

The Prince Book Notes

The Prince by Niccolò Machiavelli

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Author/Context

Niccolo Machiavelli was born in Florence, Italy on May 3, 1469. His family owned farm and rental properties and Machiavelli's father, Bernardo, practiced law. Machiavelli received a quality, classical education, characteristic of the humanist traditions of Renaissance Italy. As a young boy, Machiavelli showed great interest in the works of ancient Latin writers, such as Dante, Livy, and Cicero.

In Machiavelli's youth, Florence was ruled by Lorenzo de' Medici, or Lorenzo the Magnificent, the great liberal statesman, patron of the arts, and man of letters. After Lorenzo's death, Florence went through a period of political instability, starting with the French invasion of Charles VIII (1494) and ending with the rise and fall of Savaronola, a Dominican friar, who through his prophetic sermons established a theocratic state until its fall in 1498. At the age of 29, Machiavelli, who never held a governmental position before, became second chancellor of the newly established Republic of Florence. Machiavelli's position gave him access to the major political and military players of Europe. As a diplomat, Machiavelli traveled extensively and met such leaders as Louis XII of France, Cesare Borgia, Emperor Maximilian II, and Pope Julius II. During his diplomatic missions, he took notes of these men, which would prove useful in writing *The Prince*. Machiavelli was considered a tireless worker and eventually became a trusted advisor to the *gonfaloniere*, or chief magistrate, Piero Soderini. But in 1512, the Republic of Florence fell to the Spanish army of the Holy League. The Medici family regained control of Florence and Machiavelli was dismissed from his position. A year later, he was accused of taking part in a conspiracy against the Medici rulers. Imprisoned and tortured, he was eventually cleared of the charges and released.

Over a decade of living and breathing politics came to an abrupt end and Machiavelli had a difficult time adjusting to civilian life. He was forced to withdraw to a small farm in San Casciano near Florence. In a letter to his friend, Francesco Vettori, Machiavelli describes how he ends his uneventful days. Changed into his courtly robes, he writes, "I enter the ancient courts of bygone men where, having received a friendly welcome, I feed on the food that is mine alone and that I was born for." Even the malice of fortune could not extinguish Machiavelli's passion for politics. In 1514, he finished *The Prince*. Originally intended for Giuliano de' Medici, Lorenzo the Magnificent's son, Machiavelli, rededicated the work to Lorenzo the Magnificent's grandson, Lorenzo de' Medici after learning of Giuliano's death.

Early reactions to *The Prince* were critical of its blunt political Darwinianism. They were shocked by the ideas expressed through the terrifyingly accurate portrayals of the rulers described. Many attributed the work to the devil and even accused Machiavelli of being one. Shakespeare, in one of his works, mentions "the murderous Machiavel." Even modern commentators, the most influential being Leo Strauss, have labeled Machiavelli as a teacher of evil. Modern English vocabulary defines something "Machiavellian" as being synonymous with cunning and deceit. Whether or not Machiavelli deserves such infamy is still open to debate. But there is no denying the impact it has had on political thought and ethics. It has a secure place in the canon of the classics. *The Prince* must



be evaluated within the context of his other works, most notably, *The Discourses* (1517) and *The History of Florence* (1525). Although his tone is always incisive, Machiavelli's other works reveal a "gentler" side. In addition to his work on politics and history, Machiavelli wrote several plays. *Mandragola* (1520) is considered one of the best plays of the Renaissance. Machiavelli died in 1527 at the age of 58.

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Plot Summary

Niccolo Machiavelli, in dedicating his book to Lorenzo de' Medici, urges the young prince of Florence to read his work and follow its advice. He also asks the prince to consider his bad turn of fortune (his exile from Florentine politics). Having made his case, Machiavelli goes right to the main focus of his work-how principalities can be acquired, governed, and preserved. Machiavelli identifies three main types of principalities: hereditary, new, or mixed. The hereditary principality passes down power through the ruling family. It is not difficult to maintain as long as the hereditary prince continues to rule as before. New principalities are created through military or civil acquisition. Mixed principalities (new territories added to an existing one) are of two kinds. If the new territory shares the same language and customs as the old one, the prince must extinguish the former ruling line and rule as before. If the new territory does not share the language and customs, the prince should either reside in it or set up colonies consisting of his own citizens or soldiers. Whether he chooses to reside in it or set up colonies, he must protect weaker neighbors, weaken powerful ones, and not let powerful forces enter his territories.

There are four ways a new prince can acquire a principality: by one's own arms, by the arms of others, by evil means, and by civil means. A principality that is won by a prince by his own arms is most secure. Machiavelli lists great princes who came to power through their own abilities: Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, and Theseus. They ruled effectively because they were all armed, unlike Savaronola, a Dominican friar who lost power because he did not take up arms. A principality acquired by the arms of others needs a prince with both fortune and virtue. Cesare Borgia is an example of a prince who came to power through fortune, but lost his power through an unfavorable change in fortune, even though he was a great leader and did almost everything right. Princes who come to power through evil means may gain power but not glory because of their conduct. Those who come to power by civil means (election by the nobles or the people) must remember to win the support of the people because they are crucial in times of adversity. Machiavelli also mentions the ecclesiastical principality with the pope as the ecclesiastical prince. In describing how the position of pope has come to wield much power, Machiavelli does not make a great distinction between a religious prince and a territorial prince.

Machiavelli identifies three kinds of armies: mercenary, auxiliary, and native. Since mercenary forces are hired hands that fight for a wage, they are unreliable in the face of battle. Auxiliary forces, or forces borrowed from an ally, are dangerous if they are victorious because the prince who uses them is under their obligation. Machiavelli strongly encourages every prince to use his own native troops. History has shown that princes who accomplished great things always used their own troops. In fact, a prince's sole activity is the art of warfare. He must always engage himself in the physical and mental exercises of warfare, especially in times of peace.

Regarding how a prince should rule and act, Machiavelli states that in an ideal world, it is virtuous for a prince to be good. But in reality, princes who distance themselves from



ethical concerns and do whatever it takes for the benefit of their states rule best. Therefore, it is better to be parsimonious than generous, cruel than loving, crafty than honest. Machiavelli's general rule is to be as good as circumstances allow, but be willing to resort to any means necessary for the good of the state. A feudal prince must be wise in controlling the nobles and keeping the people content. Even fortresses are useless if the prince does not have the support of his people.

A prince gains esteem and glory through his courage. He must undertake great enterprises that allow him to display his abilities. When two neighbors are at war, a prince must never be neutral; he must take sides. The prince must have the wisdom to choose the least risky venture and act on it courageously. Wisdom is also needed in picking and satisfying his closest advisors and avoiding flatterers.

Machiavelli laments the decline of the Italian city-states and attributes it to the use of mercenary and auxiliary armies instead of native forces. In concluding that virtue, or abilities and fortune must come together for success, Machiavelli implores Lorenzo de' Medici to be the leader Italy has been waiting for—a prince to unite the Italians, drive the barbarians out of Italy, and restore his beloved nation to her former glory.



Major Characters

Niccolo Machiavelli: The author of the book, he served as a government official in the Republic of Florence until the Medici family regained control. Forced out of his position, Machiavelli utilized his new found extra time to write *The Prince*. He dedicated the book to Lorenzo de' Medici in hopes that the prince would read it and restore Florence, Italy, and possibly his political career to former glory. Machiavelli draws upon ancient and modern examples of leaders in order to draw conclusions, generalizations, and opinions regarding how to acquire, govern, and maintain power.

Lorenzo de' Medici: The Duke of Urbino and the grandson of Lorenzo the Magnificent, he is the recipient of Machiavelli's work. Machiavelli originally intended to dedicate the work to Lorenzo the Magnificent's son, Giuliano de' Medici, but he died in 1516. Machiavelli dedicates the book to Lorenzo de' Medici in hopes that the young prince would restore Italy to its former glory. Machiavelli believes that Lorenzo de' Medici is in the best situation to unite the Italians because of his family's great influence in Florence and over the Church-Lorenzo's uncle being Pope Leo X.

King Ferdinand II : The king of Spain at the time Machiavelli wrote *The Prince*, King Ferdinand established his throne by marrying Isabella, uniting the kingdoms of Castile and Aragon. Known as The Catholic, King Ferdinand was closely associated with the Church, joining the Holy League in order to defeat France. He also succeeded in driving the Moors out of Spain in the name of religion. Machiavelli refers to King Ferdinand throughout the book, using him as an example of a ruler who has, through his shrewd political maneuverings, accomplished great things. King Ferdinand is said to preach peace and faith but his actions clearly betray his words. Yet, Machiavelli considers the king's apparent hypocrisy to be acceptable and even necessary. Machiavelli also praises King Ferdinand for undertaking great endeavors as to arouse awe in his subjects.

