

剑桥政治思想史原著系列（影印本）

CAMBRIDGE TEXTS IN THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

君主论

The Prince

Machiavelli 马基雅维利

Edited by

QUENTIN SKINNER

& RUSSELL PRICE

中国政法大学出版社

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Series editors

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Machiavelli: The Prince

This is a major new English-language edition of one of the central texts in the history of political thought, presenting students with the most accurate and accessible translation yet of Machiavelli's famous treatise.

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君主论
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剑桥政治思想史原著系列

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在政治理论领域，“剑桥政治思想史原著系列”作为主要的学生教科丛书，如今已牢固确立了其地位。本丛书旨在使学生能够获得从古希腊到 20 世纪初期西方政治思想史方面所有最为重要的原著。它囊括了所有著名的经典原著，但与此同时，它又扩展了传统的评价尺度，以便能够纳入范围广泛、不那么出名的作品。而在此之前，这些作品中有许多从未有过现代英文版本可资利用。只要可能，所选原著都会以完整而不删节的形式出版，其中的译作则是专门为本丛书的目的而安排。每一本书都有一个评论性的导言，加上历史年表、生平梗概、进一步阅读指南，以及必要的词汇表和原文注解。本丛书的最终目的是，为西方政治思想的整个发展脉络提供一个清晰的轮廓。

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Editors' note

The division of labour between us has been as follows. The Introduction was written by Quentin Skinner, who also compiled the Bibliographical Note and the list of Principal Events in Machiavelli's Life. But he is greatly indebted to Russell Price for the many helpful suggestions he made about each of these parts of the book. For commenting on drafts of the Introduction he would also like to express his warm thanks to Raymond Geuss, Susan James and Jeremy Mynott.

The translation is the work of Russell Price, who is also responsible for the annotations to the text, the Appendices, the Biographical Notes and the Indexes. But he in turn wishes to acknowledge his great debt to Quentin Skinner for checking the whole of the translation and for commenting on his other contributions to the book. He is also very grateful for the help received from several other friends, which has contributed greatly to improving the translation. He is especially indebted to Paolo L. Rossi, who checked most of it. He also wishes to thank Francesco Badolato, Luciano Cheles and Michael Oakeshott for commenting on some chapters, and for advice, as well as Bruna Isella and Rev. Giovanni Rulli, S. J., for advice on some points, and Harro Höpfl for help in correcting the proofs.

Introduction

Niccolò Machiavelli was born in Florence in 1469. He received his early education from a well-known teacher of Latin, Paolo da Ronciglione, and may subsequently have attended the University of Florence. After that, however, almost nothing is known about him until 1498. In the spring of that year the regime dominated by Savonarola fell from power in Florence. A new city government was elected, and Machiavelli was one of those who rose to prominence in the wake of the change. Although he appears to have held no previous public office, he suddenly found himself installed both as head of the second Chancery and as secretary to the main foreign relations committee of the republic, the so-called Ten of War.

Machiavelli served the Florentine republic for over fourteen years, during which he was sent on a number of diplomatic missions on behalf of the Ten. In the course of these embassies he wrote a large body of official reports, trying out many of the ideas he was later to develop in his political works. He also came into direct contact with many of the political leaders whose policies he subsequently analysed in the pages of *The Prince*, including Louis XII of France, Cesare Borgia, Pope Julius II and the Emperor Maximilian.

Machiavelli's public career came to an abrupt end in the summer of 1512. During the previous October the Pope had signed the Holy League with Ferdinand of Spain. Entering Italy in the spring of 1512, Ferdinand's troops first drove the French out of Milan. Then they turned against Florence, the traditional ally of the French. Faced with the sack of their city, the Florentines capitulated at the end of August. The Medici family, in exile since 1494, returned to its earlier position

of controlling influence in the city, and soon afterwards the institutions of the republic were dissolved.

