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Machiavellian Heroes Through the Prism of Aristotle

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MACHIAVELLIAN HEROES THROUGH THE PRISM OF ARISTOTLE

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Dedicated to my models of excellent men:

Joaquin Acosta Jr. Joaquin Acosta Sr. and Raul Rivas Sr.

And for my muse, Vanessa Desiree Garcia, O.4.

-Robert Acosta

MACHIAVELLIAN HEROES THROUGH THE PRISM OF ARISTOTLE

By

ROBERT ACOSTA, B.A., POLITICAL SCIENCE

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“Forgive us our virtues-thus one should pray to men.”

-Friedrich Nietzsche

INTRODUCTION: “Don’t worry if I say anything that seems to you different from what we want, because all will turn out to the purpose”-Ligurio in Machiavelli’s *Mandragola*¹

This thesis is concerned with a traditional problem of political philosophy. The problem is primarily concerned with the thought and enterprise of Niccolo Machiavelli. Machiavelli’s political thought is believed to represent a radical break with the philosophy of the ancients. Machiavelli’s uniqueness lies in his apparent re-conception of human nature, human fulfillment, and the subsequent idea of human virtue. Machiavelli regards his venture as both dangerous and excellent, as it represents the foundation of new modes and orders for the common benefit of mankind.² Machiavelli’s thought has had practical consequences and is therefore worthy of analysis. The central problem that this thesis is concerned with then, is the problem that is presented by the character of Machiavelli’s philosophy; in essence Machiavelli’s virtue. The problem confronted by this thesis is neither unique nor original. The originality of this thesis lies not in the problem, but in the nature of the solution to the problem that is presented in the person of Machiavelli. The novelty of this work lies in its analysis of Machiavelli through the prism of Aristotle. The hypothesis of this paper is that there is a direct correlation between the political philosophies of Aristotle and Machiavelli. Machiavelli incorporates three fundamental theses of Aristotelian political philosophy: 1. Machiavelli agrees with Aristotle’s thesis that politics is the master science. 2. Machiavelli agrees with

¹ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Mera J. Flaumenhaft, translator. *Mandragola*. Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press 1981. Page 29.

² See Preface to the *Discourses on Livy*.

Aristotle's thesis that man is a political animal. 3. Machiavelli's ideal prince reflects Aristotle's conception of human nature.

This thesis contends that Machiavelli's radical re-conception of human nature is actually a re-packaging of Aristotle's fundamental political philosophy. The validity of these hypotheses will be tested by an examination of the case studies that Machiavelli advocates studying in Chapter VI of The Prince. The extent of Aristotle's influence can be measured by the extent that the case studies reflect these general Aristotelian premises. If the case studies reflect Aristotle then our hypotheses would be validated. If Machiavelli incorporates elements of Aristotle's thought, it is presumed that Machiavelli's heroes: Theseus, Romulus, Cyrus, and Moses would reflect Aristotle by way of Machiavelli. The notion of a direct connection between Aristotle and the thought of Machiavelli is significant because many interpretations of Machiavelli focus singularly on his claim of innovation and ignore the relationship between his ideas and those of Aristotle. The void in this area of Machiavelli scholarship is indicated by this passage, "But, and this is more noteworthy, there is no trace of Platonic or Aristotelian teleology, no reference to any ideal order, to any doctrine of man's place in nature in the great chain of being."³ This thesis will attempt to exhibit a direct link between Aristotelian teleology, Aristotelian conceptions of human nature, and the thought of Machiavelli. As students of Machiavelli, we must remain wary and remember that it is dangerous to take Machiavelli at face value. It would not be surprising if Machiavelli was to heed the advice that he offers in Chapter XVIII of The Prince, "-And the one who has known best how to use the fox has come out

³ Berlin, Isaiah. *The Originality of Machiavelli*, in Against the Current. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. P. 37.

