



95¢

CLASSICS SERIES CL56

# the prince

NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI

*Introduction by John Tobin*



COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

# The Prince



NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI

## *Introduction*

There is an apocryphal story regarding the reception of *The Prince* by Lorenzo the Magnificent, its dedicatee, who was but the grandson of the Lorenzo of true magnificence, the patron of Poliziano and Botticelli, Ficino and Michelangelo, to the effect that as Machiavelli brought forward his gift copy of the text another suitor presented a pair of hunting dogs to the Duke. Lorenzo preferred the dogs, whose scent he found less rank and pungent than the animal man anatomized by the former Florentine Secretary. However odoriferous, indeed gamy, this creature, however far from other Florentine views of man, the angelic of Pico or the Neo-Platonically beautiful of Botticelli, his existence was not denied then, nor is it now. An understanding of him as he is at his worst, not as he ought to be at his best, is the *sine qua non* of a successful ruler. *The Prince* is a textbook guaranteed by its author to provide just such an understanding.

In 1513 Machiavelli wrote the book in order to gain employment with the Florentine government, now controlled by the Medici but ~~to~~ <sup>owing</sup> whose brief experiment with representative republican government he had served as Secretary of the Council of Ten, a position of respon-



sibility, though by no means equivalent to a modern European Foreign Minister, or even Ambassador plenipotentiary.

That Machiavelli, exiled by the Medici—indeed tortured by them to the degree of four turns upon the rack—should have sought a post from those whose monarchical reign ended his dream of a Florence imitative of the civic virtues of republican Rome is not wholly surprising. For, genuinely anti-dictatorial as he was in principle, Machiavelli was among that class of men who prefer ultimately an ordered security to an uneasy liberty. It was a preference more than understandable in the early years of the sixteenth century. Security and order were what Florence and the other Italian city-states needed most in their unequal struggle against the “barbarian” nation-states of France and Spain, to name only the chief predators. If Lorenzo de Medici could unify Italy so as to expel the foreigners, then the constraints of monarchical society could be endured. Since 1494, when Sforza of Milan misguidedly had invited Charles the Eighth of France to support his cause against rival city-states, through 1503 when the Spaniards arrived, joined in 1509 by the Germans, Renaissance Italy was the constant victim of looting, pillaging, and slaughter, which culminated in 1527 with the sack of Rome. In the midst of this chaos, Machiavelli offered specific directives as to diplomacy and to war, the ultimate tool of diplomacy.

The amorality behind these directives has so shocked sufficiently large numbers of readers that “Machiavellian” has become a synonym for the ruthlessly cunning practice of *Realpolitik*. Aristotle in Book Five of *The Politics*, to which Machiavelli is partly indebted, had provided an equally detached analysis of the means of preserving power, but he included it amid a work replete with references to “the good,” to justice, to the importance of the young being educated in the spirit of the constitution, and similarly positive, morally connotative, if not explicitly ethical judgments. Kinds of slight or infrequent deceit, noble white lies, had been condoned by St. Basil and by Plato in Book Three of *The Republic*, but until Machiavelli, no one had urged profound and constant deceit in so explicit a manner. The posthumous reputation of the Florentine Secretary has shown quite

rightly that humankind cannot bear very much political reality.

For Machiavelli the end which justifies these morally illicit means is civil unity; the only sin is that of ignorance in bringing about such order. In keeping with this amorality, the author separates radically the sacred and secular orders, save for some velleities he has in describing various cruel acts as "good," in the distinction he makes between power and glory, and in the curious parallel of Moses:Lorenzo, Israelites:Florentines, Christ the Redeemer:Lorenzo. The reverse policy of fusing the two orders had produced the chaos and confusion of Savonarola's theocratic Florence, 1493-98.

The only role Machiavelli allowed religion was that of a cloak of false-seeming. Indeed, he anticipates Marx in viewing it as a kind of opiate. As for the Church itself, Machiavelli considers it wholly as a temporal power in the days when "how many legions has the Pope?" was neither a mocking nor a rhetorical question. Moreover, the Church provided him with his classic examples of the ruler who is the cunning fox, Alexander VI, and the bold lion, Julius II, with Alexander's son, Cesare Borgia, the cardinal instance of the prince who is both lion and fox.

Prudence, that supreme virtue in a ruler, which deals with the means to adjust to objective reality rather than the ends was possessed by Cesare Borgia to a high degree. It is the means and the elegance of their execution that obviously delighted Machiavelli. If politics was a subtle craft, murder was not less a fine art; Machiavelli had the soul of a Florentine artist. The satisfaction implicit in his description of Borgia's treatment of de Orco or of Oliverotto's Theodoric and Odoacer dinner party have offended certain readers fully as much as the subject matter itself.