Machiavelli's own misfortunes began in November, when he was formally dismissed from his post in the Chancery. (Why he was suddenly removed, however, remains something of a mystery, especially as some of his friends survived the change of regime without apparent difficulty.) A second blow fell in February 1513, when he was accused of taking part in an abortive conspiracy against the new regime. At first he was imprisoned and tortured, but soon afterwards he was released and allowed to retire to his farm. From there, in December 1513, he wrote a famous letter to his friend Francesco Vettori about his new life. I have been making it bearable, he reports, by studying ancient history, and at the same time pondering the lessons to be gleaned from long years of government service. As a result, he says, 'I . . . have composed a little book *On Principalities*, in which I delve as deeply as I can into this subject' (p. 93). The little book is *The Prince*, which Machiavelli drafted – as this letter indicates – in the second half of 1513 and completed by the end of that year.

The Prince opens with the observation that all forms of dominion are either republics or principalities (Ch. I). But Machiavelli at once adds that he will concern himself exclusively with principalities, concentrating on the best methods of governing and holding on to them (Ch. II). His aim in doing so, as his opening Dedicatory Letter explains, is to show the Medici how to scale the heights of greatness. One of his hopes, he adds, is of course to win their favour by advising them on how this can be done. But his main aspiration – as he makes clear in the Exhortation to the Medici which brings *The Prince* to a close – is that if they follow his advice, the result will be to bring honour to their illustrious family and benefit to the people as a whole.

As Machiavelli points out at the start of Chapter XII, the first eleven chapters of his book form a unity. He begins by distinguishing three different types of principality, and proceeds to analyse the different methods of acquiring and maintaining them. First he considers hereditary principalities, but only to note that these pose few difficulties (Ch. II). Next he turns to what he calls mixed cases, those in which a ruler annexes a new possession to existing territories (Ch. III). This is where problems begin to arise, especially if the two principalities are in different areas and lack a shared language or system of laws.

Chapter III is given over to contrasting the Roman way of proceeding

in such cases with the methods recently employed by Louis XII of France in attempting to hold on to his new possessions in Italy. The first and most effective policy, Machiavelli insists no less than three times, is for the ruler of such a composite principality to go and live in his new territories. Thereafter he must devote himself to undermining his stronger neighbours while protecting the weaker ones. The Romans always acted in this fashion, as a result of which they never lost control of new provinces. But Louis has done exactly the opposite, as a result of which he has just been hounded out of Milan for the second time.

Newly acquired territories will either be accustomed to living under a prince (Ch. IV), or else will be self-governing republics used to living 'in freedom' (Ch. V). Territories of the former type are relatively easy to hold, provided that the previous ruler was someone who exercised total political control. But conquered republics are very hard to maintain, for they always display 'greater vitality, more hatred, and a stronger desire for revenge' (p. 19). A new ruler must either destroy them completely, or else be sure to go and live there, while at the same time allowing their citizens as many as possible of their old laws.

Machiavelli next turns from rulers who gain control of new territories to the contrasting case of private citizens who become rulers for the first time. He considers five different ways in which this transition can be effected, arguing that the obstacles a new prince can expect to encounter will largely depend on the manner in which his principality was first obtained.

One method of becoming a prince is by virtú and the force of one's own arms (Ch. VI). Principalities are hard to acquire in this way, but easy to hold once acquired. A second method is to gain power – as Cesare Borgia did – by good fortune and the arms of others (Ch. VII). Such rulers attain their positions with ease, but hold on to them only with the greatest difficulty. A third way is to come to power by crime (Ch. VIII). Machiavelli offers as his main example Agathocles of Sicily, who seized control of Syracuse after butchering the entire senate. A fourth way is to be chosen by one's fellow-citizens (Ch. IX). Princes of this type generally find little difficulty in holding on to power, provided they are able to retain the goodwill of those who originally chose them. Finally, a fifth method of rising from the status of a private citizen to that of a ruler is to be elected pope (Ch. XI).

Machiavelli presents this classification in a self-consciously cool and

abstract style. When he discusses the attainment of power by crime, he remarks that he will not enter into the merits of the case, since his examples 'should be enough for anyone who needs to imitate them' (p. 30). And when he ends by discussing the Papacy, he insists on treating that august institution – in a manner that must certainly have startled his original readers – as nothing more than one of the various principalities contending for power in Italy.