best. But it is necessary to know well how to color this nature, and to be a great pretender and dissembler; and men are so simple and so obedient to present necessities that he who deceives will always find someone who will let himself be deceived.”⁴ Despite this, it is assumed by most analysts that Machiavelli is simply stating the truth when he declares he is departing “from the orders of others.”⁵ In addressing the Machiavellian mission, Leo Strauss puts it bluntly, “Accordingly he rewrites, as it were, Aristotle’s *Ethics*.”⁶ Machiavelli’s thought becomes an eradication of the political philosophy of Aristotle. Machiavelli advises his readers in Chapter XXI of The Prince, that “A prince is also esteemed when he is a true friend and a true enemy, that is, when without any hesitation he discloses himself in support of someone against another...And it will always happen that the one who is not friendly will seek your neutrality, and he who is friendly to you will ask that you declare yourself with arms.”⁷ Let us heed Machiavelli’s advice and issue a blunt call to arms, and announce that the purpose of this thesis is to correct the “old-fashioned and simple opinion” that Machiavellian thought cannot be understood by virtue of an Aristotelian prism.

The Significance of the Problem: A Review of the Literature:

The significance of the problem of Machiavelli is manifest by the consequence of his thought. It is by virtue of the famous, or perhaps infamous, Machiavellian maxims that we have become familiar with the adjective: Machiavellian. Leo Strauss begins his analysis on

⁴ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 70.

⁵ Ibid, p. 61.

⁶ Strauss, Leo. *Niccolo Machiavelli* in Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983. P. 214.

⁷ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 89-90.

Machiavelli by stressing the climate of the conventional opinions regarding Machiavelli. “We shall not shock anyone, we shall merely expose ourselves to good-natured or at any rate harmless ridicule, if we profess ourselves inclined to the old-fashioned and simple opinion according to which Machiavelli was a teacher of evil...He is notorious as the classic of the evil way of political thinking and political acting.”⁸ This popular characterization of Machiavelli has a long-standing tradition and is based upon the nature of his “advice.”⁹ Machiavelli’s counsel is based upon his conceptualization of what constitutes human nature and consequently human fulfillment. Machiavelli’s answers to these questions have practical political effects; this in essence represents his break with the ancients and his claim to be an initiator of new modes and orders.¹⁰ The innovation of this project is explained by Harvey C. Mansfield in his introduction to The Prince, “Politics according to him is not limited by things above it, and things normally taken to be outside politics—the ‘givens’ in any political situation—turn out to be much more under the control of politics than politicians, peoples, and philosophers have hitherto assumed. Machiavelli’s The Prince, then, is the most famous book on politics when politics is thought to be carried on for its own sake, unlimited by anything above it. The renown of The Prince is precisely to have been the first and the best book to argue that politics has and should have its own rules and should not accept rules of any kind or from any source where the object is not to win or prevail over things.”¹¹ The Machiavellian agenda seems to be primarily concerned with the primacy of the political. He shares this idea with Aristotle, as indicated by

⁸ Strauss, Leo. Thoughts on Machiavelli. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958. P. 9-10

⁹ Isaiah Berlin discusses this tradition in *The Originality of Machiavelli*. He makes explicit reference to the Elizabethan stereotype of the “murderous Machiavel”

¹⁰ See Chapter XV of The Prince and compare with the Preface of the Discourses on Livy.

¹¹ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago. 1998. P. vii.