Francesco Sforza: Francesco Sforza is the primary example of a new prince who acquires his principality by his abilities. He was a soldier who rose through the ranks to become Duke of Milan in 1450 with the help of the Venetians. Machiavelli has high regard for Francesco Sforza because he was a mighty military leader. His sons, however, lost the throne because they rejected the life of military discipline. Machiavelli criticizes the castle Francesco Sforza built in Milan because the family's reliance upon it has kept them insulated from the people. This violates one of Machiavelli's most cherished rules: do not be hated by the people.

Cesare Borgia: The son of Pope Alexander VI who inherited much power and territory from his father, known as Duke Valentino, Cesare Borgia is considered by Machiavelli to have been a most capable leader and the embodiment of what a prince should be. Machiavelli suggests that an ambitious prince looking for a recent model to follow should imitate Cesare Borgia. Machiavelli uses many events of Cesare Borgia's life to illustrate how and why he was successful. Machiavelli believes that Cesare Borgia would have succeeded in uniting all of Italy had he not fallen ill. Examining Cesare



Borgia's life, Machiavelli concludes that in order for a prince to ultimately succeed, he needs both ability and fortune.

Pope Alexander VI: Father to Cesare Borgia, Pope Alexander VI was a great leader who used his position and abilities to empower his son and consequently, the power of the Church. Cesare Borgia inherited much power and territory from his shrewd father. Machiavelli considers Alexander VI a master at the art of political deception. Through the military success of Cesare Borgia, Pope Alexander VI not only brought respect and prestige to the position of the pope and the Church, he helped establish his son as the most powerful prince in Italy until they both fell ill. Pope Alexander died soon after and Cesare Borgia, deathly ill, could not prevent his eventual downfall.

Pope Julius II: The successor to Pope Alexander, he continued to increase the power of the Church through military conquests and political maneuverings. Machiavelli commends the Pope for finding a novel way to raise money—the sale of ecclesiastical offices. Pope Julius succeeded in expanding the territorial boundaries of the Church and driving the French out of Italy by joining the Holy League. Machiavelli uses Pope Julius as an example of a ruler who succeeded because his political methods corresponded well with the times. Known to have acted impetuously in his military decisions, Machiavelli suggests that Pope Julius's successes were largely due to his impetuosity. Machiavelli concludes that being impetuous is usually better than inaction.

Minor Characters

King Louis XII: Machiavelli uses the military and political exploits of Louis XII in Italy as examples of what not to do in maintaining power over a newly conquered territory. Louis XII makes several crucial mistakes in his attempts to take Italy. Machiavelli, in describing the king's mistakes, emphasizes one key point: that he who causes another to become powerful ruins himself.

Moses: The biblical figure who led the Israelites out of Egypt. Machiavelli considers Moses to be one of the great princes who came to power through abilities rather than fortune. Although Moses is a special case because he was commanded by God, Machiavelli finds his leadership skills admirable. Machiavelli likens the current state of Italy to the Israelite's bondage in Egypt. Machiavelli pleads for a strong leader to lead the Italians to a similar Exodus from the hands of the 'barbarians.'

Cyrus: The founder of the Persian Empire (558-529 B.C.), Cyrus, in finding the Medes soft as a result of a long period of peace, defeated them and established an empire. Machiavelli lists Cyrus as one of the great princes who came to power by his abilities rather than fortune.

Romulus: The legendary founder of Rome. Machiavelli includes Romulus as one of the great princes who came to power through abilities rather than fortune.



Theseus: The legendary hero of Athens, Theseus is included as one of the great princes who came to power through abilities rather than fortune.

Savaronola: The Dominican friar who held power over Florence before the takeover by the Republican government that Machiavelli served under. Savaronola is an example of an unarmed prophet that falls.

Hiero of Syracuse: Machiavelli uses Hiero as a modern example of a prince who came to power by his abilities rather than fortune. Hiero was a private citizen who rose to power because of his remarkable leadership abilities. Hiero is an example of a ruler who relied on his own troops.

Pope Leo X: Lorenzo de' Medici's uncle. Machiavelli believes that the young Medici prince has the opportunity to unite all of Italy because he has all the resources available to succeed, including his uncle's support as head of the church. Machiavelli, in examining the successes of Pope Alexander VI and Pope Julius II, advises Pope Leo X to continue building up the church through his goodness.

King David: The biblical figure who becomes king of Israel after King Saul. Machiavelli recounts the story where David rejects King Saul's weapon and armor before going out to battle the giant, Goliath. The story is used to illustrate that one should never rely on the strength of another's army. A great prince should always command his own troops.

Philopoemen: Ancient general of the Achaean League (253-183 B.C.), Philopoemen is an example of a prince who was always engaged in the thoughts of military strategy. Because he studied the art of warfare, Philopoemen is said to have never experienced a situation in war where he did not know how to act. Plutarch calls him 'the last of the Greeks.' Machiavelli states that the primary task of a prince is to prepare for warfare, especially in times of peace.

Achilles: The legendary hero of Greek mythology, Achilles trained under Chiron, a centaur (half man, half beast). Machiavelli states that the ancient writers meant to show that a warrior needs to be trained in the fighting ways of both man and beast. The ways of man is through laws. The ways of the beast is through force.

Marcus Aurelius: A Roman Emperor who ruled fairly and moderately, he is the only Roman Emperor who did not come to ruin for not siding with the army. Machiavelli suggests that a wise prince must know how to rule judiciously like Marcus Aurelius, but only when his power is already established.

Septimus Severus: A Roman Emperor who, unlike Marcus Aurelius, ruled with force and cruelty, Septimus Severus knew how to be both the fox and the lion. He was respected by his soldiers and not hated by any of his people. A prince with similar abilities should imitate Septimus Severus in establishing his power.

Emperor Maximilian II: Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, he was considered to be a ruler who was not respected because he was given to changing his mind and never

being decisive. Machiavelli warns that a prince who is not resolute in his decisions will never gain honor, especially among his advisers.



Objects/Places

republics: A state with a system of government with elected representatives where power is ultimately derived from the people. Machiavelli identifies two types of states: republics and principalities. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli focuses on principalities because he writes about republics in another work, *The Discourses*.

principalities: A state with a system of government where power is derived mainly from one primary ruler. Machiavelli identifies three main types of principalities: hereditary, new, and mixed. Hereditary principalities pass down power through the ruling family line. New principalities are created through military or civil acquisition. Mixed principalities are new territories that are added to an existing territory. Machiavelli further identifies four ways a ruler acquires a new principality: by one's own arms, by the arms of others, by evil means, and by civil means. Machiavelli also identifies the ecclesiastical principality as a special case with the pope acting as the political prince.

hectic fever: A disease that is at first hard to diagnose but easy to treat, later it becomes easy to diagnose but impossible to treat. Machiavelli uses hectic fever as an analogy-as hectic fever is to the body, political maladies are to a state. Machiavelli's point: it is important for a ruler to detect a problem and resolve it right away before it becomes impossible to fix.

Church: In Machiavelli's time, the position of the pope and the power of the Church were a force to be reckoned with, both in political and military affairs. Pope Alexander VI and Pope Julius II were instrumental in strengthening the power of the Church. Machiavelli considers the pope to be a special type of a political ruler.

mercenary (forces): Mercenary forces are troops that are hired to fight for a wage. Machiavelli takes a strong stance against the use of mercenary forces. He believes mercenary forces are useless to a ruler because they are undisciplined, cowardly, and without any loyalty. Their only motivation to fight is for pay. Machiavelli attributes Italy's demise to the use of mercenary armies.

auxiliary forces: Auxiliary forces are troops that are borrowed from an ally. Machiavelli warns against using such forces because if they win, the employer is under their favor and if they lose, the employer is ruined. Auxiliary forces are more dangerous than mercenary armies because they are united under their own interests and controlled by capable leaders who may turn against their employers.

fox: The fox is used as a symbol for wisdom and cunning. As a fox is able to recognize traps, a prince must be able to outmaneuver his foes. However, since a fox cannot drive away wolves, it is not enough for a prince to have just fox-like qualities; he must also be like a lion.

lion: The counterpart to the fox, a lion is a symbol for courage and ferocity. As a lion is able to drive away wolves, a prince must be able to stand up against his enemies.

However, a lion cannot recognize traps, therefore, a prince must also be like the fox-wise and cunning.

fortresses: A fortress is a type of fortification that allows a ruler to withstand sieges and attacks. Regarding the use of fortifications, Machiavelli advises that a fortress, such as a castle, may or may not be useful depending upon the situation, but relying too much on it is harmful. A fortress will not protect a ruler if he is hated by his people.