When guile fails, force has to be used. And force means war. War fascinated Machiavelli. He never forgot that Florence has a mythical Roman past, that the city now under the protection of St. John the Baptist had been under the aegis of the ancient war deity Mars. He thought war the only art necessary to a leader of state. He wrote a treatise on warfare itself, indeed accomplished a moderately successful conversion of Florence from a mercenary dependent power to one defended by a citizen

militia. War had been the chief occupation, however formalized, of the nobles and knights, and the middle-class Machiavelli had an excessive veneration for this upper-class activity, all too excessive in a day when artillery was radically altering warfare. This middle-class background partially explains Machiavelli's enthusiasm for self-made rulers like Agathocles and Septimius Severus, men who by force had overcome that fickle woman, Fortune. The prince in Machiavelli's text is, of course, any ruler whether of royal or common blood.

It was more than nostalgia for Roman citizen armies described by Livy that produced Machiavelli's strong opposition to the mercenaries. As Secretary to the Council of Ten, he had actually dealt with leading *condottieri* who demanded and received from their employers all too many *florins* when one considers their reluctance to fight pitched battles or indeed attack opposing mercenaries with whom, as members of the same craft-guild, they felt a loyalty greater than that they owed their paymasters. The mercenaries were frequently both ineffectual and unreliable. Some suggestion of this latter quality can be found in the name of the great *condottiere*, Gattamelata, or the *Honeyed Cat*, whose equestrian statue by Donatello can still be seen in Padua. The crude brutality can be seen in Verrocchio's study of Colleoni, whose raw animality rivals that of the horse he sits astride. There are no Cincinnati or Scipios here.

A scientific treatise with a hortatory conclusion, a work of detachment in its analysis of means, of passionate involvement as to its end, *The Prince*, apart from the ending, is written in a direct, unadorned, indeed apothegmatic style. The pithy judgments about fortune, initial impressions, virtue and vice, the aphorisms about war and cunning pleased an age which delighted in similar examples of compact wisdom from Erasmus through Bacon.

As all thinking is radically metaphoric, so images and analogies necessarily appear in Machiavelli—the prudent man is like an archer, colonies are keys to open a country, evils brew, Fortune is a woman, David's refusal to use any but his own arms against Goliath is an emblem of the superiority of native over mercenary troops. All of which illustrations add a vividness and force to the argu-

ment. Moreover, they often indicate how far Machiavelli is at odds with orthodoxy. To cite only one example: the centaur is used by Machiavelli as an emblem of the need to be at times man and at times beast, yet traditionally it had been interpreted as the necessary control of reason over the appetitive and irascible instincts. When Machiavelli wrote Chiron, he thought Colleoni.

Machiavelli's extension of the Biblical doctrine of being as shrewd as serpents, as mild as doves, his insistence on the importance of adjustment to circumstance, and above all, his plea for Florentine and Italian unity went unheeded by Lorenzo. He was not the long-sought redeemer; most assuredly his kingdom was not of this world: he is to be found in Michelangelo's marble in the Medici chapel, ironically enough the symbol of the contemplative life.

However, Machiavelli would have found solace in the great hope of Renaissance humanists, posthumous fame. *The Prince*, if proximately a failure, has been ultimately a success. The first Florentine realist artist, Masaccio, said that painting is merely the imitation of things as they are. Like Masaccio, but in a different medium, Machiavelli painted man as he is. The colors of Masaccio's frescoes have not faded; you may find them still in the churches of Florence; neither have the words of Machiavelli: you may find them in the political capitals of the world, in London, in Cairo, in Washington, and in Moscow.

JOHN J. TOBIN

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Niccolò Machiavelli was born on May 3, 1469, in Florence, Italy. His father was a jurist who held landed property that brought in a fair income, making it unnecessary for his son to depend on his political income for a living.

In 1494, Machiavelli entered political life by being appointed a clerk in the second chancery of the commune under Marcello Virgilio Adriani, his former teacher. In 1498, when Adriani became chancellor of the Republic, Machiavelli succeeded him as second chancellor and secretary, a post he held for fourteen years.

In 1502, Machiavelli married Marietta Corsini, who bore him several children. In that same year, he was sent, against his will, to the court of Cesare Borgia in Romagna. He returned to Florence in January, 1503, with a lasting admiration for the audacity and political prudence of Cesare.

In 1512, Florence deposed Soderini and opened her gates to the Medici. Machiavelli was deprived of his appointments and exiled from Florence for one year. Soon after, he was implicated in the conspiracy of Pier Paolo Boscoli and was sentenced to prison. He was released by Giovanni de Medici's election to the papacy in March, 1513, and retired to a farm near Casciano. Losing his emoluments, he could barely support his family and was now driven to writing.

He died in Florence on June 20, 1527.

