go a long way to encouraging soldiers to performing their duty and to fight with greater virtù.

The Romans also encouraged bravery in their soldiers through other means. According to Machiavelli, in picking instruments to convey orders during battle, “...Alexander the Great and the Romans used horns and trumpets as they thought by

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<sup>614</sup> “E Tito Livio nelle sue Istorie ne fa fede assai volte dov, venendo in comparazione degli eserciti nimici, dice: - Ma i Romani per virtù, per generazione di armi e disciplina erano superiori-; e però ip ho più particolarmente ragionato delle armi de’ vincitori che de’ vinti.”

<sup>615</sup> Though, it should be noted that in the Army of Words which Machiavelli constructs in his dialogue, about half of the infantry are actually pikemen.

<sup>616</sup> “E così qualunque atto virtuosi era da’ consoli riconosciuto e premiatoe, pubblicamente, da ciascuno lodato...”

virtù of such instruments, they could more inflame the *animi* of the soldiers and they would fight more bravely” (AG 3:106\*318).<sup>617</sup> This is a strange passage for us. First, we are probably more likely to be skeptical than Machiavelli’s contemporaries or the ancients of the psychological claims which underlie the practice of using certain instruments and music to inspire emotions in individuals. Second is the use of “virtù” in this passage in the phrase “by virtù of”,<sup>618</sup> which is a construction that Machiavelli uses basically in the same way we would say “by virtue of” to mean “due to the nature of”. Machiavelli often uses this formulation to talk about the effects which are caused — or are desired to be caused — by the nature of an inanimate object such as a musical instrument or a treaty. So, while this use of virtù is part of the constellation of meanings of the word, I tend to think that it is a part of the constellation, as with the use of virtù to describe Cosimo Rucellai, above, which is less pertinent to understanding the meaning of virtù in the sense in which it most affects politics.<sup>619</sup>

Machiavelli also urges the imitation of the Roman practice of keeping the virtù of an army united. This example of Roman virtù is in line with the use, described above, of the virtù of an army to mean the subset of the army with the most virtù. As Machiavelli explains “...in all three principal actions that armies do, that is to say to march, to encamp and to battle, [the Romans] placed the legions in the middle;

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<sup>617</sup> “...Alessandro Magno e i Romani usavano i corni e le trombe, come quelli che pensavano per virtù di tali instrumenti, potere più accendere gli animi de’ soldati e farli combattere più gagliardamente.” “Gagliardamente” conveys meanings of both “brave” or “courageous” and “vigorous” or “strongly”. It would be interesting to compare this to the relevant passages from Plato’s *Republic* about the affects of music on the soul of the listener.

<sup>618</sup> I believe that this formulation becomes more common in Machiavelli’s writing as he ages.

<sup>619</sup> However, this can only sometimes be the case. This formulation is, basically, used above where “by virtù of the cavalry and of the elephants” Carthage defeats Rome in a battle. However, this use is not referring to an inanimate object, but to the military virtù of the Carthaginian cavalry and elephants.

because they desired that the virtù in which they were most confident, would be most united...” (AG 3:88\*/308).<sup>620</sup> That is to say that the Romans kept the legions proper in the center of their forces in battle, in the center of the line while marching, and in the center of their fortified camps when they were constructed. Around the legion proper were deployed the auxiliaries, the light infantry, and any camp followers. Machiavelli reiterates the importance of focusing the virtù of one’s army in relating an episode from Caesar’s Gaulic campaigns when he was surrounded and besieged in his fortified camp. Caesar, finding himself unable to attack or defend because he had split his forces to cover every side of the camp, changed tactics and facing in one direction “with all of his forces, he made their vehemence so much against [the enemy] and with so much virtù that he overcame the enemy and won” (AG 7:201/361).<sup>621</sup> The Gauls had split the virtù of their army so that they could assault Caesar’s camp from all sides at once, but that left them vulnerable to Caesar’s tactic of concentrating his army and attacking each piece of the Gaulic army in turn. Machiavelli gives similar advice in the *Discorsi* when he advises captains not to defend mountain passes into which only a part of their army can fit because it involves splitting the virtù of the army. For Machiavelli, a captain should avoid putting himself in the position where he might stake the whole of his *fortuna* on only part of his virtù.

The final aspect in which Machiavelli specifically puts the Romans forward as an exemplar of virtù in *dell’Arte della Guerra* is in their avoidance of certain times

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<sup>620</sup> “...in tuttatre l’azioni principali che fanno gli eserciti, cioè camminare, alloggiare e combattere, mettevano le legioni in mezzo; perché volevano che quella virtù in la quale più cofidavano, fusse più unita...”

<sup>621</sup> “...con tutte le forze, fece tanto impeto loro contra e con tanta virtù che gli superò e vinse.”

and places of making war. “And because the Romans desired that all these things in which they had put so much of their industry be worthwhile, they avoided no less the winters, than the impassible mountains, and difficult areas and all other things which impeded them from being able to demonstrate their *arte* and their *virtù* (AG 6:182\*/353).<sup>622</sup> Machiavelli comes out particularly harshly against the idea of waging war during winter, saying, “Who wants therefore that forces, orders, disciplines and *virtù* in any part not be valuable, make a field war in winter” (AG 6:182\*/353).<sup>623</sup> The Roman example which Machiavelli exhorts us to follow is, in so far as possible, to avoid entering into situations in which the *virtù* and other capabilities which have been earned with difficulty are of no use. Machiavelli encourages his readers to develop the *arte* of war and does not want to see it go to waste through captains’ poor strategic decisions to make war in times and places for which their *arte*, modes, and orders are not suited, making it impossible for their armies to display their *virtù* and leaving the outcome more in the hands of *fortuna* than is necessary.

The use of Rome as an example in *dell’Arte della Guerra* serves the purpose of pointing out the disciplines which encourage *virtù* in soldiers and modes of not wasting that *virtù* once it exists. Machiavelli justifies following the example of the Romans because they were the best, but he might just as well have advocated following their example because they were the most prudent: their unwillingness to

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<sup>622</sup> “E perché i Romani volevano che tutte queste cose in che eglino mettevano tanta industria valessono loro, fuggivano non altrimenti le vernate, che l’apli aspre e i luoghi difficili e qualunque altra cosa gli impedisse a potere mostrare l’arte e la virtù loro.”

<sup>623</sup> “Chi vuole adunque che leforze, gli ordini, le discipline, e la virtù in alcuna parte non gli vaglia, faccia guerra alla campagna il verno.”

fight an enemy on terrain which would interrupt the deployment of their modes and the display of their virtù was coupled with a boldness in fighting wars in terrain in which their modes and orders were well suited.<sup>624</sup> As is clear when looking at how Machiavelli treats contemporary examples of virtù, Machiavelli clearly thinks that his contemporaries would benefit a great deal from attempting to imitate the Romans. For most, even falling far short would be a vast improvement.

*In Istorie Fiorentine:*

The example of Rome in *Istorie Fiorentine* mainly serves as the foil against which those Italian powers which follow are measured and fall short. However the one instance in which Machiavelli invokes the example of Rome, is to remind us that the Rome of the late Imperium was but a shadow of its former self. “And truly to ruin so much Empire, founded on the blood of so many virtuosi men, [could] not have come with less indolence in the princes, nor less infidelity in the ministers...”(IF 1:1).<sup>625</sup> This is because all of the strong Emperors were in the Eastern half of the Empire, while those in the West were, in the end, mostly weak puppets of their ministers. And so the capable Eastern Emperors are indolent because they did not adequately respond to the barbarian invasions in the West, while the Western Emperors were indolent because they were actually incapable of being otherwise. The ministers of the Western Emperors are described as acting with infidelity because they generally served the

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<sup>624</sup> While Machiavelli does not focus on this, one of the many strengths of the maniple system was that it was better suited for fighting in hills or on broken ground than the Phalanx.

<sup>625</sup> “E veramente a rovinare tanto Imperio, fondato sopra il sangue di tanti uomini virtuosi, non conveniva che fusse meno ingavia ne’ principi, né meno indedelità ne’ ministri...”

interests of their own career and competed with other ministers, rather than serving the interests of the Empire and their Emperor. The corruption of Rome in the middle to late Imperium is a frequent theme in Machiavelli and here it appears in the first paragraph of Book 1 to act as a springboard into his wider historical narrative. The Rome of the late Imperium is not Machiavelli's exemplar of virtù; that is the Roman Republic.

## 5.2.2 Non-Roman Ancients

### 88 Spartans (D 1:9.4, D 2:24.4)

The Spartans are the one ancient people who emerge as an example of virtù in the *Discorsi* but are not discussed in relation to their military encounters with the Romans. Though they were never able to achieve the sort of Empire the Roman's achieved, Machiavelli did not deprecate the virtù of that city when ruled under the laws, orders, and modes laid out by Lycurgus. Machiavelli's first use of Sparta as an example comes in his discussion of how important it is for a founder or reformer to be alone in power. Machiavelli claims that King Agis IV of Sparta attempted to reorder Spartan law in accordance with Lycurgus's because, having abandoned those laws, "his city had lost a lot of its ancient virtù, and by consequence [it had lost a lot] of force and of empire, he was in its first beginnings killed by the Ephors as a man that

wanted to occupy the tyranny” (D 1:9).<sup>626</sup> Agis wanted to return the Spartans to the *ordini* which had produced their ancient virtù, but he was prevented from doing so because he was not alone in power and did not have the authority to so reorder the city. This is also an example of Machiavelli’s claim that a city’s good orders and modes are corrupted after their founding, over time, until they can be re-founded and purified.

Machiavelli’s second mention of the Spartans as an example of virtù comes in his discussion of the utility of fortresses. Machiavelli turns to his usual historical examples and notes that the Romans did not build fortresses, but also did not destroy preexisting forts, and “that if the Romans did not build fortresses, the Spartans not only refrained from this, but did not permit their cities to have walls; because they wanted that the virtù of particular men, not other defenses, defended them” (D 2:24).<sup>627</sup> Machiavelli uses these examples as definitive in demonstrating that fortresses were useless without a good army, and that they did not really add much value to having good arms. Machiavelli’s reason for this is that if one has a good fortress, but no army, it can easily be laid siege by a good army, and will eventually be taken if no relief force can be raised. Machiavelli’s belief about this, bolstered by his Roman and Spartan examples, is that the siege and the fort are unnecessary middle steps before the set piece battle between the two armies which will actually be decisive.