Quotes

Quote 1: "If you will diligently read and consider it, you will detect in it one of my deepest desires, which is that you will come to that greatness which fortune and your own qualities promise you. And if from your great height Your Highness will sometimes cast a glance below to these lowly places, you will see how undeservedly I endure the heavy and relentless malice of fortune." Dedication, pg. 13

Quote 2: "From this it follows that all armed prophets have succeeded and all unarmed ones have failed; for in addition to what has already been said, people are by nature changeable." Chapter 6, pg. 27

Quote 3: "Therefore, if you are a prince in possession of a newly acquired state and deem it necessary to guard against your enemies, to gain allies, to win either by force or fraud, to be loved and feared by your subjects, to be respected and obeyed by your troops, to annihilate those who can or must attack you, to reform and modernize old institutions, to be severe yet cordial, magnanimous and liberal, to abolish a disloyal militia and create a new one, to preserve the friendship of kings and princes in such a way that they will either favor you graciously or oppose you cautiously-then for such purposes you will not find fresher examples to follow than the actions of this man." Chapter 7, pg. 34

Quote 4: "By such methods one may win dominion but not glory." Chapter 8, pg. 36

Quote 5: "It is the nature of men to feel as much bound by the favors they do as by those they receive." Chapter 10, pg. 43

Quote 6: "These states alone, therefore, are secure and happy." Chapter 11, pg. 44

Quote 7: "The two most essential foundations for any state, whether it be old or new, or both old and new, are sound laws and sound military forces. Now, since the absence of sound laws assures the absence of sound military forces, while the presence of sound military forces indicates the presence of sound laws as well, I shall forego a consideration of laws and discuss military forces instead." Chapter 12, pg. 46

Quote 8: "In the end, the arms of another will fall from your hand, will weigh you down, or restrain you." Chapter 13, pg. 52

Quote 9: "A prince must have no other objective, no other thought, nor take up any profession but that of war, its methods and its discipline, for that is the only art expected of a ruler." Chapter 14, pp. 53-54

Quote 10: "Thus, when fortune turns against him, he will be prepared to resist it." Chapter 14, pg. 55

Quote 11: "Many men have imagined republics and principalities that never really existed at all. Yet the way men live is so far removed from the way they ought to live that



anyone who abandons what is for what should be pursues his downfall rather than his preservation; for a man who strives after goodness in all his acts is sure to come to ruin, since there are so many men who are not good." Chapter 15, pg. 56

Quote 12: "The answer is, of course, that it would be best to be both loved and feared. But since the two rarely come together, anyone compelled to choose will find greater security in being feared than in being loved." Chapter 17, pg. 60

Quote 13: "I conclude that since men love as they themselves determine but fear as their ruler determines, a wise prince must rely upon what he and not others can control." Chapter 17, pg. 61

Quote 14: "Therefore a prince will not actually need to have all the qualities previously mentioned, but he must surely seem to have them. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that having them all and always conforming to them would be harmful, while appearing to have them would be useful." Chapter 18, pg. 63

Quote 15: "From it a noteworthy lesson may be drawn: princes should delegate unpopular duties to others while dispensing all favors directly themselves. I say again that a prince must respect the nobility, but avoid the hatred of the common people." Chapter 19, pg. 67

Quote 16: "Nevertheless, since our free will must not be denied, I estimate that even if fortune is the arbiter of half our actions, she still allows us to control the other half, or thereabouts." Chapter 25, pg. 84

Quote 17: "for fortune is a woman and in order to be mastered she must be jogged and beaten." Chapter 25, pg. 86

Quote 18: "I cannot describe with how much love, with what thirst for revenge, with what resolute loyalty, with what tenderness, with what tears he would be received in all those provinces which have endured these foreign hordes. What gates would be closed to him? What people would deny him obedience? Whose envy would oppose him? What Italian would withhold his allegiance?" Chapter 26, pg. 90



Topic Tracking: Fortune

Dedication

Fortune 1: In the dedication, Machiavelli expresses two main objectives. The first is straightforward-he wants Lorenzo de' Medici to read and consider his work because it will bring the prince honor and glory. The other message is subtle-he wants the prince to know how much he is suffering because of his unfortunate circumstances. There is a strong sense of irony in Machiavelli's mention of fortune. He believes that the prince can achieve greatness because of his fortune and abilities. On the other hand, fortune has reduced Machiavelli from a once significant political official to a poor day laborer. Perhaps Machiavelli was appealing to Lorenzo de' Medici in hopes that he would be offered a position in the Medici government. Nonetheless, for Machiavelli, fortune is a force to be utilized if favorable and overcome if not.

Chapter 1

Fortune 2: In defining principalities, Machiavelli identifies two main ways a prince can gain power-through fortune or ability. These two factors are the keys to a prince's success. Hereditary principalities are easier to acquire through fortune than new principalities are.

Chapter 3

Fortune 3: When a prince conquers a new territory that shares a common language and culture as his original domain, all he needs to do to maintain control is to extinguish the former ruling line. However, if the language and culture are different, a prince must have both ability and fortune because the new territory must be properly assimilated. The best strategy is for the prince to reside in the new territory, which requires risk and is dependent upon favorable circumstances.

Chapter 4

Fortune 4: Machiavelli identifies two main types of governing a principality. One is by the absolute rule of a single prince like the Kingdom of the Turks. The other is by a primary ruler with other independent nobles who maintain their own estates, like feudal France. A principality with an absolute ruler is easy to control once it is conquered. But a principality like feudal France is difficult to control. The likelihood that a prince can hold a territory is determined as much by the principality's previous government as his abilities. Machiavelli uses the idea of fortune indirectly by stating that political and civic structures matter as much as a prince's abilities. This is in line with Machiavelli's general conclusion: fortune and ability must be aligned for a prince to succeed.

Chapter 7



Fortune 5: Machiavelli considers several ways a prince may acquire new principalities: through his own abilities, through other people's arms, or through fortune. Those who obtain their dominions through fortune will face problems holding onto power if they do not have abilities as well. Machiavelli examines the case of Cesare Borgia and concludes that a prince can have great abilities and still be ruined by fortune. Machiavelli acknowledges that for all the sure-fire political strategies, methods and advice, fortune remains the unknowable factor. Fortune is powerful and unpredictable. Even though Borgia had great abilities and did everything right, in the end, he had to succumb to the malice of fortune.

Chapter 14

Fortune 6: Machiavelli states that a prince should never rest from military thought. Especially in times of peace, a prince must engage in honing his skills and in studying military strategies. Preparation is necessary because fortune is unpredictable. Machiavelli seems to suggest that fortune *does* change and only those prepared will be able to resist it.

Chapter 18

Fortune 7: Machiavelli advises that a prince should be only as good as circumstances allow. By this, Machiavelli means that when things are going well, a prince should take advantage of favorable times to be good-but not overly so. When circumstances change, a prince must be willing to resort to evil if that is what it takes to overcome the change in fortune.

Chapter 24

Fortune 8: Machiavelli blames the recent Italian princes for the demise of Italy because of their use of mercenary and auxiliary armies. Although Italy could be said to have undergone misfortune, for Machiavelli, there are clear reasons that cannot be attributed to fortune.

Chapter 25

Fortune 9: Machiavelli gives the fullest treatment of fortune in this chapter. In Machiavelli's view, fortune accounts for half of human affairs. Since humans are responsible for the other half, when fortune is favorable, the wise prince should do all he can to prepare so that when fortune turns on him, he can withstand it. Machiavelli compares fortune to a flood-although it cannot be stopped, its impact can be lessened by dams and levees. Machiavelli also compares fortune to a woman; it can be mastered by aggressive tactics. Thus, he believes that in most instances, it is better to be impetuous than cautious.

Chapter 26

Fortune 10: Machiavelli tries to convince Lorenzo de' Medici that the stage is set for the young prince to make his mark by uniting Italy and driving out the barbarians. Cesare

Borgia was thought to be destined for that role but fortune denied him. Machiavelli urges the young prince to finish what Borgia had started, for fortune seems to be on his side.



Topic Tracking: Power Politics

Chapter 2

Power Politics 1: Machiavelli states the main focus of the book-to discuss how principalities can be acquired, governed, and preserved. He begins with the difference between hereditary and new principalities. Hereditary principalities are easier to control and regain control because the hereditary prince has the advantage of the people's natural affection for him. By identifying the dynamics of power (in this case, the people), Machiavelli attempts to show how a prince can rule most effectively.

Chapter 3

Power Politics 2: In advising the prince residing in a new territory with languages and customs different from his original territory, Machiavelli makes several recommendations. First, the prince must protect weaker neighbors and weaken powerful ones. Second, he must not let a powerful force enter his territories, including allies. Last, the wise prince must be willing to use force to remedy a situation before it becomes unfixable. It is almost always more effective to confront problems early. A wise prince must not put off confrontations for another day.

Chapter 5

Power Politics 3: For a conquered territory that was used to living under freedom, i.e. republics, the prince can destroy it, reside in it, or take tribute from a set-up government friendly to the prince. Machiavelli recommends that the surest way to establish power is through destruction because people who have been accustomed to living under freedom are likely to rebel for that right. Machiavelli often suggests the swiftest and most effective methods of establishing power.