Nevertheless, there is something deceptive about Machiavelli's presentation of his case. He is careful to develop his typologies and put forward his precepts in wholly general terms. But the factors he chooses to emphasise suggest that, at several crucial points, what he is really thinking about is the situation in Florence.

This becomes evident as soon as we recall the position of the Medici at the moment when Machiavelli was writing *The Prince*. At the time of their reinstatement in 1512, the Medici had been living in exile for eighteen years. They had thus spent most of their lives as private citizens. Moreover, the city to which they returned had been a self-governing republic throughout the intervening period. Finally, they owed their reinstatement not to their own *virtù*, but to sheer good fortune combined with the foreign arms supplied by Ferdinand of Spain.

This is to say that the Medici found themselves in the predicament Machiavelli considers most dangerous of all for a new prince. He is very emphatic in Chapter VII about the problems encountered by those who suddenly come to power by luck or favour in combination with the force of foreign arms: 'like all other natural things that are born and grow rapidly, states that grow quickly cannot sufficiently develop their roots, trunks and branches, and will be destroyed by the first chill winds of adversity' (p. 23). He insists in Chapter V that these problems will be even graver if their principality was previously a republic. For in republics 'they do not forget, indeed cannot forget, their lost liberties' (p. 19). Beneath the surface generalities of Machiavelli's text, a highly specific note of warning – possibly even of *Schadenfreude* – is clearly audible.

A similar point can be made if we consider how the Medici conducted themselves in Florence during the years immediately after their return. Giuliano de' Medici, the man to whom Machiavelli originally dedicated *The Prince*, was at first sent to take control. But the head of the family, Pope Leo X, recalled him to Rome as early as April 1513.

Giuliano's nephew Lorenzo, to whom Machiavelli rededicated his book after Giuliano's death in 1516, was thereupon sent in his place. But he too spent little time in the direct supervision of the city's affairs. He was absent from September 1514 until May 1515, and again for much of the rest of that year; he was absent again from October 1516 until the spring of the following year, and he died less than two years after that.

Throughout the period when Machiavelli was writing and revising *The Prince*, the Medici were thus behaving in just the manner that Machiavelli felt to be the height of imprudence. As we have seen, Chapter III argues that (Louis XII's failure to go and live in his newly conquered Italian territories was one of the main causes of his losing them so rapidly. Chapter V adds that, in the case of new possessions which have previously been republics, it is absolutely indispensable either to destroy them or else to go and settle in their territories. Once again, an undercurrent of specific warning and advice appears to lie beneath the surface generalities of Machiavelli's text.

At the start of Chapter XII Machiavelli announces a new theme. Having discussed the various types of principality, he now turns to the figure of the prince. Unless a new prince builds firm foundations he will always come to grief. (But the main foundations of any government are good arms and the good laws that arise out of them. The first and most basic topic to be considered must therefore be the prince's methods of defence.)

Taking up this question in Chapters XII to XIV, Machiavelli makes two fundamental points. (The first is that no prince can be said to have good arms unless he raises his own troops.) And in speaking of *arme proprie*, as he explains at the end of Chapter XIII, what Machiavelli means are armies 'composed of subjects or citizens or of one's dependents' (p. 51). This is one of Machiavelli's cardinal beliefs, and it underlies practically everything he says about the best means of gaining and holding power. Chapter VI had already warned that even the greatest *virtù* will never be sufficient to maintain a new ruler unless he can also defend himself without the help of others. Chapter VII had declared that the first task of those who win power by favour or fortune is – as Cesare Borgia had recognised – to raise their own troops. And in Chapter XI Machiavelli had sardonically added that, although we cannot enquire into the workings of the Papacy, since it is controlled by a higher power, we can certainly ask why it has grown so rapidly in

stature of recent years. The answer, once again, is simply that the popes have 'made it great by the use of force' (p. 42).