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<sup>626</sup> “...avesse perduto assai di quella antica virtù, e per conseguente di forze e d’imperio, fu ne’ suoi primi principii ammazzato dagli efori spartani come uomo che volesse occupare la tirannide.”

<sup>627</sup> “...che se i Romani non edificavano fortezze, gli Spartani non solamente si astenevano da quelle, ma non permettevano di avere mura alle loro città; perché volevano che la virtù dell’uomo particolare, non altro difensivo, gli difendesse.”

## 89 Enemies of Rome (AG 2:78/304 (F.C.))

Machiavelli explains that the relative lack of named individuals fighting against Rome in the histories is not because there was a lack of individuals with virtù. Machiavelli first claims this “comes from the malignity of the writers, who persist with *fortuna*” in that they often honor only the victors (AG 2:78/304).<sup>628</sup> Thus, the writers of the histories honor the virtù of individual Romans and not the virtù of individuals Samnites, Gauls, Etruscans, and others because they were writing after the Romans had already won. “But that virtù which the writers do not celebrate in particular men, they celebrate generally in the peoples, where they infinitely exalt to the stars the obstinacy that was in those for defending their liberty” (AG 2:78/304).<sup>629</sup> This quote should be understood in the context of Machiavelli’s claims, in the *Discorsi*, that only a people with virtù as great as the Romans could have conquered Rome’s neighbors because these neighboring peoples defended their liberty with great ferocity and ostentatious displays of virtù.<sup>630</sup> The historians who “persist with *fortuna*” do so by praising individuals’ virtù from the side of the victors while ignoring it from the side of the vanquished.<sup>631</sup> However, these historians do praise the virtù of the vanquished peoples because this praise makes the greatness of the victor’s victory seem that much greater. What Machiavelli wants us to understand from this example

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<sup>628</sup> “...nasce dalla malignità degli scrittori, i quali seguitano la fortuna...”

<sup>629</sup> “Ma quella virtù che gli scrittori non celebrano negli uomini particolari, celebrano generalmente ne’ popoli, dove esaltano infino alle stelle l’ostinazione che era in quegli per difendere la libertà loro.”

<sup>630</sup> See *Discorsi* 2:2

<sup>631</sup> However, this is not always true and, indeed, sometimes the reverse is true. For examples, in the Second Punic War (sometimes called the Hannibalic War), as far as I can tell, it is the unanimous judgment of the ancient histories that the virtù of Hannibal and his army was great, and no mention is made praising the virtù of the Carthaginians as a people. Clearly, victory over Hannibal was a more glorious achievement than victory over Carthage.

is that, even if the histories do not often mention individual men of virtù from the vanquished, we should understand that they existed in lands which put up significant struggle before they finally succumbed to conquest. For Machiavelli, the obstinacy comes from a love of liberty, but the capability to resist comes from military virtù.

### **90 Samnites (D 1:15)**

Machiavelli's example of Samnite virtù comes in the context of his discussion of the role in which religion played in the civic life of the Romans and their contemporary Italians. The particular occurrence which Machiavelli describes (referencing events from Livy 10.31, 10.38-39) comes near the end of the Samnite Wars, when the tide had definitively turned to the Roman favor. The Samnites attempted to realign themselves with the favor of the gods and reinforce their own obstinacy through recourse to a religious ritual which included forcing each individual soldier to swear an oath not to retreat or disobey their commanders, and killed any who refused to take the oath (D 1:15). However, the Roman commander successfully impressed upon his own soldiers that such an oath would not save the Samnites from the, by this time, superior Roman military virtù.

And [when] they came to conflict, they outclassed the Samnites, because the Roman virtù, and the fear conceived for the past routes, overcame any obstinacy that could have been them by virtù of religion and by the giving of an oath. Nevertheless one sees how

they did not believe they could have another refuge for them, nor attempt another remedy from [which they] could take hope of recovering the lost virtù (D 1:15).<sup>632</sup>

Like so many last ditch efforts, this one too, failed. However, it is not clear that, by the time the Samnites took recourse to this extreme method, if there was anything they could have done which would have succeeded. The Romans had, by this time, beaten the Samnites consistently (over the course of several decades) and the Samnites' virtù had waned as a result of the piling on of losses. The Samnites hoped to recover their lost virtù by virtù of religion and the extreme modes of their oath. It is not that this last effort was likely to succeed, or even that the Samnites thought it likely to succeed, but that the Samnites, probably rightly, saw no other option available to them which might lead to victory.

### **91 Etruscans (D 2:5)**

Machiavelli uses the example of the Etruscans (whom he refers to as the Tuscans) to demonstrate the causes and extent to which even great civilizations can be erased from memory. "There was therefore...formerly [a] powerful Tuscany, full of religion and of virtù; that had its own customs and its own native language; which was totally extinguished by Roman power. Therefore, as was said, of it nothing remains

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<sup>632</sup> "E venuti al conflitto, furono superati i Sanniti, perché la virtù romana, e il timore concepito per le passate rotte, superò qualunque ostinazione ei potessero avere presa per virtù di religione e per il giuramento preso. Nondimeno si vede come a loro non parve potere avere altro rifugo, né tentare altro remedio a potere pigliare speranza di ricuperare la perduta virtù.

save the memory of the name” (D 2:5).<sup>633</sup> For Machiavelli, all that is accomplished, the work of so many men and with so much virtù, may be lost to history through flood or fire or war. But this impermanence of empire and the short memories of men are no more reason to despair of one’s political projects than are the examples of those people whose great virtù and accomplishments will forever dwarf your own. Indeed, one cannot despair that one’s actions will go unremembered and, for that reasons, not act without ensuring that to be true. Machiavelli is probably saddened that the memory of the virtù of the ancient Etruscans is almost totally lost, but that is because they accomplished something worthy of remembering. I think this is more than Machiavelli would say of his contemporary Italians in things of politics and warfare.

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<sup>633</sup>“Era dunque...già la Toscana potente, piena di religione e di virtù; aveva i suoi costumi e la sua lingua patria; il che tutto è stato spento dalla potenza romana. Talché, come si è, di lei ne rimane solo la memoria del nome.” Machiavelli here seems to share the sentiment (but does not!) of Percy Bysshe Shelley’s “Ozymandias”:

I met a traveller from an antique land  
 Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
 Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,  
 Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,  
 And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,  
 Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
 Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,  
 The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed:  
 And on the pedestal these words appear:  
 "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:  
 Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"  
 Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
 Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
 The lone and level sands stretch far away.

*Shelley’s Poetry and Prose* (1977) <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46565/ozymandias>.

**92 Gauls (D 3:36)**

Machiavelli's discussion of Gaulic virtù comes as part of his discussion of what sort of tactics and battle formations gives an army virtù and fury. For Machiavelli, the paradigm of such tactics and formation is the three line Maniple formation of the Roman legion, the benefit of these orders is that they give the army virtù and fury for a long duration (see example 87 and discussions in Chapters 2 and 3).

On the contrary it occurs in those armies where there is fury and not order, just as were the French; they however are lacking in combat, because, [when] they are not successful at winning with the first impetus and not being sustained by an ordered virtù that their fury in which it hoped, nor having outside of that thing in which it could have confidence, just as that was cooled was lacking (D 3:36).<sup>634</sup>

Rather, the entire Gaulic army attacked all at one and with an unordered fury. They did not have the orders to aid this sudden fury, and so if they failed to win the battle at its outset, they generally lost. This is because the fury of battle naturally cools, as all fury does naturally, unless it is sustained by an ordered virtù. Whatever virtù the Gaulic warriors had at the outset of the battle, came from their fury, rather than the fury coming from their virtù as is preferable. Thus, as the battle wears on, any whose army is ordered as the Gaulic armies will find their virtù and fury desert them, and they will easily be beaten by an army who is able to survive their first thrusts and still

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<sup>634</sup> “Al contrario interviene in quelli eserciti dove è furore e non ordine, come erano i Franciosi; i quali tuttavia nel combattere mancavano, perché, non riuscendo loro con il primo impeto a vincere e non essendo sostenuto da una virtù ordinata quello loro furore nel qual egli speravano, né avendo fuori di quello cosa in la quale confidassono, come quello era raffreddato mancavano.”

maintain virtù over time. This is why, with only a few exceptions, the Roman legions generally always beat the Gaulic armies when they met in battle.

**93 Carthaginians (AG 4:112\*/321 (F.C.), AG 4:115\*/322 (F.C.), AG 4:115\*/322 (F.C.)) and 94 Parthians (AG 3:96\*/312 (F.C.))**

According to Machiavelli's interpretation of the ancient histories, Roman expansion often came at the expense of peoples whose love of liberty caused them to obstinately fight Roman encroachment with ostentatious displays of their military virtù. Machiavelli's examples are drawn from two of Rome's most implacable foes: the Carthaginians, who were the last force for about a half a millennium who posed an existential threat to Rome, and the Parthians, at whose borders Rome's eastward expansion halted.

The Parthians and Carthaginians (in the first Punic War) focused on different tactical units than the Roman's, whose virtù was in their heavy infantry, which was also Machiavelli's preferred unit. Machiavelli claims that the Parthians's "virtù in major part consists in bows and arrows..." (AG 3:96\*/312)<sup>635</sup> used by their light cavalry, which was very effective in the flat open plains of Parthia, which is why the Parthians were often a match for Rome when the Romans invaded, but were rarely a

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<sup>635</sup> "...la virtù de' quail in maggior parte consisteva negli archi e nele saette..."

threat to Roman territory.<sup>636</sup> When the Romans invaded Africa in the First Punic War, the Carthaginians initially attempted to fight the Romans in the hills, but later were “victorious, by the counsel of Xanthiuppus the Lacedaemonian, who made them descend into the plain, where, by virtù of the cavalry and of the elephants, they were able to beat the Romans” (AG 4:112\*/321).<sup>637</sup> Both of these cases are examples of military virtù which is grounded in different modes and orders than those in which the military virtù of the Romans were grounded. But these cavalry tactics were designed for flat open terrain, while Rome’s heavy infantry centered three line maniple system was designed, first and foremost, for the hilly terrain of the Italian peninsula. Additionally, in the planes, the light cavalry tactics of the Parthians and Carthaginians initially proved a match for the Romans, the Romans were able to adapt their heavy infantry tactics to successfully combat both light infantry and neutralize war elephants.