Chapter 6

Power Politics 4: Machiavelli gives a list of great princes of the past who rose to power and maintained it by their abilities. In contrast, he mentions Savaronola, the Dominican friar who lost his power when the people no longer heeded his preaching. Machiavelli concludes that all successful rulers must have arms. Power and arms go hand in hand.

Chapter 8

Power Politics 5: Machiavelli, in describing princes who come to power through evil means, comes closest to making a moral judgment. A prince who comes to power through evil may gain dominion but not glory. However, Machiavelli's definition of evil is not clear. By the examples he gives, evil is excessive cruelty done to your own citizens for the expressed purpose of gaining power. Machiavelli offers no praise for such princes, but he does acknowledge that some rulers must resort to evil means. He then distinguishes between proper and improper cruelty. Proper cruelty is done at one time



and serves a specific purpose. Improper cruelty is repetitive and threatening to the citizens. A wise prince must be willing to practice proper cruelty in order to maintain power, but avoid improper cruelty so that his subjects do not feel hatred for him.

Chapter 9

Power Politics 6: In dealing with nobles, a prince has to exercise discernment in determining who is dangerous or not. The people, on the other hand, are content as long as their property and women are not harmed. Whether or not a prince comes to power through the nobles or the people, Machiavelli emphasizes the need for the prince to win the support of the people. The prince should even be aware of how much control his advisors have over them. The people should be used to obeying the prince above anyone else.

Chapter 11

Power Politics 7: Only the ecclesiastical prince is able to rule without having to defend his power because it is rooted in the ancient traditions of religion. Machiavelli explains historically how the position of pope came to hold so much power. By showing the development of the pope's power, Machiavelli gives concrete evidence of his previous arguments—a prince who uses arms, innovative methods, and wise political decisions will increase his power.

Chapter 15

Power Politics 8: Machiavelli makes it clear that it is not important for a prince to have all the good qualities. The game of power politics is clearly more favorable to princes who are willing to do anything for the good of the state. For Machiavelli, what is good for the state has no ethical or moral implications. Anything that benefits the state is considered good.

Chapter 16

Power Politics 9: For Machiavelli, it is better to be parsimonious than generous. A prince can only be generous through heavy taxation or constant plundering from conquests. Both are finite sources. Former rulers with reputations of generosity were only so on their way to power. It is impossible to maintain power by being generous without arousing the people's hatred.

Chapter 17

Power Politics 10: Machiavelli makes a powerful argument that it is better for a leader to be feared than loved. He arrives at this position because of the countless examples from history. Men respond more strongly to fear than to love. The love of the people can easily change, but fear is constant. The prince has control over his people's fear of him, but he cannot make the people love him. Therefore, a prince should pursue the course of action that he can best control.



Chapter 18

Power Politics 11: Hypocrisy and deceit are legitimate methods in politics. It is not important for a prince to have good qualities; it is sufficient that he only appears to have them. Because men are given to appearances, they will not scrutinize a prince's hypocrisy. They will only judge by the results and not the methods. Machiavelli considers the appearance of being religious as the most powerful quality. King Ferdinand is known to have preached faith and peace, but his actions were always to the contrary. Nevertheless, he was able to gain power and esteem for his nation and himself.

Chapter 19

Power Politics 12: The feudal prince has the responsibility to satisfy his people while containing the nobles. Machiavelli praises the structure of the French government in allowing the king to delegate potentially unpopular duties to other governing bodies such as the parliament while keeping the power to dispense favors for the king. This way, the king is able to use the parliament to fend off the nobles, while using favors to please the people.

Chapter 20

Power Politics 13: When there is a conflict between two powers, it is almost always better to take sides than be neutral. Being neutral draws contempt from both sides. In dealing with political alliances, the wise prince must discern what is the least risky option and then carry it out resolutely. This brings honor whether your side wins or not.



Topic Tracking: Virtue

Dedication

Virtue 1: Machiavelli, in dedicating the work to Lorenzo de' Medici, reminds the young prince that greatness awaits him because he is endowed with both fortune and admirable qualities. Machiavelli uses the term "virtue" to describe the positive qualities of a prince. In Daniel Donno's notes, he writes that virtue is a word which "implies physical and mental capacity-intelligence, skill, courage, vigor-in short, all those personal qualities that are needed for attainment of one's own ends." (p. 125) The last part is an important qualifier because virtue is very much related to getting end results. Virtue, in the Machiavellian sense, does not carry a moral tone.

Chapter 1

Virtue 2: In speaking about principalities, Machiavelli introduces two main factors that determine the fate of a ruler-fortune and abilities. Machiavelli states that it does not take virtue to attain a hereditary principality, but it is required in order to acquire a new principality.

Chapter 3

Virtue 3: When a new territory does not share the same language and culture as the prince's original territory, the prince must have the wisdom and ability to assimilate the new territory. The prince must settle the new territory. He can do this most effectively by residing in it. The prince must be competent in maintaining the balance of different powers. He must protect his weaker neighbors while preventing powerful ones from gaining more power. Moreover, the prince must have the courage to confront problems before it becomes too late. A prince should not hesitate in using force or going to war.

Chapter 6

Virtue 4: Machiavelli writes that for a private citizen to become a prince, he needs to have fortune or ability. Among those who became princes through ability, Machiavelli cites Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, and Theseus. Using them as examples, Machiavelli states that an important component of ability is recognizing an opportunity and acting on it. A new prince who comes to rule over a new principality faces the pressure to implement new ways of doing things. However, people who oppose change are always more vocal than those who benefit from change. Therefore, Machiavelli advocates the use of force. All of the princes mentioned above maintained power through the use of arms.

Chapter 7

Virtue 5: Machiavelli examines the two ways a prince can attain power. Francesco Sforza is an example of a prince who rose to power by his abilities. Cesare Borgia is an



example of a prince who inherited power from his father. Even though Borgia had great abilities and did everything right, he nevertheless lost power because of a bad turn of fortune. However, Machiavelli urges any prince of ambition to imitate the actions of Borgia because his life shows how to utilize one's abilities to attain success.

Chapter 8

Virtue 6: Here, Machiavelli makes it clear that virtue or ability is related more to statecraft than morality. A prince who comes to power by evil means is said to have neither fortune nor ability. Such a prince may gain power, but not glory. By "evil means," Machiavelli is referring to proper and improper uses of cruelty. Cruelty is considered proper if utilized at one time in order to achieve some necessary goal. Improper cruelty is repetitive and achieves no purpose than to instill constant fear into the citizens. Therefore, the proper use of force can be a virtue.

Chapter 10

Virtue 7: An important virtue for a prince is his ability to relate to his citizens. Machiavelli stresses the importance of gaining the support of the people because that is essential in times of trouble. A prince does not have to be loved by the people, but he must not be hated. A prince with virtue may not be loved but he is always respected. In times of trouble, such as a siege, a prince must know how to keep up the morale of his people. This takes both wisdom and courage.

Chapter 11

Virtue 8: Machiavelli further demonstrates that virtue does not fall under a moral imperative. Even in the institution of the Church where morality supposedly plays a major role, Machiavelli makes no moral judgments about the pope's use of political power. There is no distinction made between the pope and a territorial prince. Machiavelli praises the actions of previous popes that gave the Church its current power and urges the newly elected pope, Leo X, to continue strengthening the church through his goodness and virtues. Although Machiavelli does not specify how Pope Leo X should exercise his goodness and virtues, it is evident that he supports any actions that bring glory to the Church.

Chapter 14

Virtue 9: One of the major characteristic virtues of a prince should be his passion for the art of warfare. Machiavelli believes that a prince must be engaged in military study and training at all times, especially during times of peace. A prince must study the exploits of great military men and hone his skills through hunting. Machiavelli uses Philopoemen, the ancient leader of the Achaeans, as an example of a ruler who was constantly engaged in military thought. Thus, in battle he never encountered a situation that he did not know how to handle. A prince who is prepared in the art of warfare both in mind and body can overcome times of unfavorable fortune.

Chapter 15



Virtue 10: A prince must not be overly concerned with having all the good qualities. Good qualities are not good if they result in the ruin of the state. In fact, a prince that strives to be good all the time will surely lose power because there are many men who are not good. Therefore, a virtuous prince is not related to whether one is good or not in personal terms. The only virtues that are good are those that are beneficial in maintaining the state.

Chapter 16

Virtue 11: Machiavelli uses the quality of generosity to illustrate the point that a prince need not be concerned about being good. It is common sense that generosity is a good quality, but for a prince, it can lead to his downfall. In a practical sense, a prince cannot be generous all the time. Therefore, it is better for a prince to be parsimonious from the beginning than earn the contempt of the people.

Chapter 17

Virtue 12: Machiavelli considers whether it is better to be loved than feared. Although being loved is good, history has shown that leaders who were feared ruled more effectively. A ruler who brings disorder to his state because of his misguided kindness should not be considered kind. For Machiavelli, it is virtuous for a prince to be feared and not hated.