Aristotle's famous theses of "politics is the master science" and "man is a political animal."¹² The concern of Machiavelli appears to be with the impositions that traditional notions of morality and virtue place upon political man. Political man should have no restraints upon his ability to achieve success. Many have assumed that Machiavelli's critique of traditional morality represents a blatant denial of ethics. Isaiah Berlin argues against this assumption, "It is the first misinterpretation that goes deepest, that which represents Machiavelli as caring little or nothing for moral issues. This is surely not borne out by his own language. Anyone whose thought revolves round central concepts such as the good and the bad, the corrupt and the pure, has an ethical scale in mind in terms of which he gives moral praise and blame. Machiavelli's values are not Christian, but they are moral values."¹³ Berlin makes the point that Machiavelli is wrongly accused of being immoral when he is in all actuality, absolutely, and perfectly moral. His morality is perceived as immorality because Machiavelli has shifted the traditional paradigm of ethics and virtue. Quentin Skinner articulates a humanist argument to support the idea of a Machiavellian ethos of morality, by virtue of Machiavelli's unique use of the term virtue. "It is often complained that Machiavelli fails to provide any definition of virtue, and even that he is innocent of any systematic use of the word. But it will now be evident that he uses the term with complete consistency. Following his classical and humanist authorities, he treats it as that quality which enables a prince to withstand the blows of Fortune, to attract the goddess's favour, and to rise in consequence to the heights of princely fame, winning honor

¹² See Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, I.2 and *The Politics*, 1253a1-5.

¹³ Berlin, Isaiah. *The Originality of Machiavelli*, in *Against the Current*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. P. 55.

and glory for himself and security for his government.”¹⁴ Machiavelli’s morality consists of virtues that mold the effects of chance to the benefit of the prince and to the benefit of his regime. Skinner argues elsewhere that the effects of pagan Fortune were displaced by Christian Fate. Machiavelli re-introduces Fortune as a variable and daring action emerges once again as an important and desirable human characteristic. Skinner’s Machiavelli is a humanist whose focus is upon the potential of the species. Eugene Garver agrees that success in the face of Fortune is at the essence of Machiavelli and he identifies prudence as the central virtue that produces mastery of Fortune and political success. “Machiavelli occupies a position in the history of prudence or practical reason roughly analogous to that of Descartes in the history of theoretical reason and reflection on natural science...Machiavelli teaches his reader that only those defenses are secure and trustworthy which depend on one’s own strength and virtu’, and offers a method for achieving that kind of independence and building secure foundations for political rule.”¹⁵ It must be remembered at this point that this thesis involves interpreting the Machiavellian project in light of Aristotelian philosophy. The virtue of prudence should lead us to connect the dots. Aristotle identifies prudence as a virtue that falls under the genus of practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is distinct from philosophic wisdom and philosophic wisdom represents the height of human fulfillment according to Aristotle.¹⁶ Garver’s analysis of the history of prudence is prudent in addressing Aristotle. “Aristotle distinguishes between prudence and *techné* because prudence, since it has no end outside the action, is a function of character, while technical abilities are distinct from character; and so *technai*, unlike prudence

¹⁴ Skinner, Quentin. Machiavelli: A Very Short Introduction. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981. P. 40.

¹⁵ Garver, Eugene. Machiavelli and The History of Prudence. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1987. P. 3.

¹⁶ See The Nicomachean Ethics, Book VI.5, VI.7, VI.8

can be forgotten, and the idea of an intentional technical error makes sense.”¹⁷ Thus, Garver states in regards to the virtue of prudence that “Machiavelli provides a more useful starting point than...Aristotle.”¹⁸ This proclamation may have been undertaken in haste as Garver seems to mistake, or perhaps forget, Aristotle’s assertion in the first lines of The Nicomachean Ethics, that “Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim.”¹⁹ Garver’s statement that Aristotelian prudence “has no end outside the action” is a basic and imprudent understanding of Aristotle’s thought. Aristotle writes of prudence in The Nicomachean Ethics, “Now it appears to be the part of a prudent man to be able to deliberate well upon those things which are good and expedient for him, not in part, as what things are conducive to health and strength; but what things are conducive to good life universally. And a proof of this with a view to arrive at some particular end, they reason well in things of which there is no art. Wherefore he who is able to deliberate, is wholly prudent.”²⁰ In direct opposition to Garver’s conclusion, Aristotle writes that prudence has no action without an end. Prudence is not prudence without an end. Furthermore, Garver’s regard of Machiavelli as “a more useful starting point” for analyzing prudence does not clear up the blur between Machiavellian prudence and astute cleverness. The pragmatism of Machiavellian prudence has often led to an assumption that Machiavelli was an early proponent of relativism and perhaps even nihilism. Robert Kocis warns against this supposition. In fact, Kocis argues that Machiavelli provides a viable alternative to these post-modern perspectives. “Whatever the

¹⁷ Garver, Eugene. Machiavelli and The History of Prudence. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1987. P. 21.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 8.