The other example of the military virtù of Rome’s enemies Machiavelli deploys is Hannibal’s army (in its conflict with Scipio Africanus’s army). In both *il Principe* and the *Discorsi* Machiavelli uses Hannibal as a key exemplar of military and political virtù. And, indeed, Hannibal is clearly one of the (few) exceptions to the historians usual avoidance of praising the virtù of the vanquished; Hannibal’s virtù and military genius was too glorious to be ignored or glossed over. However, in this instance, Machiavelli discusses Hannibal and Scipio Africanus’s thinking behind their battle formations at the Battle of Zama. Machiavelli notes that Hannibal put his

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<sup>636</sup> There are, of course, political reasons for this involving the frequent dynastic struggles in Parthia.

<sup>637</sup> “...per il consiglio di Santippo lacedemonio, vittoriosi, il quale gli fece scendere nel piano, dove, per virtùde’ cavagli e degli liofanti, poterono superare i Romani.”

auxiliaries, which were his weakest and least reliable troops, in front of his more virtuoso veterans firstly so that the auxiliaries would not be able to run once the battle had begun and secondly so that they would tire out the Roman troops so that “with his people fresh and virtuosa he could easily beat the already tired Romans” (AG 4:115\*/322).<sup>638</sup> Machiavelli continues that Scipio, seeing that “Hannibal had posted all the virtù of his army in the second rank; whence that Scipio, to put forward to that similar virtù, united the principi and triarii together...” so that they would not be overwhelmed when Hannibal’s second rank charged (AG 4:115\*/322).<sup>639</sup> Here Machiavelli uses the concept of the virtù of an army to mean the soldiers in an army which were the strongest and most reliable due to their experience, good modes and orders, and numbers. Part of what makes Hannibal so successful an enemy of the Romans is that he was one of their few enemies with a heavy infantry with virtù almost equivalent to that of the Romans. Hannibal’s cavalry was vastly superior to that of the Romans for most of the duration of the war, but as we saw with the examples of the Parthians and the Carthaginians in the First Punic War above, the Romans were beating enemies with far superior cavalries.

These examples of virtù demonstrate that, while Machiavelli exhorts his audience to imitate the military virtù of the Romans, it is possible to order military virtù differently than the Romans did. Further, the Romans could be defeated by peoples with military virtù with different modes and orders than their own. However,

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<sup>638</sup> “...con la sua gente fresco e virtuosa facilmente i Romani già stracchi superare.”

<sup>639</sup> “...Annibale posta tutta la virtù del suo esercito nella second schiera; donde che Scipinone, per opporre, a quella, simile virtù, raccolzò i principi e i triarii insieme...”

these defeats were temporary and in terrain different from what the Romans were used to fighting on; in terrain more favorable to the Romans or given time to adjust their tactics, the legions proved the better army. It is also important to keep in mind that Machiavelli's audience was primarily his contemporary Italians, who lived in the same areas where the three line maniple legions were developed and on the terrain where they won the Romans unmatched supremacy.

### **95 Goths (P 13) and 96 Ostrogoths (IF 1:4)**

*In il Principe:*

The Romans lost their virtù to the Goths because the Romans stopped using their own soldiers and begin employing Gothic mercenaries (P 13). Machiavelli claims that this is the cause of the fall of the Roman Empire because “without having one's own arms, no principality is secure, in fact it is totally obliged to *fortuna*, not having virtù to defend it with faith in adversity” (P 13).<sup>640</sup> The similar lack of the virtù a people has from having its own troops why, for Machiavelli, foreign European powers were able to so easily invade Italy in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.

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<sup>640</sup> “sanza avere arme proprie, nessuno principato è sicuro; anzi è tutto obligato alla fortuna, non avendo virtù che nelle avversità con fede lo difenda.”

*In Istorie Fiorentine:*

Immediately following the fall of the Western Roman Empire, in which King Theodoric of the Ostrogoths, writes to Zeno Augustus, Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire based in Constantinople, to ask permission to invade Italy. According to Theodoric, “his Ostrogoths believed things unjust, being superior in virtù to all other peoples, they were inferior in empire...” (IF 1:4)<sup>641</sup> Here Theodoric’s basic claim was that expanse of empire was justly related to the amount of virtù of those who ruled that empire. While it is unclear if Zeno accepted that line of argumentation, the Emperor of the Romans did certainly give his permission for Theodoric and his Ostrogoths to invade Italy, depose Odoacer, and set up an Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy nominally loyal to Constantinople.

### **5.2.3 Florentines**

**97 Florentines (IF P, IF 2:5, IF 2:8, IF 2:10, IF 2:32, IF 3:1, IF 3:7, IF 3:29, IF 4:30, IF 5:8, IF 5:34, IF 6:28, CC 410/454, CC 418/459, D 2:12, D 2:24, D 2:24)**

(See also my Chapter 1)

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<sup>641</sup> “...[i] suoi Ostrogoti pareva cosa ingiusta, sendo superiori di virtù a tutti gli altri popoli, essere inferiori di imperio...”

In *i Discorsi*:

As an example of virtù, the Florentine's appear wholly as a negative example in the *Discorsi*; in both places the Florentines appears as an example, it is so that Machiavelli can criticize them for their mediocre virtù. Machiavelli speaks of Florence's use of fortresses in the same chapter that he speaks of Sparta's and Rome's aversion to them. The Florentines attempted to use fortresses to hold Pisa when it should have used "the Roman mode: either make it their associate or dismantle it. Because the virtù of these forts one saw in the arrival of King Charles [VIII of France in 1494], to whom they were given either for little faith in those who guarded them or for fear of the greater evil..." (D 2:24).<sup>642</sup> For Machiavelli, relying on fortresses can give a dangerous false confidence as was demonstrated in this case: the Florentines thought it could hold Pisa with forts, but it could not. The Florentine possession of those forts in Pisa did nothing additional to secure their hold on that city above the other things they had done. For Machiavelli, had the Florentines not fooled themselves with this false confidence, they could have taken the proper precautions to hold Pisa and would have been able to do so. This is also an example of Machiavelli returning to the theme of appearance versus reality, but rather than the political actors fooling others, they fool themselves.

The other place in which the Florentines appear as an example of virtù is where Machiavelli details the conditions under which a people are most advantaged or

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<sup>642</sup> "...il modo Romano: o farsela compagna o disfarla. Perché la virtù delle fortezze si vide nella venuta del re Carlo, al quale si dettono o per poca fede di chi le guardava o per timore di maggiore male..."

disadvantaged in fighting war at home or in a foreign country. Machiavelli relates that Florence was unable to respond to the aggression of Castruccio Castracani, who was lord of the neighboring, but smaller, Lucca. “But, Castruccio died, these same Florentines had the *animo* to assault the Duke of Milan at home, and to work to take away his kingdom; so much *virtù* they demonstrated in far away wars and so much cowardice [*viltà*] in nearby wars” (D 2:12).<sup>643</sup> This is because the Florentine people were kept unarmed, which meant that they could not defend their homes and lands when invaded. However, when invading, and especially when invading another country which kept its people unarmed like Milan, they were able to be very successful. (This may also have to do with their employment of mercenaries.) An armed people, such as the Romans, are formidable in far away wars, but are even more formidable in nearby wars, because they must win of necessity, and because there will necessarily be more of them, as when invading, some must be left behind. However, as we will see, Machiavelli’s ascription of *virtù* to the Florentine army’s performance abroad (though it is coupled with cowardice near home) is the highest praise he uses for Italian arms in the *Discorsi*.

In *La Vita di Castruccio Castracani da Lucca*:

The only instances when Machiavelli uses *virtù* to describe peoples in *La Vita* are when he is talking about soldiers. Here, Castruccio only uses the term three times. Two uses are to describe the lack of *virtù* in Florentine troops, while the other use is to

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<sup>643</sup> “Ma, morto Castruccio, quelli medesimi Fiorentini ebbono animo di assaltare il duca di Milano in case, e operare di togli il regno; tanta *virtù* mostrarono nelle guerre longinque e tanta *viltà* nelle propinque.”

describe the virtù of Castruccio's soldiers. Machiavelli describes two battles in which he relates the lack of virtù displayed by the Florentine soldiers. However, in each of these cases, it is not the fault of the soldiers themselves that they do not display virtù; rather, that occurred because Castruccio has outmaneuvered his Florentine foes. In the first battle, between most of the Guelfs and Ghibellines from all Tuscany, Castruccio arranged his troops to put his strongest soldiers forward and against the weaker soldiers on the Guelf flanks, not allowing his weak center to come to blows with the stronger Guelf center composed of the Florentines.<sup>644</sup> Thus, the Florentine center of the Guelf army, "without having been able to demonstrate any of their virtù, they fled" (CC 410/454).<sup>645</sup> In the second battle, in a pass near Serravalle, Castruccio lured the Florentines into a pass which was too narrow for them to properly deploy their forces, which favored Castruccio's smaller army. Castruccio's infantry hemmed in the Florentine cavalry, who "rather more from necessity than from virtù resisted",<sup>646</sup> because they did not have room to maneuver in the narrow pass, nor the ability to retreat, because they were pressed up against the Florentine infantry (CC 418/459). Thus, Castruccio was again able to arrange the battlefield such that it removed his enemy's ability to display its virtù at all. In this case, rather than through his own

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<sup>644</sup> Peter Constantine, *The Essential Writings of Machiavelli*. Trans. and Ed. Peter Constantine. New York: The Modern Library. 2007. (p.409, notes 10 and 11) notes that Machiavelli invents the fact that Castruccio was in command of the battle and replaces the actual battlefield tactics with Roman tactics. (Constantine claims these are the tactics which Livy reports Scipio using in his battle against Hannibal. However, these are not the tactics which Polybius – Livy's main source for the Hannibalic war – report Scipio using at Zama, the only confrontation between these two men. Rather, I believe it to be a tactic Scipio uses in Spain against the Carthaginians there.)

<sup>645</sup> "...sanza avere potuto mostrare alcuna loro virtù, si fuggirono."