Chapter 18

Virtue 13: Machiavelli argues that in an ideal world where all men are honest, it would be virtuous for a prince to keep to his pledges. But since men are dishonest, it is necessary for a prince to use deception when it is to his benefit. The prince must have the characteristics of both the fox and the lion. The fox can recognize snares but cannot drive away wolves. The lion can drive away wolves but cannot recognize snares. The prince must be cunning and courageous. Machiavelli states that it is not important for a prince to actually have good qualities, but just the appearance of having them. People look at outward appearances, and as long as the ends turn out favorable, the means are justified.

Chapter 21

Virtue 14: A prince must know how to handle foreign relations. Situations will surely arise where a prince must choose sides in a war. It is not wise to remain neutral because both parties will despise the prince who does not take sides. The prince must have the wisdom to choose the least risky option and then pursue it courageously. Win or lose, the prince will gain respect and honor for being decisive.

Chapter 22

Virtue 15: People will assess how wise a prince is by his choice of ministers and close advisors. There are three types of minds: capable of thinking for itself, capable of understanding the thinking of others, and capable of neither. A prince must have at least



the capability to understand the thinking of others. The main criterion of a good minister is whether he puts the prince's concerns over his own. If the minister looks more to his own interests, the prince must not rely on him. The prince must practice discernment in dealing with his advisors.

Chapter 23

Virtue 16: The prince must know how to avoid flatterers. He should have a few close and trusted advisors who are free to speak their minds about the things the prince asks about. All other advice, he should ignore. But the prince must ultimately decide all things for himself and not be indecisive. Whatever he does, he must carry out resolutely so that he will be respected.

Chapter 26

Virtue 17: Machiavelli challenges the prince, Lorenzo de' Medici, to save Italy from the barbarians. Cesare Borgia was thought to have all the qualities necessary to accomplish this task, but failed due to an unexpected turn of fortune. Italy is waiting for another prince who has the abilities and fortune to succeed. Machiavelli believes that Italy is lacking a qualified leader to unite and lead them against the barbarians. For Machiavelli, virtue is directly related to leadership.



Dedication

Niccolo Machiavelli to the Magnificent Lorenzo de' Medici

Niccolo Machiavelli begins his short political treatise by dedicating the work to Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Urbino and grandson to Lorenzo the Magnificent (1449-1492). Machiavelli admits that those who want to gain a prince's favor usually offer gifts worthy of greatness, but he, having no such things, will give him the only thing of value he possesses-his knowledge of politics, both modern and ancient. Stating that he has thought long and hard on these matters and giving his qualifications as one with much former experience in politics, Machiavelli urges the prince to consider his gift, as it is both short and devoid of literary adornment. A book of practical political value, his intent is not to counsel or advise presumptuously, but to offer insights about the rule of people as one who is from their ranks. Reiterating again how little and short the work is, Machiavelli expresses his main purpose in writing the book:

"If you will diligently read and consider it, you will detect in it one of my deepest desires, which is that you will come to that greatness which fortune and your own qualities promise you. And if from your great height Your Highness will sometimes cast a glance below to these lowly places, you will see how undeservedly I endure the heavy and relentless malice of fortune." Dedication, pg. 13

Topic Tracking: Fortune 1

Topic Tracking: Virtue 1

Chapter 1

The kinds of principalities and the means by which they are acquired

Machiavelli identifies two types of states, or dominions that hold power over men: republics and principalities. Principalities can be either hereditary (rule by family succession) or new. For the former type, he gives as a recent example, King Ferdinand II of Spain and for the latter, Francesco Sforza of Milan. These principalities may be accustomed to previous rule (hereditary) or freedom (new). They may be acquired by fortune or ability.

Topic Tracking: Fortune 2

Topic Tracking: Virtue 2



Chapter 2

Chapter 2

Hereditary principalities

Machiavelli focuses on principalities because he has discussed republics in another work (*Discourses*). His basic plan is to convey how principalities can be best governed and preserved. Given the nature of hereditary principalities, Machiavelli believes that they are easier to maintain than new principalities because a hereditary prince does not have rule much differently than before. Even an ordinary prince can retain power unless unusual forces deprive him of it. But even if a hereditary prince loses power, he can easily regain it if the new ruler falters even a bit. The hereditary prince has an easier time gaining the love of his subjects than a new prince does because the people feel a natural affection for him. Unless the hereditary prince is unusually cruel, his subjects will prefer a traditional ruler to a new one.

Topic Tracking: Power Politics 1



Chapter 3

Mixed principalities

New principalities and mixed principalities-new territories added to existing ones-face difficulties because the residents expect the new ruler to be better than the one before. Experience usually proves otherwise, as the new ruler must be wary of those he overthrows and at the same time, please those who brought him to power. These friendships are hard to satisfy because those who helped him come to power expect a lot in return. It is easier to hold on to power of a rebellious territory the second time around because the reinstated prince can use the rebellion as an excuse to implement stricter rule.

Newly conquered states may be from the same region and share the same language as the old territories or they may not. When they share a common culture and language, the new prince should establish his rule by extinguishing the line of former princes and maintaining the status quo, specifically the territories' laws and taxes. Then these new territories will be more quickly assimilated with the old territories.

When the customs and language are different, the ruling prince needs fortune and ability. The best strategy is for the prince to reside in the new territories so that he can quickly put down rebellions and instill loyalty or fear into his new subjects. A foreign prince is less likely to attack a territory when a prince is a resident. The next best strategy is to send out colonies or, in a less efficient case, a portion of the army into the conquered territories to maintain order and settle the state. The only drawback to this method is having to displace a few subjects in order to house the colonists or the army, but this is not a major concern because the displaced are usually poor and without much influence. Machiavelli coldly adds, "men must be either pampered or annihilated." (p. 16) If an army is sent, there is more potential for trouble because troops are more difficult to maintain and their presence causes resentment among the people.

Topic Tracking: Fortune 3

Topic Tracking: Virtue 3

A prince residing in a territory with different customs and language must be aware of protecting his weaker neighbors and weakening the powerful ones. Also, he must not allow a foe of equal strength to enter his territories. The Romans, for example, were able to conquer and expand because they often exploited the weaker parties within a territory by using them to overthrow the ruling power. Once in power, the Romans set up colonies, protected the weaker powers without increasing their strength, and weakened the powerful ones without getting rid of them. A wise prince should do likewise, always ready to remedy a situation before it is too late. Machiavelli likens the maladies of a state to the hectic fever. The disease, at its early stage, is easy to cure but hard to diagnose. At a later stage, it is easy to diagnose, but impossible to cure. Similarly, a problem within a state can be detected and dealt with early or else it can become impossible to remedy. Machiavelli praises the ancient Romans for quickly dealing with



their problems instead of avoiding confrontations. Wise men counsel that one should enjoy the benefits of time, but according to Machiavelli, time is not always beneficial.

Topic Tracking: Power Politics 2

Machiavelli examines the case of King Louis XII of France, who invaded Italy in 1499. He suggests that the king made several mistakes. First, the king got rid of the weaker forces that originally sided with him; second, he strengthened the powerful (the Church); third, he brought in a strong partner (Spain); fourth, he did not reside in Italy; and fifth, he did not establish colonies. The French king could have prevented further defeat had he not reduced the power of the Venetians (a strong counter-force), who were essential in maintaining a balance of power. Machiavelli, having discussed these matters with a cardinal, re-emphasizes the fact that the French often make the political mistake of letting other forces, such as the Church or Spain, gain too much power while weakening the power of balancing forces. Machiavelli concludes with a general rule that he who causes another to become powerful ruins himself.



Chapter 4

Why Alexander's successors were able to keep possession of Darius' kingdom after Alexander's death

Given that newly acquired states are difficult to control, Machiavelli discusses how the successors of Alexander the Great in the Asiatic lands were able to retain power after his death. Machiavelli identifies two ways of governing a principality. One way is for a single prince to rule over the whole territory with ministers and functionaries acting as his servants, as is the case in Turkey. The other way is for a prince to rule along with barons who hold inherited positions and have their own loyal subjects, as is the case in France. Machiavelli points out that the Kingdom of the Turks would be difficult to conquer because in order to win, one must mount a battle against a strong, united force. But once defeated, it would be easy to keep because the new conqueror needs only to extinguish the ruling family, the source of the kingdom's unity. The Kingdom of France, on the other hand, would be easy to conquer, but difficult to keep. To defeat France, one needs only to find a discontented baron, among many, who is willing to be an ally, but once in power, a conquering prince will find a host of problems to deal with. In a state like France, a prince is never free from having to please friends and extinguish enemies.

The Asiatic lands conquered by Alexander was like the Turkish government, therefore, it was easy to control even after the emperor's death. The Romans, on the other hand, experienced difficulties controlling territories with governments similar to the French. Therefore, one can assess the likelihood of a prince's success in controlling a newly acquired principality by the type of government the territory has had. This is as much a determining factor of success or failure as the prince's abilities.