¹⁹ See Aristotle’s The Nicomachean Ethics, I.1

²⁰ Aristotle. The Nicomachean Ethics. Oxford: Baxter Printers, 1819. Book VI, Chapter V. p. 148.

merits of these two views when not so caricaturized, we pause now only to establish that Machiavelli was not committed to either belief. When considered as an integral whole, Machiavelli's writings simply preclude both interpretations. Of course, given his historical circumstances, Machiavelli did not expressly address these moral alternatives; but one can show that it would have been contradictory for him to subscribe to these doctrines."²¹ In his intellectual biography of Machiavelli, Sebastian De Grazia writes, "Few would hold that Niccolo is a moral absolutist. Yet he never questions that there is good and evil. Authentic norms exist...Niccolo thinks of himself as a good man."²² Given the various prejudices we are handed down about Machiavelli, it is ironic and surprising to hear that he thinks of himself as a "good man." Strauss and Mansfield teach us that he regards himself as a great and excellent man, but that estimation is seemingly made independent of a moral compass. As Mansfield describes Machiavelli's virtue, there is no indication of a moral connotation. "Machiavelli's virtue is in him before it is distributed to the princes he advises and the peoples he describes. His virtue is broader than anyone else's because it shows how everyone's virtue makes sense in his scheme. In a sense, a prince must make his own virtue, but the formal and final causes of his virtue, if not the efficient cause, are in Machiavelli. Machiavelli is sufficiently with his beloved ancients, and against his Christian enemy, to want the attributes of God for himself."²³ Mansfield makes a stunning reference to Aristotle and his arrangement of efficient, formal, and final causes.²⁴ Mansfield proceeds to claim that Machiavelli is representative of all three. This apparent

²¹ Kocis, Robert A. Machiavelli Redeemed. Bethelam: Lehigh University Press, 1998. P. 111.

²² De Grazia, Sebastian. Machiavelli in Hell. New York: Vintage Books, 1994. P. 71.

²³ Mansfield, Harvey C. Machiavelli's Virtue. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. P. 5.

²⁴ The best exposition of the four causes is found in Aristotle's Metaphysics. Mansfield writes that the efficient, formal, and final causes are within Machiavelli. The material cause is not mentioned by Mansfield explicitly but it can be assumed that the material cause is found in the personage of the "prince" that is molded by Machiavelli.

blasphemy is highlighted by the statement referencing Machiavelli's Christian enemy and his desire to take upon himself the attributes of God. In a roundabout way we have returned to Strauss's initial "old-fashioned and simple opinion according to which Machiavelli was a teacher of evil."

Berlin states that "there is something surprising about the sheer number of interpretations of Machiavelli's political opinions...There is a startling degree of divergence about the central view, the basic political attitude of Machiavelli."²⁵ Berlin continues and exclaims that this diversity is odd given that Machiavelli writes in such a clear and concise style; Berlin states that Machiavelli is no Plato or Hegel. Berlin attributes the variety of interpretations and their subsequent disagreements to the character of the Machiavellian project. "There is evidently something peculiarly disturbing about what Machiavelli said or implied, something that has caused profound and lasting uneasiness."²⁶ The profound and lasting uneasiness that results from the Machiavellian project is reflective of human nature's comfort with the known and the familiar. Machiavelli's enterprise of creating new modes and orders is destructive of a morality and ethics that we hold as both good and true. The language and the consequences of Machiavelli's enterprise are unsettling. However, it may provide comfort to hypothesize that Machiavelli does not create so much as he recreates. His endeavor is comprised of a return to an ancient wisdom and its attendant virtue. Machiavelli's virtue is reflective. It would appear that ideas about virtue are dependent upon ideas of what constitutes human nature. The paradigm of Machiavelli's conception of human nature is