# The Prince

*The The  
The The The  
The*

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI



*Translated by*  
CHRISTIAN E. DETMOLD



AIRMONT PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC.  
22 EAST 60TH STREET • NEW YORK 10022



**An Airmont Classic**

***specially selected for the Airmont Library  
from the immortal literature of the world***

**THE SPECIAL CONTENTS OF THIS EDITION**

**©, Copyright, 1965, by  
Airmont Publishing Company, Inc.**

# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
<i>Niccolò Machiavelli to the Magnificent Lorenzo, Son of Piero de' Medici . . . . .</i>	11
1. <i>How Many Kinds of Principalities There Are, and in What Manner They Are Acquired . . . . .</i>	13
2. <i>Of Hereditary Principalities . . . . .</i>	14
3. <i>Of Mixed Principalities . . . . .</i>	15
4. <i>Why the Kingdom of Darius, Which Was Conquered by Alexander, Did Not Revolt Against the Successors of Alexander After His Death . . . . .</i>	25
5. <i>How Cities or Principalities Are to Be Governed that Previous to Being Conquered Had Lived Under Their Own Laws . . . . .</i>	29
6. <i>Of New Principalities That Have Been Acquired by the Valor of the Prince and by His Own Troops . . . . .</i>	31
7. <i>Of New Principalities That Have Been Acquired by the Aid of Others and by Good Fortune . . . . .</i>	35
8. <i>Of Such as Have Achieved Sovereignty by Means of Crimes . . . . .</i>	44
9. <i>Of Civil Principalities . . . . .</i>	49
10. <i>In What Manner the Power of All Principalities Should Be Measured . . . . .</i>	54
11. <i>Of Ecclesiastical Principalities . . . . .</i>	57
12. <i>Of the Different Kinds of Troops, and of Mercenaries . . . . .</i>	61
13. <i>Of Auxiliaries, and of Mixed and National Troops . . . . .</i>	68
14. <i>Of the Duties of a Prince in Relation to Military Matters . . . . .</i>	73

15.	<i>Of the Means by which Men, and Especially Princes, Win Applause, or Incur Censure . . .</i>	76
16.	<i>Of Liberality and Parsimoniousness . . .</i>	78
17.	<i>Of Cruelty and Clemency, and Whether It Is Better to Be Loved than Feared . . .</i>	81
18.	<i>In What Manner Princes Should Keep Their Faith . . .</i>	85
19.	<i>A Prince Must Avoid Being Despised and Hated . . .</i>	89
20.	<i>Whether the Erection of Fortresses, and Many Other Things Which Princes Often Do, are Useful or Injurious . . .</i>	101
21.	<i>How Princes Should Conduct Themselves to Acquire a Reputation . . .</i>	107
22.	<i>Of the Ministers of Princes . . .</i>	112
23.	<i>How to Avoid Flatterers . . .</i>	114
24.	<i>The Reason Why the Princes of Italy Have Lost Their States . . .</i>	117
25.	<i>Of the Influence of Fortune in Human Affairs, and How It May Be Counteracted . . .</i>	119
26.	<i>Exhortation to Deliver Italy from Foreign Barbarians . . .</i>	123

**Niccolò Machiavelli**  
to the  
**Magnificent Lorenzo, son of Piero de' Medici**

Those who desire to win the favor of princes generally endeavor to do so by offering them those things which they themselves prize most, or such as they observe the prince to delight in most. Thence it is that princes have very often presented to them horses, arms, cloth of gold, precious stones, and similar ornaments worthy of their greatness. Wishing now myself to offer to your Magnificence some proof of my devotion, I have found nothing among all I possess that I hold more dear or esteem more highly than the knowledge of the actions of great men, which I have acquired by long experience of modern affairs, and a continued study of ancient history.

These I have meditated upon for a long time, and examined with great care and diligence; and having now written them out in a small volume, I send this to your Magnificence. And although I judge this work unworthy of you, yet I trust that your kindness of heart may induce you to accept it, considering that I cannot offer you anything better than the means of understanding in the briefest time all that which I have learned by so many years of study, and with so much trouble and danger to myself.

I have not set off this little work with pompous phrases, nor filled it with high-sounding and magnificent

words, nor with any other allurements or extrinsic embellishments with which many are wont to write and adorn their works; for I wished that mine should derive credit only from the truth of the matter, and that the importance of the subject should make it acceptable.

And I hope it may not be accounted presumption if a man of lowly and humble station ventures to discuss and direct the conduct of princes; for as those who wish to delineate countries place themselves low in the plain to observe the form and character of mountains and high places, and for the purpose of studying the nature of the low country place themselves high upon an eminence, so one must be a prince to know well the character of the people, and to understand well the nature of a prince one must be of the people.