Topic Tracking: Fortune 4

Chapter 5

How to govern cities and principalities that, prior to being occupied, lived under their own laws

There are three ways of keeping a principality that is accustomed to living under its own laws: destroy it, reside in it, or allow a form of self-government that is friendly to the prince and take tribute from it. But the only sure way is to destroy it because there is always a chance that its residents will rebel in the name of freedom, which once tasted is never forgotten. Thus, a territory that is used to having a ruler will be easier to control than a more liberal territory, such as a republic.

Topic Tracking: Power Politics 3



Chapter 6

Concerning new principalities acquired by one's own arms and ability

Machiavelli notes that ambitious men often imitate other great men so that even if they fall short, they can come close, just like an archer who, judging his target to be too far, aims for a target farther off. In addressing new princes, Machiavelli assumes that for a private citizen to become a prince, either ability or fortune must play a major part. As examples of those who became princes through their ability rather than fortune, Machiavelli lists Moses, the biblical leader of the Exodus, Cyrus, founder of the Persian Empire, Romulus, the legendary founder of Rome, and Theseus, the legendary hero of Athens. What these men have in common is more than their abilities. They all capitalized on the opportunities that lay before them.

For men who become princes by their abilities, the greatest difficulty is in winning their dominions. After the hard part is done, their abilities allow them to rule effortlessly. According to Machiavelli, it is often necessary for a new prince to set up new, innovative methods of government. But Machiavelli warns that in such a case, the prince will find many enemies among those who oppose change. On the other hand, the prince will find the supporters of change to be passive because people generally do not want to trust something until it is firmly established.

The only effective way to establish a new system is to use force. Machiavelli gives as an example Savaronola, the Dominican friar who held power over Florence with his fiery sermons, but lost control because he was unarmed when his message was no longer welcomed. Machiavelli observes, "From this it follows that all armed prophets have succeeded and all unarmed ones have failed; for in addition to what has already been said, people are by nature changeable." Chapter 6, pg. 27 He notes that princes such as Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, and Theseus could not have succeeded without taking up arms. Hiero of Syracuse is a modern example of a private citizen who used his abilities to rise to power. Although he had to work hard to establish power, once in control, his abilities allowed him to easily maintain it.

Topic Tracking: Virtue 4

Topic Tracking: Power Politics 4



Chapter 7

Concerning new principalities acquired with the arms and fortunes of others

Machiavelli turns his attention to private citizens who acquire principalities through fortune, such as through a bestowed gift or bribery. These so-called princes make no effort in acquiring power, but they inevitably face many difficulties in preserving it. Without a loyal army or any traditions to stand on, a prince of a new state that relies on fortune does not have a good chance of surviving. In reviewing the two ways of becoming a prince, either through ability or fortune, Machiavelli offers two illustrations. Francesco Sforza, the Duke of Milan, is an example of a prince who rose to power through his abilities. He maintained his power with ease because he had to overcome many obstacles in establishing his state. Cesare Borgia, or Duke Valentino, is an example of one who acquired his position and territory through fortune-by inheriting it from his father, Pope Alexander VI. But he lost it through fortune as well, although he did everything right. Using Cesare Borgia's life as a case study, Machiavelli constructs an interesting argument-that ultimate success is dependent upon both ability and fortune. Cesare Borgia is the model prince that all other princes who come to power by fortune should imitate. Machiavelli writes:

"Therefore, if you are a prince in possession of a newly acquired state and deem it necessary to guard against your enemies, to gain allies, to win either by force or fraud, to be loved and feared by your subjects, to be respected and obeyed by your troops, to annihilate those who can or must attack you, to reform and modernize old institutions, to be severe yet cordial, magnanimous and liberal, to abolish a disloyal militia and create a new one, to preserve the friendship of kings and princes in such a way that they will either favor you graciously or oppose you cautiously-then for such purposes you will not find fresher examples to follow than the actions of this man." Chapter 7, pg. 34

Topic Tracking: Fortune 5

Topic Tracking: Virtue 5

Aside from the mistake of supporting the election of a new pope who would eventually come to haunt him, Cesare Borgia did everything right and would have prevailed had it not been for the untimely death of his father and his own failing health.

Chapter 8

Concerning those who become princes by evil means

A private citizen may become a prince in two ways that cannot be characterized by ability or fortune. One is through wicked means and the other is through election by his fellow citizens. Machiavelli gives an ancient and modern example of the former kind without making morality its core issue. Agathocles of Sicily is an example of a potter who rises through the military ranks to become its commanding officer. At an opportune time, he kills off the ruling powers of Syracuse and becomes king. Thus, his rise to power was not through fortune, though it cannot be attributed to virtue either because of the extreme cruelty of his acts. "By such methods one may win dominion but not glory," Chapter 8, pg. 36 states Machiavelli, although he does acknowledge the fact that some rulers must resort to evil deeds. The modern example is Oliverotto da Fermo, who killed his uncle in order to take power. Machiavelli provides these two examples to explore the use of proper and improper cruelty. Proper cruelty is done early and at one stroke so that the deed accomplishes the desired goal without making the citizens feel constantly threatened. Improper cruelty is one that is repetitious, which makes the citizens always wary of danger. As a general rule, harm should be inflicted all at once while benefits should be given little by little. Both harm and benefits should not serve as quick solutions for desperate circumstances.

Topic Tracking: Virtue 6

Topic Tracking: Power Politics 5



Chapter 9

Concerning the civil principality

Another way that a private citizen may become a prince without ability or fortune is through the support of either the common people or the nobles. From the conflicting desires of the common people (not wanting to be oppressed) and the nobles (wanting to oppress), there are three possible scenarios or forms of government: principality, liberty or license (in political terms: monarchy, democracy, or anarchy). A civil principality results when the nobles anoint one from their ranks to rule over the people, or when the people select one of their own to protect themselves against the nobles. He who comes to power through the nobles is less secure than one who comes to power through the people because the other nobles consider themselves equal to the prince, while the people seek only to be protected from oppression. A prince must group nobles according to whether they support him or not. In dealing with nobles who are not supportive, the prince should judge whether it is because of their inherent lack of strong character, or because they are ambitious and care more about their own interests. Those of the former character, especially the competent, can be used because they are not a threat. But the ambitious and cunning nobles should be looked upon as enemies to be carefully watched.

Whether a prince comes to power through the people or the nobles, he must win the support of the people, which is easily accomplished by not harming them. Machiavelli stresses the importance of keeping the good will of the people because they are crucial in times of trouble. He qualifies this statement by saying that a prince should not expect the people to bail him out of trouble. If a prince is a man of courage and ability, the people will inevitably stand behind him even in times of adversity. A prince must therefore, be closely associated with his people. He must not rely too heavily on his magistrates to lead them, lest they become too dependent on his advisors, rather than on him. If the people are dependent upon the prince in times of peace, they will be loyal to him in times of danger as well.

Topic Tracking: Power Politics 6

Chapter 10

How the strength of all principalities should be measured

A way to judge the strength of a prince is to determine whether he can stand on the power of his own army or must rely on the help of others. A prince who can meet any enemy on the battlefield is considered self-sufficient; a prince that must rely on fortifications or on the help of others is not. Machiavelli uses the German cities as examples of well-prepared fortifications, capable of withstanding a siege for a year. Such preparations are necessary, and Machiavelli advises the prince that is not self-sufficient to provide for such measures. A well-fortified city will not be a target of attack and even if it is, most armies cannot engage in a siege for that long a time. A wise prince must also know how to keep up the determination of his citizens during a siege. He can use several tactics, such as giving them hope, warning them of the cruelty of their attackers, taking strong action against dissenters, and directing their anger against the enemy. Since the enemy most certainly destroys the surrounding countryside of a fortified city, a prince can rely on the loyalty of his subjects whose properties have been damaged. Machiavelli writes, "It is the nature of men to feel as much bound by the favors they do as by those they receive." Chapter 10, pg. 43 As long as the city is properly defended and has enough food, a wise prince can withstand any siege.

Topic Tracking: Virtue 7



Chapter 11

Concerning ecclesiastical principalities

In addressing the ecclesiastical principalities, Machiavelli is referring mainly to the Church and its main position of authority, the papacy. Among the princes, the ecclesiastical prince is the only one who, once in power, does not have to defend his power because it is rooted in the ancient traditions of religion. According to Machiavelli, "[t]hese states alone, therefore, are secure and happy." Chapter 11, pg. 44 Machiavelli attributes the power of the papacy to have originated in the reign of Pope Alexander VI. Before he came to office, the ruling powers of Italy did not respect the popes and the Church. However, when Alexander VI came to power, he used his influence to strengthen the power of the Church through his son's (Cesare Borgia) military successes. After Alexander's death, Pope Julius II continued strengthening the Church's power base through innovative ways to raise money, including the sale of ecclesiastical offices. He then succeeded in several significant feats: enlarging the territorial boundaries of the Church through military conquests, weakening the most powerful barons of Italy, and driving the French out of Italy. Machiavelli suggests to Pope Leo X, the newly elected pope and uncle to Lorenzo de' Medici, that as his predecessors have made the position great through the use of arms, he should make it greater through his goodness and other virtues.