²⁵ Berlin, Isaiah. *The Originality of Machiavelli*, in Against the Current. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. P. 25.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 26.

provided by Aristotle. Machiavelli adopts the beast, man, god arrangement of human nature that is espoused by Aristotle. Given this understanding of human nature, Machiavelli proceeds to indicate how these natural components can be utilized by the prince in his search for conventional success and glory. Machiavelli makes a strong appeal to the prince to recognize that education in the histories of “excellent men” is a prerequisite for their own personal success. In Chapter VI of The Prince, Machiavelli identifies four of the “greatest examples” of “excellent men” who should be studied and emulated by the prince. In learning their stories, the prince will be able to identify the path of greatness, walk upon it and obtain an “odor” of their virtue. Machiavelli’s ideal prince is a mirror of the ancient princes of old. Diego A. von Vacano explains the nature of what he refers to as “The Princely Hero.” “*The Prince* is a book that tells of a new sort of hero. It is Machiavelli’s own radically innovative understanding of the idea. It extirpates the notion from conventional definitions that he inherits from the past, both in classical and biblical definitions. Most readers will see it rather as a type of anti-hero, for evil is easily associated with the actions described in the work.”²⁷ Leaving aside the moral judgments for the moment, this passage indicates the ancient sources for the Machiavellian model of hero that are specifically outlined in Chapter VI of The Prince. Furthermore, given our hypothesis, it follows that in reflecting the virtues of excellent men, Machiavelli’s heroes would reflect Aristotle’s conception of human nature, human excellence and political leadership.

²⁷ Von Vacano, Diego A. The Art of Power: Machiavelli, Nietzsche, and the Making of Aesthetic Political Theory. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007. P. 47.

Methods:

The research method that will be employed to support my hypothesis is a deep textual analysis of the primary sources combined with a utilization of the intellectual authority of appropriate secondary sources. In terms of primary sources, the basis of Machiavelli will be The Prince and the Discourses on Livy; for Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics and The Politics; for the histories of “excellent men:” Plutarch’s Lives, for the histories of Theseus of Athens and Romulus of Rome; Xenophon’s Cyropaedia: The Education of Cyrus for the history of Cyrus of Persia; and the King James’ Old Testament for the history of Moses. The primary sources of Aristotle and Machiavelli will be analyzed and interpreted in light of each other. Special focus and attention will be paid to Chapters VI (Of New Principalities That Are Acquired through One’s Own Arms and Virtue), Chapter XI (Of Ecclesiastical Principalities), and Chapter XVIII (In What Mode Faith Should Be Kept by Princes) of The Prince. The histories will also be compared and contrasted with one another where appropriate; however, the bulk of analysis will be focused upon interpreting the histories within the context of Machiavelli. Other primary sources will be used as secondary bases to place arguments or histories in relation to one another. For example, St. Augustine’s City of God, will be utilized in the analysis of Plutarch’s Romulus. Furthermore, works by Plato and Cicero will highlight some of the problems, discrepancies, and similarities of issues that shed light upon the basic hypothesis of the thesis. Secondary sources will be employed to establish a basis of authority for various claims of interpretation regarding Aristotle and Machiavelli. This thesis is indebted greatly to the interpretative powers of Leo Strauss and Harvey C. Mansfield.