<sup>646</sup> "...pure più per forza che per virtù resistevono..." Capata notes (p.495, n.49.) "*per forza*: per necessità."

tricky deployment, Castruccio accomplished this through tricking the Florentine's to make a poor maneuver and then ambushing them.

*In Istorie Fiorentine:*

The Florentine Republic is Machiavelli's central example in *Istorie Fiorentine*. Machiavelli's historical narrative of Florence really begins in what he takes to be the run-up (1215 A.D.) to the establishment of the Florentine republic (which he seems to date at the establishment of the original *Gonfaloni* in 1250 A.D.). Machiavelli praises the virtù of the Florentine Republic at its founding (IF 2:5), but his last word of praise for the Republic's virtù was in the conduct of its war against Pope Gregory XI which lasted from 1375-1378 (IF 3:7). So, underlying Machiavelli's narrative of the histories of Florence is a theme of the republic's loss of what virtù it possessed at its outset. And while many individual citizens of the Republic are described as having virtù up through the very end of the narrative — which runs to the death of Lorenzo de' Medici in 1492, whom Machiavelli describes as having virtù (IF 8:36) — it seems that the Florentines lost the ability to channel the virtù possessed by individuals into virtù possessed by the state.

### **Divisions**

For Machiavelli, this inability to cultivate a republic with virtù was largely due to the nature of the domestic conflict discussed in the last section. For Machiavelli, the

constant divisions in the city are its really defining feature (IF:P). Perhaps in a fit of patriotism, Machiavelli claims that Florence had divisions which would have destroyed even a greater city, but

...so much was the virtù of those citizens and the power of their intelligence and animo to make themselves and their fatherland great, that so many of them that remained free of so many evils were able to exalt it more with their virtù, that the malignity of those accidents that diminished it did not have the ability to crush it. And without doubt, if Florence had so much happiness that, after it had freed itself from the [Holy Roman] Empire, [if] it had a form of government that had maintained it united, I do not know of any republic, either ancient or modern, that would have been superior: it would have been full of so much virtù of arms and of industry (IF: P).<sup>647</sup>

That is, the virtù of individual citizens was so great as to be able to maintain the city and even bring praise and glory to it. But the divisions made it impossible for the republic to reach its full potential as a great world-historical republic. For Florence to have reached its potential, it would have needed to find a way to combine the great virtù of its citizens into a republican virtù that could have channeled all of that private ingeniousness and *animo* into the service of the public. However, the manner in which the Florentines engaged in domestic conflict, made it impossible for them to accomplish this. Rather than a permanent civil peace, the end of each conflict merely signaled a temporary truce while each side readied its forces for another conflict or, in

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<sup>647</sup> “...tanta era la virtù di quelli cittadini e la potenza dello ingeno e animo loro a fare sé e la loro patria grande, che quelli tanti che rimanevano liberi da tanti mali potevano più con la virtù loro esaltarla, che non aveva potuto la malignità di quei accidenti che gli avieno diminuiti opprimerla. E senza dubbio, se Firenze avesse avuto tanta felicità che, poi che la si liberò dallo Imperio, ella avesse preso forma di governo che l’avesse mantenuta unita, io non so quale republica, o moderna o antica, le fusse stata superior: di tanta virtù d’arme e di industria sarebbe stata ripiena.”

the case where one party was decisively defeated, it signaled a pause before the victorious party turned on itself and divided into factions.

### **Florentine Governments Machiavelli Praises**

Despite the divisions in the city, Florence was able to sustain some virtù for a time; however, the lack of unity made this virtù short lived. Machiavelli's first such example is the foundation of the Florentine Republic. In 1250, where the Ghibellines were persuaded to readmit the Guelfs into the city "and being united, it seemed to them time in which they were able to take a form of a free way of life and an order which would enable them to defend themselves..."(IF 2:4).<sup>648</sup> They set up an elected government, an independent judiciary,<sup>649</sup> and a militia raised from the original 46 *gonfaloni*. Of this militia Machiavelli writes, "there was so much virtù in these men at that time, and they governed themselves with so much generosity of *animo* that where today to assault the enemy suddenly is reputed as a generous act and prudent, at the time they reputed it vituperative and false" (IF 2:5).<sup>650</sup> This first militia under the new Florentine Republic had so much virtù and was so noble that they did not need to resort to deception or trickery to beat an enemy, because they could simply overpower

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<sup>648</sup> "...ed essendo uniti, parve loro tempo da potere pigliare forma di vivere libero e ordine da potere difendersi..." Here "*vivere libero*" means both a republican form of government and independence from outside powers.

<sup>649</sup> Independent because the two judges were foreigners who, theoretically, would have no partisan interest or personal grudges influence their rulings.

<sup>650</sup> "...tanta virtù era allora in quegli uomini, e con tanta generosità di animo si governavano che dove oggi lo assaltare il nimico improvviso si reputa generoso atto e prudente, allora vituperoso e fallace si reputava."

them or be overpowered while trying. However, this first form of republican government only lasted ten years before it was overcome by factional squabbles (IF 2:6).

The only other two governments of Florence that Machiavelli praises exist in the context of active factional conflict. The first is a Guelf government set up after the Ghibellines were expelled from the state and is a strange formulation.<sup>651</sup> “Maintaining therefore the Florentines, by virtù of this new government, inside with laws and outside with arms, their reputation...” (IF 2:10).<sup>652</sup> As I noted on the uses of examples of virtù in *dell’Arte della Guerra*, this formulation of virtù — “by virtù of” [*per virtù di*] — becomes more common in Machiavelli’s writing as he ages, and he seems to use virtù in a different manner than he does when describing a quality of a person or group of persons, but more like an object such as the musical instruments from *dell’Arte della Guerra* or treaties elsewhere in *Istorie Fiorentine*. Perhaps it is worth noting that this formulation never appears, in a negative context. It is always the case that the direct object either does or is expected to do a positive.<sup>653</sup> But, it does not seem like Machiavelli is using the word “virtù” in the same sense in the phrase “*per virtù di*” as in the phrase “*con la virtù militare*”, for example. In the former phrase, “*per virtù di*” could probably be translated as “*by the nature of*” or “*by the strength of*” without losing any meaning.

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<sup>651</sup> This seems to be sometime around 1270.

<sup>652</sup> “Mantenendo adunque i Fiorentini, per virtù di questo nuovo governo, dentro con le leggi e fuora con le armi, la reputazione loro...”

<sup>653</sup> E.g. Venice expects to receive aid by virtù of its treaty with Florence or men’s *animo* are heightened by virtù of the trumpet fanfare and never the city was taken by virtù of its walls.

However, in this instance, the formulation is being used to ascribe an attribute to a government, which is, at base, a group of people. Perhaps a less literal translation of “with the virtù of” might be more accurate to Machiavelli’s meaning, and certainly makes this sense of virtù very similar to the senses we are used to Machiavelli using. So, perhaps we can paraphrase Machiavelli as saying ‘The Florentines maintained their reputation through the virtù of their new government, internally through laws and externally through arms.’ Now we can notice that the content of the passage is of interest. The government’s virtù maintains the Florentines’ reputation in two ways: internally with laws and externally with arms. If what I have suggested above is correct, this means that they are fighting their fellow citizens with laws, like men, and foreigners with arms, like animals. That is, for this brief time, the Florentines are behaving towards each other in such a way that they might actually be able to develop the unity towards which republican virtù can be directed. However, this government falls to internal squabbles before too long.

Machiavelli’s final use of virtù to describe a Florentine government positively is in his description of the Eight of War during Florence’s war with Pope Gregory XI (1375-1378). According to Machiavelli,

The war lasted three years, not ending before the death of the Pontifex; and it was universally administered with so much virtù and so much satisfaction, that the Eight were propagated in the magistracy every year; and were called Saints, even though they little esteemed excommunication; and the churches they stripped of goods, and forced the clerics to celebrate the offices: so much did

those citizens then esteem their fatherland more than their souls  
[*anima*] (IF 3:7).<sup>654</sup>

That the Eight administrated the war with so much *virtù* is all of the detail that Machiavelli gives us. But, as we will see below, that is enough to set them significantly above most of the remainder of what Machiavelli has to say about Florentine military *virtù*. Additionally, they demonstrated the commitment to their fatherland over all other things, which is at the foundation of republican *virtù*. However, this republican *virtù* in the Eight was not universally possessed by all Florentines. For even though the Eight's handling of the war was exactly what was called for, they were brought down by infighting within the Guelf party (IF 3:8). After this event, Machiavelli never again praises a government of Florence as governing with *virtù*. The pattern of Florence displaying a flash of republican *virtù* followed by it being snuffed out through domestic strife is at an end, but not because the domestic conflict is over. Rather, it is because the city more or less stops being described as having an unblemished *virtù* when considered as a whole. Many Florentine individuals will be described as having *virtù*, but when Machiavelli uses the quality when talking about the city itself, we will notice that it is mostly to point out just how flawed Florence's *virtù* is.

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<sup>654</sup> “Durò la guerra tre anni, né prima ebbe che con la morte del Pontefice termine; e fu con tanta *virtù* e tanta sodisfazione dello universale amministrata, che agli Otto fu ogni anno prorogato il magistrato; ed erano chiamati Santi, ancora che eglino avessero stimate poco le censure, e le chiese de' beni loro spogliate, e sforzato il clero a celebrare gli uffizi: tanto quelli cittadini stimavano allora più la patria che l'anima.”

## The Guelfs

Machiavelli twice describes specifically the Guelf party of Florence as having virtù. However, we must be sure to note that the virtù of the Guelf faction cannot be mistake for the virtù of the republic and is more often used to divide rather than unite the republic. As such, the virtù of a faction can serve to weaken the republic rather than strengthen it if no modes or orders exist to direct that virtù toward the interest of the republic.

The first instance occurred while the Guelfs in exile were forced to flee to Bologna.<sup>655</sup> “From there they were called by the Guelfs of Parma against the Ghibellines; where, by their virtù they overcame their adversaries, [and] were given all their [adversaries’] possessions...” (IF 2:8).<sup>656</sup> This victory, about which Machiavelli gives us no further detail, paved the way for the Florentine Guelfs to return to Florence. For our purposes, it demonstrates that the Guelfs had (at least military) virtù at this early period in the republic.