(Machiavelli's argument constitutes a frontal attack on the advice-books for princes published by a number of his contemporaries. Giovanni Pontano, for example, writing his treatise on *The Prince* in the 1490s, had affirmed that any ruler who is loved by his subjects will never need to maintain an army at all.) Machiavelli never tires of insisting that, on the contrary, sheer force is indispensable to good government. He not only makes this the principal theme of these central chapters on military affairs; he also reverts to the same topic in the last three chapters of his book.

These closing chapters begin by considering the various rulers who have recently lost power in Italy (Ch. XXIV). In every case, Machiavelli stresses, their first and basic failing was their 'common military weakness' (p. 83). This makes it absurd for them to claim that they have been the victims of sheer ill-fortune. The power of *fortuna*, as the celebrated discussion in Chapter XXV goes on to explain, need never control more than half our actions. They have lost their positions in consequence of lacking the kind of *virtù* with which Fortune can alone be opposed, and in particular the kind of military *virtù* needed for the successful defence of one's territories. The final Exhortation to the Medici largely echoes the same refrain. 'If your illustrious family, then, wants to emulate those great men who saved their countries, it is essential above all else, as a sound basis for every campaign, to form an army composed of your own men' (pp. 89-90).

Machiavelli's argument is also directed against the prevailing conduct of warfare in Italy. (With the increasing refinement of urban as well as courtly life, most princes had given up attempting to muster their own armies and turned to the employment of mercenary and auxiliary troops.) Against this practice Machiavelli speaks out with intense vehemence. Mercenaries are 'useless and dangerous'; the ruin of Italy 'has been caused by nothing else than the reliance over so many years on mercenary armies' (p. 43). Borrowed auxiliaries are even worse; if they lose they ruin you, but if they win they leave you at the mercy of the foreign ruler to whom they owe their basic allegiance (Ch. XIII).

Machiavelli's other main contention about the prince's military duties forms the subject of Chapter XIV. A ruler must always think and act essentially as a warrior, and above all take command of his armies

himself. This too constitutes a sharp break with the usual values of Renaissance advice-books aimed at princes and their followers. Consider, for example, Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*, drafted a few years before *The Prince*. (Castiglione argues that, even among those whose profession is arms, warlike attitudes must of course be set aside in time of peace in order to cultivate the arts and refinements of civilised life.) Machiavelli grimly points to the consequences of adopting such an attitude: 'it is evident that if rulers concern themselves more with the refinements of life than with military matters, they lose power' (p. 52). A prince, he concludes, 'should have no other objective and no other concern, nor occupy himself with anything else except war and its methods and practices' (pp. 51-2).

Following this discussion of military affairs, Machiavelli announces at the start of Chapter XV that one further question still needs to be raised about the figure of the prince. How should he conduct himself towards others, especially his allies and his own subjects? Machiavelli's answer occupies him throughout Chapters XV to XXIII, after which he concludes (as we have seen) by reverting to the topic of defence. The intervening chapters undoubtedly represent the most sensational and 'Machiavellian' sections of his book.

He begins by noting that 'many people have written about this subject' (p. 54). It is clear that he partly has in mind the advice-books produced by such prominent humanists as Patrizi and Platina as well as Pontano, all of whom had published treatises entitled *The Prince* in the course of Machiavelli's own lifetime. As he subsequently indicates, however, he also has in mind a number of ancient treatises to which these contemporary writers owed their deepest intellectual debt. The most influential of these included Seneca's book of advice to Nero, *De clementia*, and above all Cicero's general treatise on moral duties, *De officiis*, whose precepts were frequently copied out by Renaissance moralists virtually word-for-word.

At the same time Machiavelli alerts us to the fact that his own analysis will involve him in repudiating this entire tradition of thought. 'I fear that I may be thought presumptuous, for what I have to say differs from the precepts offered by others, especially on this matter' (p. 54). The reason, he adds, is that he finds existing discussions somewhat unrealistic, and hopes to say something useful by attempting instead to 'consider what happens in fact' (p. 55).

The fact is that, whenever rulers are discussed, they are described

as having a range of qualities for which they are either praised or blamed. Some are held to be generous, others miserly; some cruel, others humane; some untrustworthy, others faithful to their word – and so on in an extensive list of princely vices and virtues.