Organizational Strategy:

The structure of this thesis is organized around three major parts or chapters. The first part is comprised of an exploration of the problem of Machiavelli and establishes the relationship between Machiavelli and Aristotle. The arguments of the Discourses on Livy and The Prince will be interpreted as distinct works, in light of each other and within the context of Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics and The Politics. After establishing Aristotle's apparent influence, Machiavelli's insistence on studying the histories of excellent men will be introduced. This is the transition to Part Two, which consists of an analysis of the histories of the excellent men that Machiavelli identifies in Chapter VI of The Prince. The histories of these men will be analyzed in terms of Machiavelli's thought, so as to determine why Machiavelli advocated the study of these men in particular. This second part of the thesis is divided into four sections, one for each of the men mentioned in Chapter VI: Theseus, Romulus, Cyrus, and Moses. Aristotle is also addressed where it is appropriate and necessary to highlight the affinity with Machiavelli. In the common parlance of political science, these histories are essentially case studies that are meant to test the validity of the hypothesis. Part Three is the conclusion and will evaluate the validity of our hypothesis given the case studies. Furthermore, if we find that there is, in fact, an element of Aristotle's thought that is incorporated by Machiavelli, we must address the possible reasons and potential consequences of this connection. After appraising the hypothesis and addressing the consequences of this relationship, we will turn our attention away from simply focusing on the similarities between Aristotle and Machiavelli and address some of the important differences. Although Machiavelli may share some fundamental premises with Aristotle, there remains a number of essential differences. The conclusion will

raise some of these most important discrepancies. While interpreting similarities is illuminating it is imperative to remain aware of the divergences as well. It is only by being aware of both the similarities and the differences between these two great philosophers that we can begin to understand them on their own terms. A general conclusion will be reached regarding the intrinsic merits of Aristotle vis a vis Machiavelli.

With this very basic understanding of the problem presented by Machiavelli, we must now turn our attention towards the solution; a solution that can only be provided by an Aristotelian prism. Machiavelli can only be appreciated with an appreciation of Aristotle. The student of Machiavelli must begin with the study of Aristotle. With this, we turn our attention to Aristotle.

PART ONE: “They will marvel at us, and look upon us as gods, because we, standing at their head, have agreed to suffer freedom and rule over them-so terrible will it become for them in the end to be free!”-Dostoevsky’s Grand Inquisitor²⁸

In the beginning of The Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle makes the rather bold assertion that politics is the master science. He argues that all actions are undertaken to achieve a specific end and that each of these actions fall under a particular art. Some arts are subordinate to other, superior arts, and there is one that is superior to all others in that it aims at achieving that which is the highest or most important good. Aristotle states that knowledge of the good and its correspondent art will enable its achievement. He compares this knowledge to targets utilized by archers: “Will not the knowledge of it, then, have a great influence in life? Shall we not, like archers who have a mark to aim at, be more likely to hit upon what is right?”²⁹ Having explained the practical necessity of identifying the highest good and its attendant art, Aristotle continues and explains that politics is that master science, insofar as it is the specific art that helps humans achieve the highest good. “If so, we must try, in outline at least, to determine what it is, and of which of the sciences or capacities it is the object. It would seem to belong to the most authoritative art and that which is most truly the master art. And politics appears to be of this nature.”³⁰ Aristotle argues that politics is superior to all other arts and sciences in that it determines what is to be learned and to what extent it is to be learned. Furthermore, politics employs the use of all of the most “highly esteemed of capacities,” such as strategy, economics, and rhetoric, to achieve its own political agenda; this reaffirms the

²⁸ Dostoevsky, Fyodor. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, translators. The Brothers Karamazov. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990. P. 253.

²⁹ Aristotle. The Nicomachean Ethics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. P. 2 NE I.2

³⁰ Ibid.

superior status of politics as it uses the other arts as tools to complete the political goal.