However, over a century later, the Guelf leader Rinaldo degli Albizzi, who was eventually exiled by Cosimo de’ Medici when Cosimo came to power, was worried that the Guelfs had come to lack the characteristics which had allowed them to rule while their enemies were gaining power. Their enemies (the party of the

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<sup>655</sup> This occurred between the examples of the founding of the republic and original *Gonfaloni* (2:5.1) and the Guelf led Florentine government (2:10.1) above.

<sup>656</sup> “Di quivi furono dai Guelfi di Parma chiamati contro ai Ghibellini; dove, per la loro virtù superati gli avversarii, furono loro date tutte le loro possession...”

Medici), had allied themselves with the populace, and so Rinaldo advocated allying the Guelfs with the nobility.

And just like, for this, their party would become more vigorous, as much in that they would gain more life, more virtù, more animo and more esteem; asserting that, if this ultimate and correct remedy was not taken by them, [he] did not see with what other mode it was possible to conserve a state among so many enemies... (IF 4:30).<sup>657</sup>

Machiavelli suggests that Rinaldo has seen the problem that Machiavelli himself had identified: with the defeat of the Florentine nobles, their many good qualities disappeared (IF 3:1). However, rather than attempting to incorporate the nobles back into the republic for the common good, Rinaldo wanted to incorporate them into the Guelfs for the good of the faction. This lack of unity and public spiritedness basically made republican government impossible. Frankly, it is a wonder that the Florentine Republic lasted as long as it did.

### **Mediocrities**

The remaining references to Florence as having virtù are all in the form of back-handed complements, indications that Florence is somehow less than it could be, or that it only has the virtù to defeat even more pathetic enemies. Machiavelli's contempt and disgust for his contemporaries' cowardice (*viltà*) and laziness (*ozio*) appears in all of his major works, but nowhere is his disappointment more cutting than

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<sup>657</sup> E come, per questo, la parte loro sarebbe più gagliarda, quanto in quella sarebbe più vita, più virtù, più animo, e più credito; affermando che, se questo ultimo e vero rimedio non si pigliava, non edeva con quale altro modo si potesse conservaree uno stato infra tanti nimici..."

in his description of his fatherland. After the administration of the Saints, all of Machiavelli's references to Florentine virtù<sup>658</sup> are to military virtù, and Florentine military virtù is generally not all that powerful.

The first, and perhaps most eloquent, statement of Machiavelli's sentiment is his pronouncement on the fortuitous deaths of Duke Visconti of Milan and King Ladislas of Naples, both of whom were enemies of Florence. "And thus death was always more a friend to the Florentines than any other friend, and more able to save them than their virtù" (IF 3:29).<sup>659</sup> Or, again, when Machiavelli speaks of the Florentine mercenaries who won the battle of Anghiari against the mercenaries fighting for Milan, but who before, during, and after the battle displayed a total lack of discipline. "All things to marvel at[:] how in an army so made was so much virtù that would know how to win, and how in the enemy there was so much cowardice that so disorderly [a] people were able to defeat [them]" (IF 5:34).<sup>660</sup>

Or, finally, when Rinaldo degli Albizzi, now exiled from Florence by Cosimo de' Medici, in attempting to persuade the Duke of Milan to make war on his fatherland, which he hoped would help him regain power in Florence, claimed that the Duke should not worry about how poorly his last war against Florence went because

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<sup>658</sup> The one exception to this is Rinaldo degli Albizzi's desire to accrue more virtù to the Guelfs through reintegrating the nobility (4:30). However, this is both hypothetical virtù and for the Guelfs rather than for the republic.

<sup>659</sup> "E così la morte fu sempre più amica a' Fiorentini che niuno altro amico, e più potente a salvargli che alcuna loro virtù."

<sup>660</sup> "Cose tutte da maravigliarsi come in uno esercito così fatto fusse tanta virtù che sapesse vincere, e come nello inimico fusse tanta viltà che da sì disordinate genti potesse essere vinto."

Florence was not “of that same virtù as then” (IF 5:8).<sup>661</sup> Really, this statement could be generalized to express Machiavelli’s feeling about Florence after the government of the Saints: Florence never regained the virtù that it had possessed intermittently from the founding of the republic to the end of the government of the Saints. Perhaps even more so, one could expand this to Machiavelli’s general beliefs about Italy and all of Western Europe after the Romans: they did not now have the same virtù as then.

Specifically, Florentine military virtù, and Italian military virtù more generally, are unimpressive in the wars of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Machiavelli, in transitioning from describing a war in Lombardy to one in Tuscany at the same time, says “While the war in Lombardi was suffering on therefore with various weak accidents and little worthy of memory, in Tuscany was similarly born the war of King Alfonso and of the Florentines, which was not managed with more virtù or with more danger than that which was managed in Lombardy” (IF 6:28).<sup>662</sup> Here are more of these mediocre wars which Machiavelli sees as endemic to Italian history and which accomplish nothing, gain no one glory, and are not dangerous enough to provoke praise of virtù, but weaken all participants.

It was during this war that, potentially, the last flash of Florentine virtù came when the town of Foiano in Val di Chiana, which Machiavelli notes had substandard fortifications, was defended by only a 200 man Florentine garrison against Prince

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<sup>661</sup> “...di quella medesima virtù che allora...”

<sup>662</sup> “Travagliandosi per tanto la guerra di Lombardia con varii ma deboli accidenti e poco degni di memoria, in Toscana nacque medesimamente la guerra del re Alfonso e de’ Fiorentini, la quale non si maneggiò con maggiore virtù né con maggiore pericolo che si maneggiasse quella di Lombardia.”

Ferdinand of Naples's twelve thousand troops "and so much was, either that the virtù of those inside was great or his was so little, that not before after thirty-six days was he master of it" (IF 6:28).<sup>663</sup> But, even if this was the last flash of Florentine virtù, it is notable that it was in an ultimately losing minor battle that served as a delaying action. However, I tend to think that Machiavelli means this example to point more to the incompetence and laziness of Ferdinand than to the heroic strength and virtù of the two hundred Florentines. In general, Machiavelli's discussion of the wars in Italy in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century does little to hide his disgust at the weak, lazy, undisciplined armies who, because they are mostly all mercenaries, can hardly even be bothered to kill any number of the enemy's mercenaries during battle.<sup>664</sup>

## 5.2.4 Non-Florentine Italians

**98 Italians (P 26, AG 2:80/305 (F.C.), AG 7:209\*/365 (F.C.), IF 1:34, IF 5:1, IF 5:1; D 3: 36)**

The Italian state system was much closer to that of Germany than to Spain or France, in that it was composed of several independent states rather than being —

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<sup>663</sup> "...e fu tanta, o la gran virtù di quelli di dentro o la poca sua, che non prima che dopo trentasei giorni se ne insignorì."

<sup>664</sup> See Machiavelli's description and commentary on the Battle of Anghiari (5:33). According to Machiavelli, only one person died in the battle of several thousand soldiers. Banfield and Mansfield (Note 3 in that chapter) claim that Machiavelli's source for this, Biondo, claims there were at least 70 casualties in the battle; this is still a very light casualty count for pitched battle between two armies each numbering in the thousands.

more or less — one large state.<sup>665</sup> Therefore, Machiavelli's rule that one finds more virtù where one finds more states would have us expect that the Italians had more military virtù than the Spanish or the French when the opposite was the case. While one potential reason for this was that both the Spanish and French were frequently involved in wars and, thus, still valued virtù, this does not really explain the difference, because the Italians were also frequently involved in warfare.

Rather, Machiavelli lays the blame for Italy's lack of military virtù squarely on the shoulders of its princes.<sup>666</sup> Machiavelli claims that the weakness of Italian arms has made Italy the laughingstock of the world. "But," he continues, "the people have no blame for this, but truly their princes do; and of their ignorance they have earned just pains by ignominiously losing their state, and without any virtuoso example, for this they have been castigated" (AG 7:209\*/365).<sup>667</sup> It is not just that the Italian princes lost their states to the more powerful ultramontanes, but that these princes were not even able to attempt to defend their states with virtù which makes them contemptible. For Machiavelli, it was the princes' ignorance of good military modes and orders which caused them to lose their states so easily, which is why none of them provide an example worth imitating, and Machiavelli has to look outside Italy for a people with military virtù to imitate.

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<sup>665</sup> Although, I hasten to add that Spain had been recently formed by the marriage of Catherine of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon and that France had just finished a civil war, and both had powerful barons. But, compared to the inchoate Germans, they were unified and centralized.

<sup>666</sup> We should understand that, when Machiavelli is speaking in general terms, "prince" can mean the leader of a republic in addition to the leader of a principality.

<sup>667</sup> "Ma i popoli non ne hanno colpa, ma sì bene i principi loro; i quali ne sono stati gastigati, e della ignoranza loro ne hanno portate giuste pene perdendo ignominiosamente lo stato, e senza alcuno esemplo virtuoso."

As stated above, Machiavelli seems worried that people will mistake these losses as due to malignant *fortuna*. But, in a way, he says that they are correct in so assessing the cause: it seems as though the Italian princes have lost their states “...because they wanted to remain without any inconvenience with *fortuna* and not with their virtù, because the results are that, for those with little virtù, *fortuna* governs everything...” (AG 2:80/305).<sup>668</sup> Those Italian princes who lost their states did actually lose them because of the capricious nature of *fortuna*, Machiavelli tells us, but *fortuna* only had so much reign over their lives, because they had so little virtù. Here we should be reminded of nothing so much as of Machiavelli’s famous claim that *fortuna* is a river, prone to flooding that can be prepared against.<sup>669</sup> Just as in that passage, where Machiavelli points out that the other countries of Europe had made preparations against the metaphorical flood and Italy had not, he proceeds here to praise German virtù as what kept them free.

The fairly obvious conclusion is that Machiavelli’s contemporary Italians should imitate the modes of the Germans rather than imitate their past performance. Indeed, the two ‘examples of virtù’ that I have used for Italy were actually Machiavelli saying that Italian rulers had so little virtù and that *fortuna* so completely governed their lives that they could not even put up a fight for their states. In stark contrast to the example of those like Caesar and Alexander the Great, none of the Italian princes who lost their states died in battle defending them. They lacked the virtù to defend

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<sup>668</sup> “...perché vorgliono senza alcuno disagio stare con la fortuna e no con la virtù loro, perchy veggono che, per esserci poca virtù, la fortuna governa ogni cosa...”