Topic Tracking: Power Politics 7

Topic Tracking: Virtue 8



Chapter 12

Concerning various kinds of troops, and especially mercenaries

In having discussed the various types of principalities, Machiavelli turns to the ways a state can attack other territories or defend itself. Machiavelli writes:

"The two most essential foundations for any state, whether it be old or new, or both old and new, are sound laws and sound military forces. Now, since the absence of sound laws assures the absence of sound military forces, while the presence of sound military forces indicates the presence of sound laws as well, I shall forego a consideration of laws and discuss military forces instead." Chapter 12, pg. 46

A prince can either have his own forces or rely on mercenary or auxiliary forces. Mercenary forces are useless because they have no devotion to the prince. Because their only motivation is their wage, they are not reliable in the face of battle. Machiavelli attributes much of Italy's demise to its use of mercenary armies. Moreover, mercenary captains, if they are capable, should be feared because they usually seek glory for themselves. If the captain is not ambitious, then he is unreliable and should not be used in the first place. History has shown that princes with their own armies have accomplished great things. Machiavelli chronicles the demise of the Italian states and links it with their increased reliance upon mercenary armies. These armies, with their invented military code of avoiding hardships, have left Italy vulnerable to the attack of the French, Spanish, and Swiss troops.



Chapter 13

Concerning auxiliary, mixed, and native forces

Auxiliary forces, or armies borrowed from an ally, are just as useless as mercenary forces because they fight with their own interests in mind. If they lose, the prince who utilizes them loses; if they win, the prince is under their favor. In victory, auxiliary armies are more dangerous than mercenary armies because they are united and capable of acting against their employers. Machiavelli provides numerous examples of princes who failed because they used auxiliary forces. As a reference, Machiavelli considers the example of Cesare Borgia. In his military campaigns, Borgia used all types of armies: auxiliary, mercenary, and his own. His accomplishments and reputation were guaranteed only when he relied on his own troops. Machiavelli reiterates this point through the example of Hiero of Syracuse and King David from the bible. Hiero always used his own troops. And as David refused King Saul's armor, before going to battle against Goliath, Machiavelli warns, "In the end, the arms of another will fall from your hand, will weigh you down, or restrain you." Chapter 13, pg. 52

Machiavelli uses France as an example of a nation with an army of mixed composition—part Swiss mercenaries and part native. Because the French have come to rely upon the Swiss, they cannot do without them. If the French had its own army, they would be invincible. It is the folly of princes to consider the immediate benefits and forego the consequences. The decline of the Roman Empire is well known to have started with their reliance upon mercenary forces. It is no secret that great princes have always used their own armies.



Chapter 14

A prince's concern in military matters

For Machiavelli, the main concern of a prince should be warfare: "A prince must have no other objective, no other thought, nor take up any profession but that of war, its methods and its discipline, for that is the only art expected of a ruler." Chapter 14, pp. 53-54 It is through war that a hereditary prince retains power and a private citizen rises to power. Francesco Sforza became the Duke of Milan through military prowess, but his sons lost their power by avoiding military affairs. A proper prince must never rest from military concerns. He must be even more diligent in times of peace, honing his skills through action and study. Considering action, Machiavelli advises hunting because it keeps the body fit and allows the prince to learn the character and nature of landscapes. Through this, he can learn how to best defend his territory and how to advance upon territories similar to it.

Philopoemen, the ancient leader of the Achaeans, is the embodiment of a prince who is constantly engaged in military affairs. Wherever he went, he would think up scenarios and situations of warfare and ask his friends for their opinions and offer up his. Therefore, in battle, he was never in a position where he did not know how to maneuver. A prince should be given to the study of great military men so that he can imitate their successes and avoid their mistakes. A prince that is diligent in times of peace will be ready in times of adversity. Machiavelli writes, "[t]hus, when fortune turns against him, he will be prepared to resist it." Chapter 14, pg. 55

Topic Tracking: Fortune 6

Topic Tracking: Virtue 9



Chapter 15

Concerning things for which men, and princes especially, are praised or censured

Machiavelli considers how a prince should behave toward his subjects and his friends. Although many books have been written on this topic, Machiavelli sees no practical value in them because they address what ought to be and not what *is*. He writes:

"Many men have imagined republics and principalities that never really existed at all. Yet the way men live is so far removed from the way they ought to live that anyone who abandons what is for what should be pursues his downfall rather than his preservation; for a man who strives after goodness in all his acts is sure to come to ruin, since there are so many men who are not good." Chapter 15, pg. 56

Since there are many possible qualities that a prince can be said to possess, he must not be overly concerned about having all the good ones. Although a bad reputation should be avoided, this is not crucial in maintaining power. The only ethic that matters is one that is beneficial to the prince in dealing with the concerns of his state.

Topic Tracking: Virtue 10

Topic Tracking: Power Politics 8

Chapter 16

Concerning liberality and parsimony

Machiavelli uses the quality of liberality to illustrate the point he made in the previous chapter about a prince's reputation. In the case of liberality, it is obvious that a prince who is generous is considered virtuous. But in practice, it is impossible for a prince to have a reputation for generosity and also be prudent. The only way for a prince to sustain generosity is to burden his people with taxes, which causes resentment. As soon as he ceases to be generous, he will be labeled a miser. Therefore, it is better for a prince to be parsimonious. Only men with reputations for parsimony have been able to rule effectively. Machiavelli answers the charge that some rulers were reputed to be generous by stating that they were generous only on their way to power, such as Julius Caesar. Others who were reputed to be generous did so by plundering the resources of their conquests. A prince's liberality breeds contempt from his subjects either through burdensome taxation or the malicious reputation of plundering. Guarding against the people's hatred is more important than building up a reputation for generosity. A wise prince should be willing to be reputed a miser than be hated for trying to be too generous.

Topic Tracking: Virtue 11

Topic Tracking: Power Politics 9



Chapter 17

Concerning cruelty: whether it is better to be loved than to be feared, or the reverse

Like liberality, it is good for a prince to be considered kind rather than cruel, but it is more often the case that cruelty serves as a better weapon. For Machiavelli, a prince who brings peace and stability through his cruelty should be considered kinder than a leader who brings destruction upon his state because of his misplaced kindness. A prince must be willing to take cruel measures if it benefits the state. Executions harm only a few individuals, but it can be healthy for the wellbeing of the entire state. In answering the question of whether it is better to be loved than feared, Machiavelli writes,

"The answer is, of course, that it would be best to be both loved and feared. But since the two rarely come together, anyone compelled to choose will find greater security in being feared than in being loved." Chapter 17, pg. 60

In general, men are unreliable when hardships arise. Thus, fear is a stronger bond of loyalty than friendship because men are fickle in relationships, but fear is constant. It is good for a prince to be feared; but he must avoid being hated. This is possible as long as the prince refrains from the citizens' properties and women. For a prince who leads his own army, it is imperative for him to practice cruelty because that is the only way he can command his soldiers' absolute respect. Machiavelli compares two great military leaders: Hannibal and Scipio. Although Hannibal's army consisted of men of various races, they were never rebellious because they feared their leader. Scipio's men, on the other hand, were known for their mutiny and dissension. Machiavelli states, "I conclude that since men love as they themselves determine but fear as their ruler determines, a wise prince must rely upon what he and not others can control." Chapter 17, pg. 61

Topic Tracking: Virtue 12

Topic Tracking: Power Politics 10



Chapter 18

In what way princes should keep their word

Although candor is praised over craftiness, history shows that leaders who practiced deceit overcame those that lived by their pledges. Machiavelli identifies two ways of fighting: by law, which is proper for men and by force, which is proper for animals. A prince must know how to fight both ways in order to be successful. To support his point, Machiavelli turns to the writers of ancient Greece and to the story of how Achilles, the Greek mythological hero, was trained by Chiron, the centaur (half man and half beast). According to Machiavelli, this is to show that a warrior needs to be trained in the fighting ways of both men and animals.

A prince must have the qualities of both the fox and the lion; one is useless without the other. A fox can recognize snares but cannot drive away wolves; a lion can drive off wolves but cannot recognize snares. Like a cunning fox, a wise prince should be willing to break his pledge if it serves his interests. Machiavelli acknowledges that this would be bad advice if men were honest, but since they are not, it is advantageous for a prince to practice the art of deception. Pope Alexander VI is a leader who is said to have been a master at this craft. For Machiavelli, a prince should strive to be only as good as circumstances allow him to be. He must also be willing to resort to evil to accomplish his agenda as fortune dictates. He writes,

"Therefore a prince will not actually need to have all the qualities previously mentioned, but he must surely seem to have them. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that having them all and always conforming to them would be harmful, while appearing to have them would be useful." Chapter 18, pg. 63

Topic Tracking: Fortune 7

A prince must put on the appearance of such qualities as clemency, faithfulness, frankness, humanity, and religion-the last being the most important. Men judge by appearances and as long as the prince is able to produce results, the methods he utilizes will be deemed necessary and even praiseworthy. Machiavelli mentions an unnamed ruler, presumably King Ferdinand of Spain, as an example of one who swears by peace and faith and does the opposite of both. Yet, that is the way he has kept his power and reputation.