However, the most important factor that identifies the political as the master is that it has the power and authority to legislate and affect human behavior and action. It is this capacity to make laws and mold human beings that truly separates politics from the other inferior arts; politics has the potential to lead humans to that which is the highest good. Politics “legislates as to what we are to do and what we are to abstain from, the end of this science must include those of the others, so that this end must be the good for man.”³¹ Aristotle states that while this greatest end or good may be the same for both the individual and the community, and while it is worthwhile for an individual to achieve this greatest good at a personal level, he continues and asserts that “it is finer and more godlike to attain it for a nation or for city-states.”³² Aristotle regards the legislator of good laws as “finer and more godlike” than a good, fulfilled individual because this legislator leads his citizens to become better and partake in the human good through participation in the political community. The fine and godlike nature of the Aristotelian legislator seems to be a result of his public-spiritedness. Aristotle’s intellectual authority lends his argument validity but his claims about the centrality of politics to human fulfillment and politics’ status as a canvas upon which great men paint and render themselves immortal is strengthened by the thoughts of Niccolo Machiavelli; who though radically breaks with the sanctity of the ancient tradition represented by Aristotle, agrees with Aristotle on some surprisingly important points.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

In Book I, Chapter X of the Discourses on Livy, (titled, “As Much as the Founders of a Republic and of a Kingdom Are Praiseworthy, So Much Those of a Tyranny Are Worthy of Reproach”) Machiavelli ranks the measures of praise and blame that should be assigned to the actions, lives, and memories of great men. “Among all men praised, the most praised are those who have been heads and orderers of religions. Next, then, are those who have founded either republics or kingdoms. After them are celebrated those, who, placed over armies, have expanded either their kingdom or that of the fatherland. To these literary men are added; and because these are of many types, they are each of them celebrated according to his rank. To any other man, the number of which is infinite, some share of praise is attributed that his art or occupation brings him. On the contrary, men are infamous and detestable who are destroyers of religions, squanderers of kingdoms and republics, and enemies of the virtues, of letters, and of every other art that brings utility and honor to the human race, as are the impious, the violent, the ignorant, the worthless, the idle, and the cowardly. And no one will ever be so crazy or so wise, so wicked or so good, who will not praise what is to be praised and blame what is to be blamed, when the choice between the two qualities of men is placed before him.”³³ To support his high-minded sermonizing, Machiavelli outlines a brief history of the tyrannical Caesars of Rome whose dogged insistence on impiety, violence and ignorance eventually resulted in the instability, corruption and ultimate destruction of the once noble Roman regime. According to Machiavelli, if one looks to Rome under the Caesars, “He will see Rome burning, the Capitol taken down by its own citizens, the ancient temples desolate, ceremonies corrupt, the cities full of adulterers. He will see the sea full of exiles, the shores full

³³ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield & Nathan Tarcov, translators. Discourses on Livy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. P. 31

of blood. He will see innumerable cruelties follow in Rome, and nobility, riches, past honors, and above all, virtue imputed as capital sins. He will see calumniators rewarded, slaves corrupted against their master, freedmen against their patron, and those who lacked enemies oppressed by friends. And he will then know very well how many obligations Rome, Italy, and the world owe to Caesar.”³⁴ In this passage, Machiavelli gilds himself in the guise of the moralist, champions virtue, and implicates the rule of the Caesars as the source of the degradation of, not only Rome and Italy, but of the entire world. It is indeed both ironic and significant that Machiavelli would write in The Prince of Agathocles, and remark that his actions of killing citizens, betraying friends, acting without faith, without mercy, and without religion cannot be called a “virtue.” Yet in the very next sentence Machiavelli slyly makes an explicit reference to the “virtue” of Agathocles in his ability of “entering into and escaping from dangers, and the greatness of his spirit in enduring and overcoming adversities, one does not see why he has to be judged inferior to any most excellent captain.”³⁵ It seems that the Machiavellian conception of virtue is not only ironic but problematic. However, it must be remarked that Machiavelli does proceed to mention that Agathocles’ “savage cruelty and inhumanity, together with his infinite crimes, do not permit him to be celebrated among the most excellent men.”³⁶ These most excellent men are specifically named in Chapter VI of The Prince. It seems that what separates Agathocles from these celebrated, excellent men is his savage cruelty, his inhumanity, and his infinite crimes. Perhaps, we may hypothesize that what in fact separates Agathocles from these excellent men is his lack of virtue. Machiavelli admits

³⁴ Ibid, p. 33.