<sup>669</sup> *il Principe* Chapter 25.

their states in battle. But Machiavelli has a plan to change that, which, he tells us, is why he wrote and published *dell'Arte della Guerra*. This plan will take an exemplar of a totally different kind than we have discussed so far and is, as far as I know, unique in Machiavelli's writings: an exemplar produced in a thought experiment by the participants in the dialogue, who found an Army of Words.

There are really only two places in *Istorie Fiorentine* in which Machiavelli speaks of the virtù of a group of Italians (who are not Florentines) for something other than to criticize them. The first was strictly political:

a memorable thing in Rome, when one Niccolò di Lorenzo [Cola di Rienzo], Chancellor in the Capital, expelled the senators of Rome, and made himself, under the title of tribune, head of the Roman Republic; and reduced it to its ancient form, with so much reputation of justice and of virtù, that not only the proximate territories, but all Italy sent ambassadors... (IF 1:31).<sup>670</sup>

However, this rebirth of a Roman Republic with virtù was short lived, as Cola shortly panicked and fled the city, and the old order, which lacked both virtù and justice, was restored. But, I take Machiavelli's point here to be, first, that, though Italy had governed itself without virtù for some time, the states of Italy were ready to serve one among them which was governed by virtù, if only out of fear. Second, that the memory of the Roman Republic carried with it such a reputation for virtù, that the

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<sup>670</sup> "...a Roma una cosa memorabile, che uno Niccolò di Lorenzo [Cola di Rienzo], cancelliere in Campidoglio, cacciò i senatori di Roma, e si fece, sotto titolo di tribuno, capo della republica romana; e quella nella antica forma ridusse, con tanta reputazione di iustizia e di virtù, che non solamente le terre provincie, vedendo come Roma era rinata, sollevarono il capo, e alcune mosse da la paura, alcune dalla speranza, l'onoravano."

states of Italy were ready to serve a resurgent Rome without very much proof that its power was real or enduring.

The second example was military in nature. For a long time, the Italian states had been hiring foreign mercenaries to fight their wars against each other,

...until there emerged Lodovico da Conio from the Romagna, who created a company of Italian soldiers, dedicated to Saint George; the virtù and the discipline of which in little time removed the reputation of foreign arms, and reduced it to Italians, after which the princes of Italy, made use of, in the wars that they made together (IF 1:34).<sup>671</sup>

Machiavelli sees this development as having both positive and negative aspects. As for the positive aspect, an Italian company of such virtù was to be celebrated in circumstances where all of the virtù being displayed otherwise was ultramontane. But, all this development meant was that the Italian states employed Italian mercenaries in their nonstop fruitless and halfhearted war on each other. In a sense, the Italians had the same problem with unity that the Florentines had, but on a bigger scale. This problem was made worse by their incessant halfhearted warfare against each other, because this half measure avoided both the benefits of peace and of real warfare. The benefits of peace would be the increased economic activity (not that Machiavelli really cares about this) and the increased sense of Italian unity which would develop when the various states were not constantly at each others' throats. The benefits of real war would be the increased virtù, as men of virtù became more valuable in their

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<sup>671</sup> "...infino che surse Lodovico da Conio romagnolo, il quale fece una comagnia di soldati italiani, intitolata in San Giorgio; la virtù e la disciplina del quale in poco tempo tolse la reputazione alle armi forestiere, e ridusela negli Italiani, de' quali poi i principi di italia, nelle guerre che facevano insieme, si valevano."

fatherlands, and the possibility for consolidation of some of the many Italian states through force of arms.

Much has been made of Machiavelli's admiration of Cesare Borgia expressed in *il Principe* 7, and much speculation had been proffered for the cause of this admiration. However, I think the root of this admiration is simply that when Machiavelli looked at his contemporary Italians and those who had preceded him for the past few hundred years, Cesare Borgia was one of the few who stood out as displaying military virtù and prudence combined with ambition. Borgia was one of the few beacons of Italian competence, virtù, and glory in a sea of mediocre and petty leaders. Borgia's (at least suspected) ambition to unite Italy was also in tune with Machiavelli's hopes that a united Italy would be able to expel the ultramontanes and, perhaps, recapture some of the Roman glory it had lost.

### **99 Venetians (D 3:31)**

The Venetians loss of virtù is attributed to the same cause as that of the Romans: using mercenary troops instead of their own. Both of Machiavelli's uses of virtù to describe the Venetians are in reference to their practice of fighting with troops consisting of both the Venetian nobility and populace. Machiavelli maintains that when the Venetians followed this practice (which was before they attempted to expand

their territory on the Italian mainland), their forces “operated virtuosissimamente” (P 12).<sup>672</sup> “[B]ut, when they began to fight on the mainland they abandoned this virtù,<sup>673</sup> and began to copy other Italian states” in their use of mercenaries rather than their own soldiers (P 12). And, just as with the Romans, the Venetians found that their use of mercenaries weakened their virtù. They gained territory slowly and lost it easily (P 12) and after their reputation for virtù waned, they had to fear the virtuosissimo mercenary generals they had hired (P 12).

However, there is a sense in which Machiavelli does say that the Italians have virtù. When Machiavelli takes Italians as individuals, it appears that Italians have not lost military virtù (P 26). According to Machiavelli, individual Italian soldiers, when facing soldiers of other nations one-on-one, have such great virtù that “the Italians prove themselves to be stronger, quicker, cleverer” (P 26). The problem is not individual Italian soldiers but the way in which the Italians are organized militarily: Italian leaders use mercenaries instead of their own troops and do not lead their armies themselves (P 26). Machiavelli claims that if an Italian leader were to acquire and train his own troops and lead them himself, it would be possible for him “to be able to defend Italy from the foreigners with Italian virtù” (P 26).<sup>674</sup> Machiavelli is here urging the Italians, and more specifically the Medici family, to learn as he has from the success of past polities in using virtù to resist *fortuna* and their enemies.

Machiavelli is urging them to virtù just as the Romans, Goths, Germans, Spanish,

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<sup>672</sup> Wootton gives this as “they had a magnificent fighting force [*operorono virtuosissimamente*]...”

<sup>673</sup> Wootton translates *questa virtù* as “this sound policy [*questa virtù*]...”

<sup>674</sup> Wootton translated “Italian virtù” as “Italian strength and skill [*con la virtù italica*].”

French, and, until recently, the Venetians have maintained it, in using their own troops to wage war, to train them well, and to have them led by their ruler. Machiavelli urges rulers to imitate past rulers who follow this practice, in addition to some others.

Machiavelli's use of Venetians, and Italians more generally, as examples of *virtù* come totally as negative examples in which he claims that they have no *virtù*. Machiavelli's uses Italian arms generally as an example of the type of army in which there is "neither natural fury nor accidental *ordine*... And without putting forward other examples, one sees every day how they make proofs of not having any *virtù*" (D 3:36).<sup>675</sup> Machiavelli claimed (in D 3:36) that there were three types of armies: The first type had *ordine*, from which came fury and *virtù*. As shown above, Machiavelli's example of this type was Rome (example 87). The second type did not have order, but had a natural fury which did not need to be generated from order but is inferior to the fury generated from order. Machiavelli's example of this is the French. The Italians are Machiavelli's example of the third type, without the *virtù* and fury which come from order and without a natural fury. This third sort of army is totally contemptible and is easily beaten by either the first or second type.

Machiavelli's example of the Venetians' lack of *virtù* is contrasted with Rome in his discussion of how "Strong republics and excellent men retain in every *fortuna* the same *animo* and their same dignity" (3:31).<sup>676</sup> Machiavelli speaks of Rome's

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<sup>675</sup> "...non è furore naturale né ordine accidentale... E senza addurre altri esempi, si vede ciascuno di come ei fanno pruove di non avere alcuna *virtù*."

<sup>676</sup> "Le repubbliche forti e gli uomini eccellenti ritengono in ogni fortuna il medesimo animo e la loro medesima dignità."

constancy of *animo* in victory and defeat, specifically how in defeating Antiochus they were not arrogant nor were they abject in the aftermath of the battle of Cannae. “On the exact contrary of this one saw done by the Venetians, who in good *fortuna*, believing they have that which they won from that virtù, that they do not have, they arrived at so much insolence ...”<sup>677</sup> that they belittled the other powers and thought to make themselves masters of Italy (3:31). However, *fortuna* turned against them and when they lost the battle of Vailà to the French, they abjectly surrendered much of the *terrafirma* to their enemies, though the defeat was far from decisive. “So that if in Venice and in their orders there was any quality of virtù they could easily remake themselves and re-demonstrate their face to *fortuna* anew, and be in time either to win or to lose more gloriously or to have a more honorable accord” (D 3:31).<sup>678</sup> That is, the Venetians lacked virtù. Therefore, unlike the Romans who were magnanimous in victory and persevered in defeat, the Venetians were arrogant in victory and abjectly capitulated in the face of minor setbacks. Had the Venetians virtù, in the aftermath of their defeat at Vailà, they would have regrouped and taken the field again. And even if they had not won, they would have lost gloriously or made peace honorably. But, lacking virtù, glory and honor were unavailable to them. And thus it was with all Italian arms according to Machiavelli; they lacked virtù, and deservedly lacked glory and honor.

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<sup>677</sup> “Al contrario appunto di questo si è veduto fare ai Viniziani, i quali neela buona fortuna, parendo loro aversela guadagnata con quella virtù he non avevano, erano venuti a tanta insolenza...”

<sup>678</sup> “Talmenteché se a Vinegia e negli ordini loro fosse stata alcuna qualità di virtù facilmente si potevano rifare e rimostrare di nuovo il viso alla fortuna, ed essere a tempo o a vincere o a perdere più gloriosamente o ad avere accordo più onorevole.”

### 100 Lucchese (CC 417/458)

Machiavelli explains that Castruccio chose to ambush the Florentine army in the pass because it was twice the size of his army. “And although he had confidence in his industry and in their [his soldiers’] virtù, he also doubted, adhering to the high ground, so as not to be encircled by the multitude of enemies” (CC 417/458).<sup>679</sup> That is, though Castruccio’s soldiers had virtù, and he, as a captain, had great industry (as he demonstrated with his excellent maneuvers and by maintaining an army with virtù), he was not insensitive to the disadvantage of being outnumbered two to one. Additionally, it was not as though his enemies were untrained rabble. Though the Florentine troops lacked the virtù of Castruccio’s soldiers, they still composed a trained army, and a sizable one. This is why it was necessary for Castruccio to prevent the Florentines from deploying their full strength against him in the battle, which he accomplished through sticking to the high ground.