Turning to consider these qualities one by one, Machiavelli registers two rather different doubts. He first suggests that, although some of the attributes for which princes are praised are held to be good qualities, they only appear to be virtues. He first makes this point in connection with the supposed virtue of generosity, the subject of Chapter XVI. To gain a public reputation for being generous, a prince will have to consume all his resources in sumptuous display. So he will end up in the paradoxical position of having to load his subjects with additional taxes in order to sustain his reputation as a generous man. A prince who refuses to act in this way will at first be called a miser, but in course of time he will come to seem a man of truer generosity.

Machiavelli presents a similar paradox in Chapter XVII, the theme of which is the supposed vice of cruelty. Here he considers the behaviour of his fellow-Florentines in connection with the riots at Pistoia in 1501, a crisis he himself had been sent to investigate as secretary to the Ten of War. Wishing to avoid any accusation of cruelty, the Florentines had refused to punish the leaders of the factions involved. The result was that the disturbances turned into a general massacre. It would have been more genuinely merciful, Machiavelli insists, if the Florentines had instead made an example of the ringleaders at the outset, even though this would of course have led to accusations of cruelty.

Machiavelli's main doubt about the conventional virtues, however, is a different and far more radical one. Everyone will agree, Chapter XV concedes, that it would be most praiseworthy if princes could in fact possess the full range of qualities usually held to be good. But the conditions of human life are such that this is impossible: 'how men live is so different from how they should live that a ruler who does not do what is generally done, but persists in doing what ought to be done, will undermine his power rather than maintain it' (p. 54). It follows that a prince who wishes to maintain his position in a world where so many people are not good 'must be prepared to act immorally when this becomes necessary' (p. 55).

Machiavelli devotes his ensuing chapters to explaining what he means by being prepared to act immorally. His way of proceeding at this critical juncture is to offer a point-by-point refutation of the

conventional wisdom which had largely been inspired by Seneca's and especially Cicero's treatises.

First he reverts to the virtue of generosity (Ch. XVI). Cicero had opened his discussion of this quality in *De officiis* by declaring that nothing more befits the nature of man (I, 14, 42). Machiavelli begins by saying that, even if generosity is the name of a virtue, it can nevertheless do you great harm. Cicero had gone on to argue that the least suspicion of miserliness or avarice ought always to be avoided (II, 17, 58; II, 18, 64). (Machiavelli argues that a wise prince will never mind being called miserly; he will recognise that it is one of the vices without which he cannot hope to sustain his rule. Cicero had repeatedly argued that generosity, together with justice, are the virtues that above all cause us to love those who possess them (I, 17, 56). (A reputation for generosity in a leader always wins the intense affection of the people, whereas everyone hates those who discourage generosity (II, 17, 56; II, 18, 63). Machiavelli insists that it is the practice of generosity, not its discouragement, which eventually brings a prince hatred and contempt. And he notes – confronting theory with practice as he frequently does in these chapters – that in modern times great things have been done only by those princes who have had the reputation of being miserly.

Next Machiavelli turns to the vice of cruelty (Ch. XVII). The classic analysis of this evil, Seneca's *De clementia*, had denounced cruelty as the characteristic vice of tyrants, and hence as the evil most of all to be avoided by true princes (I, 26, 1). (Machiavelli retorts that a wise ruler will never mind being called cruel for any action which has the effect of keeping his subjects united and loyal. The accepted image of the true prince, one mainly derived from Seneca's famous account, had pictured such a ruler as someone who avoids cruelty even when it might be expedient to embrace it. But Machiavelli insists that it is simply impossible for a prince, and especially a new prince, to avoid incurring a reputation for cruelty if he wishes to maintain his government.)

Later in the same chapter Machiavelli considers the related dispute which arises, as he says, when one asks whether it is better for a prince to be loved or feared. Here he alludes directly to *De officiis*, II, 7, 23–4, where Cicero had discussed the best means to establish and secure power over others. To banish fear and hold fast to love, Cicero had affirmed, offers the best means to maintain our influence over other people and our own safety at the same time. Machiavelli responds with a flat contradiction: 'it is difficult to achieve both and, if one of them has