May your Magnificence then accept this little gift in the same spirit in which I send it; and if you will read and consider it well, you will recognize in it my desire that you may attain that greatness which fortune and your great qualities promise. And if your Magnificence will turn your eyes from the summit of your greatness toward those low places, you will know how undeservedly I have to bear the great and continued malice of fortune.



## *Chapter 1*

### **HOW MANY KINDS OF PRINCIPALITIES THERE ARE, AND IN WHAT MANNER THEY ARE ACQUIRED**

All states and governments that have had, and have at present, dominion over men, have been and are either republics or principalities.

The principalities are either hereditary or they are new. Hereditary principalities are those where the government has been for a long time in the family of the prince. New principalities are either entirely new, as was Milan to Francesco Sforza, or they are like appurtenances annexed to the hereditary state of the prince who acquires them, as the kingdom of Naples is to that of Spain.

States thus acquired have been accustomed either to live under a prince, or to exist as free states; and they are acquired either by the arms of others, or by the conqueror's own, or by fortune or personal courage and talents.

## Chapter 2

### OF HEREDITARY PRINCIPALITIES

I will not discuss here the subject of republics, having treated of them at length elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> but will confine myself only to principalities; and following the above indicated order of distinctions, I will proceed to discuss how states of this kind should be governed and maintained. I say, then, that hereditary states, accustomed to the line of their prince, are maintained with much less difficulty than new states. For it is enough merely that the prince do not transcend the order of things established by his predecessors, and then to accommodate himself to events as they occur. So that if such a prince has but ordinary sagacity, he will always maintain himself in his state, unless some extraordinary force should deprive him of it. And even in such a case he will recover it, whenever the occupant meets with any reverses. We have in Italy, for instance, the Duke of Ferrara, who could not have resisted the assaults of the Venetians in 1484, nor those of Pope Julius II in 1510, but for the fact that his family had for a great length of time held the sovereignty of that dominion. For the natural prince has less cause and less necessity for irritating his subjects, whence it is reasonable that he should be more beloved. And unless extraordinary vices should cause him to be hated, he will naturally have the affection of his people. For in the antiquity and continuity of dominion the memory of innovations, and their causes, are effaced; for each change and alteration always prepares the way and facilitates the next.

<sup>1</sup> In the essay on Livy in the *Discourses*.

## Chapter 3

### OF MIXED PRINCIPALITIES

But it is in a new principality that difficulties present themselves. In the first place, if it be not entirely new, but composed of different parts, which when taken all together may as it were be called mixed, its mutations arise in the beginning from a natural difficulty, which is inherent in all new principalities, because men change their rulers gladly, in the belief that they will better themselves by the change. It is this belief that makes them take up arms against the reigning prince; but in this they deceive themselves, for they find afterward from experience that they have only made their condition worse. This is the inevitable consequence of another natural and ordinary necessity, which ever obliges a new prince to vex his people with the maintenance of an armed force, and by an infinite number of other wrongs that follow in the train of new conquests. Thus the new prince finds that he has for enemies all those whom he has injured by seizing that principality; and at the same time he cannot preserve as friends even those who have aided him in obtaining possession, because he cannot satisfy their expectations, nor can he employ strong measures against them, being under obligation to them. For however strong a new prince may be in troops, yet will he always have need of the good will of the inhabitants, if he wishes to enter into firm possession of the country.

It was for these reasons that Louis XII, King of France, having suddenly made himself master of Milan, lost it as quickly, Lodovico Sforza's own troops alone having sufficed to wrest it from him the first time. For

the very people who had opened the gates to Louis XII, finding themselves deceived in their expectations of immediate as well as prospective advantages, soon became disgusted with the burdens imposed by the new prince.

It is very true that, having recovered such revolted provinces, it is easier to keep them in subjection; for the prince will avail himself of the occasion of the rebellion to secure himself, with less consideration for the people, by punishing the guilty, watching the suspected, and strengthening himself at all the weak points of the province. Thus a mere demonstration on the frontier by Lodovico Sforza lost Milan to the French the first time; but to make them lose it a second time required the whole world to be against them, and that their armies should be dispersed and driven out of Italy; which resulted from the reasons which I have explained above. Nevertheless, France lost Milan both the first and the second time.

The general causes of the first loss have been sufficiently explained; but it remains to be seen now what occasioned the loss of Milan to France the second time, and to point out the remedies which the King had at his command, and which might be employed by any other prince under similar circumstances to maintain himself in a conquered province, but which King Louis XII failed to employ.

I will say then, first, that the states which a prince acquires and annexes to his own dominions are either in the same country, speaking the same language, or they are not. When they are, it is very easy to hold them, especially if they have not been accustomed to govern themselves; for in that case it suffices to extinguish the line of the prince who, till then, has ruled over them, but otherwise to maintain their old institutions. There being no difference in their manners and customs, the inhabitants will submit quietly, as we have seen in the case of