## 5.2.5 Non-Italian Moderns

### 101 Turks (D 2:17)

Machiavelli’s discussion of the example of the Turks appears in his discussion of the merits of artillery. Concluding his discussion of why artillery does not make

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<sup>679</sup> “E beneché si confidassi nella industria sua e virtù loro, pure dubitava, appiccandosi nel luogo largo, di non essere circondato dalla moltitudine de’ nimici.”

ancient virtù superfluous, Machiavelli says that “And if the Turk by means of artillery had victory against the Sophy [of Persia] and the Sultan [of Egypt], it was born from no other virtù that [*per altra virtù di*] which by the fear that unusual noise put into their cavalry” (AG 2:17.5/339).<sup>680</sup> Again, Machiavelli is using a permutation of the ‘*per virtù di*’ formulation which we see appearing more frequently with his later works and which ascribes virtù to objects in a way which seems distinct from his other uses of virtù. In this case, the virtù of the Turkish artillery is in its noise.

### **102 Swiss (D 2:18, D 2:22) and 103 French (IF 6: 38, D 2:22)**

Just as Machiavelli used Italian examples of virtù mostly to condemn them for not actually having virtù, Machiavelli’s examples of contemporary non-Italians with virtù actually have virtù. This pattern is not uncommon in Machiavelli because he believed that nearly everything worth imitating in his times came from outside of Italy. Machiavelli uses the example of the virtù of the Swiss forces at the battles of Novara (1513) and Marignano (1515) as one of the key examples in his argument for why the infantry is superior to the cavalry in the *Discorsi*.<sup>681</sup> The Swiss won the battle of Novara convincingly, and though they lost the battle of Marignano, “they fought virtuosamente for two days and after, broken as they were, half of them saved

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<sup>680</sup> “E se il Turco mediante l’artiglieria contro al Sofi e il soldano ha avuto vittoria, è nat non per altra virtù di quella che per lo spavento che lo inusitato romore messe nella cavalleria loro.”

<sup>681</sup> This is an argument that Machiavelli makes consistently and repeatedly throughout his major works.

themselves” (D 2:18).<sup>682</sup> Machiavelli writes that Pope Leo X conditioned his foreign policy on both the French and the Swiss being considerably weakened by this battle because, “Which reasonably, being the one and the other virtuoso army, it should be bloody for both parties...” (D 2:22).<sup>683</sup> The expectation (and reality) that this battle between two armies with virtù stands in stark contrast to Machiavelli’s description of the battle of Anghiari where, in a comparably sized battle between two armies of Italian mercenaries, Machiavelli claims that there was only one casualty (IF 5:35).

The second example comes from the attempt by Jean of Anjou, son of King René of France, to conquer the Kingdom of Naples. Jean was eventually repelled, but Machiavelli notes that, “The war lasted four years and he lost, by his negligence, that, by virtù of his soldiers had many times been won” (IF 6:38).<sup>684</sup> Laying aside the discussion about how strange the “*per virtù di*” formulation is (because I discussed it above), we can see that this is an example of the soldiers having more virtù than their captain. However, unlike the examples of this which Machiavelli gives in the *Discorsi*, the virtù of the soldiers without that of their captain is not enough for Jean to win the war. It is possible that this is because this war was substantially different than those wars which Machiavelli uses as examples in the *Discorsi*, that Jean’s soldiers had virtù but enough less than the Roman legions to yield a different result, or that the Roman captains, though their virtù had no role in winning the war, had the prudence which

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<sup>682</sup> “...ei la combatterono dua giorni virtuosamente e dipoi, rotti ch’ei furono, la metà di loro si salvarono.”

<sup>683</sup> “La quale ragionevolmente, sendo l’uno e l’altro esercito virtuoso, doverrebbe essere sanguinosa per tutte a due le parti...”

<sup>684</sup> “Durò questa Guerra Quattro anni e la perdé colui, per sua negligenzai, il quale, per virtù de’ suoi soldati l’ebbe più volte vinta.”

Jean lacked not to restart the war after they had just won it; perhaps it is a combination of all three. This example reminds us that virtù, if imprudently led or used can be squandered.

#### **104 Germans (AG 2:47\*/288 (F.C.), AG 2:81/305 (F.C.))**

Machiavelli's main contemporary example of a people with military virtù was the Germans<sup>685</sup> whose virtù derived from their arms and orders as well as from necessity. "And the Germans have so much audacity by virtù of these arms and these orders, that fifteen or twenty thousand of them would assault any great number of cavalry; and there are many experiences of this from the most recent twenty-five years" (AG 2:47\*/288).<sup>686</sup> Against medieval belief that cavalry was a superior tactical unit to infantry, the Germans were supremely confident in their infantry's powers as a fighting force. Much of this medieval prejudice for cavalry came from the fact that the cavalry were made up of the enthusiastically bellicose aristocratic class who were heavily armored and thoroughly trained in the skills of warfare, while the medieval infantry was often composed of poorly equipped conscripted peasants with little training or enthusiasm for fighting. It was generally held as common knowledge that a

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<sup>685</sup> Which was a general category, in which, I believe, he at least sometimes thought of as including the Swiss.

<sup>686</sup> "E hanno per virtù di queste armi e di questi ordini presa i Tedeschi tanta audacia, che quindivi o ventimila di loro assalterebbero ogni gran numero di cavagli; e di questo da venticinque anni in qua se ne sono vedute esperienze assai."

band of infantry could be broken up and put to flight by a cavalry charge from a much smaller troop of knights.

However, as the Germans and Machiavelli believed, a well disciplined pike square was virtually immune from a cavalry charge because, as Machiavelli claims, horses are too sensible of the danger to charge into a wall of pike points (AG 2:55\*/292). Additionally, the pike square was far more cost effective and less resource intensive than the heavy cavalry unite. Each individual pike man could be equipped for far less than an individual knight because they were less heavily armored, they did not have to own a horse,<sup>687</sup> and they were less resource intensive because, when on campaign, there was not a need to find pasturage.

The Germans also had a great deal of military virtù because of the necessity which came from there being so many independent German states. Machiavelli uses the virtù of the Germans as the example which proves his rule, discussed above, that there will be more virtù when there are more states. “And that which I have discussed is true, consider Germany; there, for there are many principalities and republics, they have much virtù, and all that which in the present militia is good, depends on the example of those peoples; who, being jealous of their states, fearing servitude (which elsewhere is not feared) they all maintain their reign and honorably” (AG 2:81\*/305).<sup>688</sup> Because there are so many German states, there is a good deal of

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<sup>687</sup> Actually, the contrast was considerably starker because each knight would have had a few retainers and would need multiple horses.

<sup>688</sup> “E questo che io ho discorso sia vero, considerate la Magna; nella quale, per essere assai principati e repubbliche, vi è assai virtù, e tutto quello che nella presente milizia è buono, dipende dallo esempio di

conflict between them, which, from the perspective of each individual state risks their liberty through the possibility of being conquered. Thus, the Germans value virtù highly and encourage its development. Just above this quote, Machiavelli credits the Swiss (a subset of the Germans) with developing the pikesquare-based militia, because they were too poor to maintain an army of heavy cavalry sufficient to defend their liberty. These modes and orders were later adopted, at least in part, by the other ultramontanes, which is why Machiavelli is able to claim that all that is good in the militia depends on their example: the German militia is the contemporary example which the Italians should imitate most in updating their military modes and orders to suit the times.

Machiavelli's use of contemporary examples of virtù in *dell'Arte della Guerra* seems to be primarily intended to demonstrate to the Italians why it is that the ultramontane invaders have so much more military virtù than they. One of Machiavelli's constant themes is that the maladies which have beset Italian princes and republics since the beginning of the Italian Wars in 1494 are the fault of the leaders of the Italian states.<sup>689</sup> Rather than allowing these disposed princes to claim the excuse of a malignant *fortuna*, Machiavelli insists that they lost their states because they did not have the appropriate modes and orders for developing and maintaining

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quegli pololi; i quali sendo tutti gelosi de' loro stati, temendo la servitù (il che altrove non si teme) tutti si mantengono signori e onorati." Two notes on my translation: 1. According to Capata (305n91) "la Magna" means "la Germania". 2. The last phrase could be literally "they all maintain lords (or gentlemen) and honorable", which does not make much sense in the context of the passage, which is about how they all maintain their independence because they all have so much military virtù. I take "signori" to mean something like "lordship" which, in the context of the passage, means "they [German states] all maintain lordship [over their own territories]..."

<sup>689</sup> See especially *il Principe* Chapter 24, titled "Why the Princes of Italy have lost their States".

military virtù. These include the practices of maintaining one's own soldiers rather than relying on mercenaries or the armies of others, relying more on infantry than cavalry, and the training and drilling of soldiers to instill discipline and order. Unlike the Italians, most of the ultramontanes follow these modes and orders to a greater extent, which is why they were able to beat the Italians in almost every contest of arms during the Wars.<sup>690</sup>

### **105 Spanish (AG 2:47\*/288 (F.C.))**

(See also 102 Swiss, 103 French, and 104 Germans, above)

According to Machiavelli, one of the main reasons that the ultramontanes have military virtù is their mode of using infantry as the main body of their armies. A claim that Machiavelli makes repeatedly is that the infantry-based armies of ancient Europe<sup>691</sup> are superior in virtù to the cavalry based armies of medieval Europe. “And there have been so many mighty examples of their virtù founded on these arms and

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<sup>690</sup> From 1494, of the five major powers in Italy — the Republic of Venice, the Duchy of Milan, the Republic of Florence, the Papal States, and the Kingdom of Naples — only the Republic of Venice managed to remain mostly outside of the domination of an ultramontane power while the Duchy of Milan fell to the French and then the Spanish, the Kingdom of Naples was conquered by the Spanish, and after the Medici restoration in 1512 and the election of the Medici Pope Leo X in 1513, both the Republic of Florence and the Papal States were largely within the sphere of influence of the Spanish. The Republic of Venice's ability to survive had more to do with geography than their virtù: they lost most of their empire in Italy whenever it was contested by an ultramontane power, but were often able to regain much of what they lost because the invaders were usually short of coin to pay their soldiers and could not afford to occupy the territory just taken.