Topic Tracking: Virtue 13

Topic Tracking: Power Politics 11



Chapter 19

How to avoid contempt and hatred

Most men are content as long as they are not deprived of their property and women. A prince should command respect through his conduct because a prince that is highly esteemed by his people is unlikely to face internal opposition. A prince who does not provoke the contempt of nobles and keeps the people satisfied does not have to fear conspirators.

Machiavelli praises the structure of the French government in implementing a governing body, the parliament, to intercede for the king in matters pertaining to the relationships between the nobles and the common people. This arrangement allows the king to govern the people without ever directly opposing the nobles. Machiavelli writes,

"From it a noteworthy lesson may be drawn: princes should delegate unpopular duties to others while dispensing all favors directly themselves. I say again that a prince must respect the nobility, but avoid the hatred of the common people." Chapter 19, pg. 67

Machiavelli addresses those who refer to the lives of Roman emperors as evidence disproving his previous arguments-mainly that those who rule with force keep power while those who rule with kindness lose it. He gives a comparatively detailed account of why the Roman emperors lost their power, although some ruled with justice and some with cruelty. One main reason is that at the time, there was a third party-the soldiers, whom the emperors feared more than they did the people. Many emperors fell because they sided with their soldiers instead of the people. On the other hand, the emperors who did not side with the army, with the exception of Marcus Aurelius, fell from power because of it. Among cruel emperors, only Septimus Severus, who was extraordinarily gifted, was able to rule successfully. Septimus is an embodiment of a ruler who is like both the fox and the lion.

Machiavelli notes that current leaders do not have to worry about the army because the people are now more influential. The only exceptions are Turkey and Egypt where the standing army is still closely interwoven with the sultan's rule. The wise ruler should borrow the actions of Septimus in coming to power. Once power is established, he should borrow the actions of Marcus Aurelius in ruling with justice and moderation.

Topic Tracking: Power Politics 12



Chapter 20

Whether fortresses and many other expedients that princes commonly employ are useful or not

A prince has many options in terms of preserving his state. Some are useful while others are not. Machiavelli concedes that each case should be evaluated within its own context, nevertheless, he attempts to offer some general advice. First, it is always necessary for a new prince to arm his subjects. But when a prince adds a new domain to his original possession, he must disarm his new subjects because he should rely only on the soldiers from his native domain. Second, it is not wise for a prince to encourage factions within his own state. It serves him better to rid himself of one side than to allow disunity. Third, for a new prince, it is often wise to rely on subjects he is suspicious of in the beginning of his reign than others. The suspicious subjects, knowing that they are under scrutiny, are more inclined to please him in order to gain the prince's favor. Also, a prince who acquires a new state with the aid of its inhabitants must judge their motives—whether they helped because of their natural affection for the prince or because of their hatred for the former ruler. A prince cannot trust those of the latter because it is impossible to satisfy them. It is better for him to reconcile with his former enemies. Last, Machiavelli considers fortresses useful in certain cases and harmful in others. Ultimately, a prince should not rely too heavily on fortresses because they are useless if the people hate him.



Chapter 21

What a prince must do to be esteemed

A prince earns esteem by undertaking great enterprises. King Ferdinand of Spain is cited again as an example of a lowly monarch who gained esteem by showing his ability through great feats. In the name of religion, he conquered many territories and kept his subjects awed and occupied so that they had no chance to rebel.

When confronted with a decision to take sides among two conflicting parties, it is always better to be fully devoted to one side than to be neutral. If your allies win, you benefit whether or not you have more power than they have. If you are more powerful, then your allies are under your command; if your allies are stronger, they will always feel a certain obligation to you for your help. If your side loses, you still have an ally in the loser. It is wise for a prince not to align with a stronger force unless compelled to do so. The most important virtue is having the wisdom to know what is the least risky venture and then pursuing it courageously.

Topic Tracking: Virtue 14

Topic Tracking: Power Politics 13



Chapter 22

Concerning the prince's ministers

A prince's wisdom will be judged by the quality of his ministers and civil servants. There are three types of minds: capable of thinking for itself, capable of understanding the thinking of others, and capable of neither the first nor the second. The first type is the most excellent, but a prince who has the second kind is able to succeed as well. A minister must be someone who has the prince's interests in mind over his own. If a minister is given to thinking about himself, he is not to be trusted. But for a minister that holds the affairs of the state in the highest regard, a prince must honor and entrust duties to him generously so that he will become dependent upon the success of the state, and consequently, the prince.

Topic Tracking: Virtue 15



Chapter 23

How to avoid flatterers

A prudent prince should have a select group of wise counselors to advise him truthfully only on matters he asks about. All other opinions from others he should ignore. But ultimately, the decisions should be made by the prince and carried out resolutely. He gives an example of Emperor Maximilian II, who never consulted with others what he planned to do, and when confronted by his counselors of his plans, would change his mind so that no one knew one day what he would do the next. If a prince is given to changing his mind, his reputation will suffer. A prince must have the wisdom to recognize good advice from bad.

Topic Tracking: Virtue 16



Chapter 24

Why the princes of Italy have lost their states

The exploits of a new prince are more closely watched than that of a hereditary prince. Therefore, if a new prince succeeds in his endeavors through sound laws, arms, and examples, he will win double glory for himself. Just as a hereditary prince who loses his kingdom through folly garners double disgrace.

The princes of Italy have lost their kingdoms due to their reliance upon mercenary or auxiliary armies. They have kept neither the favor of the people nor containment of the nobles. They cannot blame fortune but only their own defects. They have resorted to the hope that if deprived of power, they will be brought back by those unsatisfied with the new rulers. Machiavelli states that such thinking is cowardly and that only those methods that come from one's own resourcefulness are good, certain, and enduring.

Topic Tracking: Fortune 8



Chapter 25

Concerning the influence of fortune in human affairs, and the manner in which it is to be resisted

Some believe that it is needless to control what is determined by God or by fortune. Having thought the matter through, Machiavelli states, "Nevertheless, since our free will must not be denied, I estimate that even if fortune is the arbiter of half our actions, she still allows us to control the other half, or thereabouts." Chapter 25, pg. 84 He compares fortune to a torrential river that cannot be easily controlled during flooding season. In periods of calm, however, people can erect dams and levees in order to minimize its impact. Fortune seems to strike at the places where no resistance is offered, as is the case in Italy.

For a prince to succeed, his character and methods of rule must be suited to the times. That is why two princes who use the same methods get different results and another two who use different methods achieve similar results. Pope Julius II is an example of one whose methods corresponded with the times. Therefore, he was able to succeed in all the impetuous endeavors he attempted. All things considered, it is usually better to be impetuous than cautious. Machiavelli writes, "for fortune is a woman and in order to be mastered she must be jogged and beaten." Chapter 25, pg. 86

Topic Tracking: Fortune 9



Chapter 26

An exhortation to free Italy from the hands of the barbarians

Machiavelli believes that the time is ripe for a determined prince to restore former glory to Italy and free her from the bondage of barbarian cruelty. Just as great leaders of the past won glory by taking it upon themselves to meet their nation's desperate needs, Machiavelli urges the prince, Lorenzo de' Medici, to take up the endeavor because all the signs point to his success. (The Medici family held great political clout, including control of the papacy). Before, a certain prince seemed to have all the necessary qualities to become Italy's savior, but in the end, fortune undid his labors. Machiavelli is referring to Cesare Borgia, who almost succeeded in uniting Italy, but failed to do so because of ill health. Machiavelli writes that the prince, on the other hand, is destined for glory just as long as he follows the model of former great princes. Italians are not lacking in courage or skill in battle. What they need is a capable leader who is worthy of the people's respect and admiration. Italian troops are capable in individual combat, but have done poorly in wars because of the lack of qualified leaders. Machiavelli emphasizes again that the prince should command and keep his own army. He is convinced that with new military weapons and strategy, an Italian army can defeat any of the other formidable armies—the Spanish, Swiss, German, and French. They all have their exploitable weakness. Machiavelli writes with much emotion:

"I cannot describe with how much love, with what thirst for revenge, with what resolute loyalty, with what tenderness, with what tears he would be received in all those provinces which have endured these foreign hordes. What gates would be closed to him? What people would deny him obedience? Whose envy would oppose him? What Italian would withhold his allegiance?" Chapter 26, pg. 90

Machiavelli challenges the prince to save Italy from the control of the barbarians. He concludes by quoting a line from a poem by Petrarch that takes glory in Italian might.

Topic Tracking: Fortune 10

Topic Tracking: Virtue 17