<sup>691</sup> Infantry based armies were in the process of becoming a mainstay of early modern Europe, which was a trend that Machiavelli wholly approved of and encouraged as best he could.

these orders, that after King Charles passed through Italy, every nation imitated him; so much that the Spanish armies have gained a very great reputation” (AG 2:47\*/288).<sup>692</sup> The arms and orders of which Machiavelli speaks are the large bodies of infantry which were primarily pikemen with integrated units of harquebus.<sup>693</sup> These units fought in tight formations which resemble nothing so much as a revival of the Greek phalanx with integrated harquebus.

### **106 Defenders of Rhodes (IF 8:20(1))**

Machiavelli praised the defenders of Rhodes for repelling the Turks in 1480.

Mahomet the Grand Turk went with a very great army to camp at Rhodes, and had for many months attacked it; nonetheless, even though his forces were great, and his obstinacy in the capture of that greatest land, he found more [obstinacy] in the besieged, they defended themselves with so much virtù from so much vehemence, that Mahomet was forced to depart from the siege with shame (IF 8:20).<sup>694</sup>

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<sup>692</sup> “E sono stati tanto possenti gli esempli della virtù loro fondati in su queste armi e questi ordini, che poi che il re Carlo passò in Italia, ornò nazione gli ha imitati; tanto che gli eserciti spagnuoli sono divenuti in una grandissima reputazione.”

<sup>693</sup> These unites came to be known generally as the pikesquare, when deployed by the Spanish it is called the Tercio (though according to Machiavelli their infantry primarily replaces the pikemen with heavily armored infantry armed with swords and shields), and by the Germans (though usually not including the Swiss) it is referred to as the *Landknechts*. The harquebus was an early firearm, a precursor to the musket.

<sup>694</sup> “Era Maumetto gran Turco andato con un grandissimo esercito a campo a Rodi, e quello aveva per molti mesi combattuto; non di meno, ancora che le forze sue fussero grandi, e la ostinazione nella espugnazione di quella terra grandissima, la trovò maggiore nelli assediati; i quali con tanta virtù da tanto impeto si defesono, che Maumetto fu forzato da quello assedio partirsi con vergogna.”

Again, for Machiavelli, virtù and obstinacy in war can accomplish great things, even against far superior numbers.

### **5.2.6 The Army of Words**

**107 Army of Words Army of Words (AG 3:93 /311 (F.C.), AG 3:93/311 (F.C.), AG 3:94/311 (F.C.))**

Machiavelli's usual method of argumentation was to address a particular problem with the most pertinent examples from the histories of the Greeks and the Romans and his experiences and observations of politics from his career. Sometimes he draws from these to compose a general rule to govern behavior; otherwise the reader is left with the implied injunction to imitate the best examples. But in terms of the raising, arming, and drilling of a militia, Machiavelli finds no example which is best to imitate. Thus, Machiavelli makes his own exemplar, by creating an Army of Words, which is raised, armed, and drilled how Machiavelli thinks will ensure a virtuoso militia. He then lines up his Army of Words against a fictional army of equal multitude, but presumably organized and trained as was customary in Machiavelli's Italy, in an imaginary battle which Machiavelli's Army of Words, being of so much more virtù and with so much better orders, wins easily.

As Machiavelli describes the Imaginary Battle, he uses *virtù* three times to describe the performance of the Army of Words. In the first instance, the captain has just sent in the mixed pike-harquebus units and the cavalry to neutralize the enemy artillery which is all stationed on the flanks. “See with how much *virtù* ours fight, and with how much discipline, which was instilled by the exercise that they have done and by the confidence that they have in the exercise; see them who, with their stride and with the men of arms beside them, orderly proceed to set upon the adversary” (AG 3:93/311).<sup>695</sup> Machiavelli’s Army of Words advances with *virtù*, discipline, and confidence because they have exercised these maneuvers before and have confidence in the value of that experience. These exercises, which he describes in detail throughout *dell’Arte della Guerra*, are the orders from which the military *virtù* of an army derives. An army with many individuals with military *virtù* that is not well ordered cannot survive against one that is: an army that acts as a group of individuals rather than a cohesive unit is little more than a rabble of warriors in infantry field warfare. In this context, individuals without military *virtù* placed into a well ordered army will learn it through the exercises.

The next use of *virtù* comes just after this, the pikesquares and cavalry return to guard the flanks of the men at arms,<sup>696</sup> what are charged by the enemy’s center.

“Watch with how much *virtù* they sustain the vehemence of the enemies, and with

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<sup>695</sup> “Vedete con quanta *virtù* combattono i nostri, e con quanta disciplina, per lo esercizio che ne ha fatto loro fare abito e per la confidenza ch’egli hano nell’esercito; il quale vedete che, col suo passo e con le genti d’arme allato, cammina ordinato per appiccarsi con l’avversario.

<sup>696</sup> Men at arms always refers to heavily armored soldiers, often these are mounted and amount to what we think of as the medieval knight, in this case, Machiavelli’s men at arms are heavily armored infantry fighting with sword and shield, in imitation of the Romans. \*\*\*Actually, this may not be true. \*\*\*

how much silence, and as the captain commands to the men at arms that they sustain and not clash [prematurely with the enemy] and of the order of the infantries not to rush forward” (AG 3:93/311).<sup>697</sup> The ordered virtù of the Army of Words allows them to sustain the enemy’s charge. Their silence allows them to hear the orders of the captain, in this case reminding them to hold their formation against their temptation to break rank and rush the charging enemy. However, once the enemy engages, Machiavelli lets his infantry engage their infantry. Once they come to close quarters, it becomes difficult for the pikemen to wield their pikes effectively.<sup>698</sup> “Meanwhile all the ordinary pikemen from the first battles fall back between the orders of the shields, and abandon the fight to the shield bearers; watch with how much virtù, security, and idleness they massacre the enemy” (AG 3:94/311).<sup>699</sup> The shield bearers are the heavily armored infantry who fight with sword and shield, in imitation of the Roman legion. Machiavelli here relies the fact that almost all opposing infantries would be made up of pikesquares and his claim that pikemen were at a distinct disadvantage against shield bearers because the pikes could pierce the armor of the shield bearers only with great difficulty and were useless once the shield bearers had closed within the length of the pikes. Thus, it is because of their arms that Machiavelli’s shield

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<sup>697</sup> Guardate con quanta virtù egli hanno sostenuto lo impeto de nimici, e con quanto silenzio, e come il capitano comanda agli uomini d’arme che sostengano e non urtino e dall’ordine delle fanterie no si spicchino.

<sup>698</sup> As the use of the pikesquares develops in European warfare, the pikemen of each side would, just as in ancient battles between Phalanxes, engage in what came to be termed “the Push of Pike”, where each side basically attempted to break the other’s lines. This is because, as Machiavelli continually points out, pikes are not terribly good weapons for close range combat. Machiavelli’s solution is, rather than engage in a push of pike, to use swordsmen to massacre the opposing pikemen, because swords are very effective at close range.

<sup>699</sup> “Intanto tutte le picche ordinarie delle prime battaglie si sono nascose tra gli ordini degli scudi, e lasciata la zuffa agli scudati; i quali guardate con quanta virtù, sicurtà e ozio ammazzano il nimico.

bearers are able to slaughter the enemy pike with security and idleness. Their virtù comes from the goodness of their arms and orders which allow them to exercise the maneuver in which the pikemen fall back through the ranks of the shield bearers to allow the shield bearers at the enemy pike.

The Army of Words wins this Imaginary Battle without really breaking a sweat; of course it does. But, however much this makes us a little dubious of Machiavelli's hypothetical proof of the virtù of his new modes and orders of forming a militia, Machiavelli's positions on contemporary practice necessitate this outcome. Recall that Machiavelli's claims that ancient virtù was so much greater than contemporary virtù is not limited to the Italians alone, but applied to all his contemporaries. In terms of modes of arming soldiers, even amongst the better ordered militaries of the ultramontanes, the pikesquare is the favored form of infantry, and only amongst the Swiss (and other Germans) is the infantry thought of as the preferred mode of combat. An Italian army, using Italian modes, is of course mostly worthless. So in terms of modes of armament, Machiavelli's use of shield bearers should allow his army to cut through the less well armed pikemen of the opposing infantry, while his cavalry and pikemen hold off the opposing cavalry.

In terms of orders of battle, all of Machiavelli's contemporary armies fought with only one line, rather than with the three line maniple system of the Romans which Machiavelli advocates. According to Machiavelli, this contrast definitively favors his Army of Words because against one line, he only has to win the battle once

to make them break and flee, but against his three lines, Machiavelli's soldiers can retreat between the gaps of the line behind them if pushed back, joining the line behind to resist the enemy anew. The result of this, for Machiavelli, is that his opponent would have to beat him three times to actually win the battle. For Machiavelli, the practice of using only one line gives far too much into the hands of *fortuna*, because if some accident happens to cause one line to break, with three lines the battle is not lost where with only one it is.

Machiavelli's Army of Words is an exemplar of military *virtù* meant for his contemporary Italians to imitate. Machiavelli drafts the Army of Words in the way that he does because he believes that its modes and orders are those best suited to the times in which he lives. A few aspects of military *virtù* seem to have changed, or adapted to the times: Machiavelli claims that the cavalry of his contemporaries was probably as good as or better than that of the ancients and Machiavelli is willing to incorporate the mixed unite pikesquare with arquebusiers into his infantry. However, most aspects of *virtù* seem timeless for Machiavelli: the focus on infantry over cavalry,<sup>700</sup> his insistence on a militia over a standing army, on drilling incessantly, on relying on one's own troops rather than mercenaries or auxiliaries, and on the three line maniple formation for the infantry and preference for soldiers armed with sword and shield to those armed with pikes. In any case, the imitation of the exemplary example of Army of Words would lead to a state being able to field an army with more *virtù*, even if they fail to achieve that much *virtù*.

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<sup>700</sup> Though Machiavelli notes that his claims in *dell'Arte della Guerra* should be taken to only apply to warfare in Europe.

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