³⁵ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 35.

³⁶ Ibid.

as much in concluding about Agathocles that “one cannot attribute to fortune or to virtue what he achieved without either.”³⁷ Machiavelli, in addressing the example of Agathocles as an antithesis, celebrates these “excellent men” as “armed prophets” who were successful in establishing “new modes and orders” by virtue of their virtue.³⁸

The armed prophets and their creation of new modes and orders is the subject of the concluding paragraph of Chapter X of the Discourses on Livy. Similar to Aristotle’s conclusion that “it is finer and more godlike to attain” the good “for a nation or for city-states,” Machiavelli mentions the eternal glory granted to the founder or orderer of modes and orders. “Without doubt, if he is born of man, he will be terrified away from every imitation of wicked times and will be inflamed with an immense desire to follow the good. And truly, if a prince seeks the glory of the world, he ought to desire to possess a corrupt city-not to spoil it entirely as did Caesar but to reorder it as did Romulus. And truly the heavens cannot give to men a greater opportunity for glory, nor can men desire any greater...In sum, those to whom the heavens give such an opportunity may consider that two ways have been placed before them: one that makes them live secure and after death renders them glorious; the other that makes them live in continual anxieties and after death leaves them a semipiternal infamy.”³⁹ There are numerous insightful points raised in this passage that deserve mention. Machiavelli begins this chapter by placing the founders of religions at the apex of the most praised of men; however in this concluding paragraph he remarks that heaven cannot give any greater opportunity for

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 23-24.

³⁹ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield & Nathan Tarcov, translators. Discourses on Livy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. P. 33.

individual glory than the reordering of a “corrupt city.” Machiavelli may be attempting to insinuate that a corrupt city cannot be reordered except through the power of religion. An analysis of Chapter XI of The Prince, titled “On Ecclesiastical Principalities,” and Book I, Chapter II of The Discourses on Livy, titled “Of the Religion of the Romans” would seem to support this thesis. Machiavelli continues and states that given the fortunate opportunity that is presented by the corrupt city, men are granted two options; one choice renders them secure in life and glorious in death, while the other leads to a life spent in anxiety and infamy in death. Given the earlier celebration of virtue, it seems as if the choice Machiavelli is speaking of is between virtue and vice. However, it must be remembered that Machiavelli is famous for being Machiavellian, an immoralist and teacher of evil. His problematic usage of the term virtue that is highlighted by his discussion of Agathocles in The Prince, must also be considered and placed into the context of his thought. One must understand virtue as Machiavelli understands it in order to make the correct choice on how one is to live life.

Another unusual detail of this passage that stands out as a theme throughout this chapter is the strange characterization of Caesar as a villain. Machiavelli acknowledges that his version of Caesar as villain is novel in its explicitness but he is quick to add that it is not odd in its spirit. Although the public may celebrate Caesar as excellent and glorious, this is due to the efforts of writers who were pressured to speak in praise of him due to the strength and duration of the empire that he founded. To further defend the tradition of his critique of Caesar, Machiavelli alludes to the esotericism of these very same writers, who though they exoterically celebrate Caesar with one breath, they subtly implicate him by praising his enemy with their next. “Nor should anyone deceive himself because of the glory of Caesar, hearing

him especially celebrated by the writers; for those who praise him are corrupted by his fortune and awed by the duration of the empire that, ruling under that name, did not permit writers to speak freely of him...He should also see with how much praise they celebrate Brutus, as though, unable to blame Caesar because of his power, they celebrate his enemy.”⁴⁰ This passage in itself is interesting on three specific points. First, Machiavelli makes an allusion to the powerful and subversive pedagogical tool of esoteric writing. Machiavelli implies that these writers utilize a special form of writing to imply an alternative doctrine that is covertly opposed to established dogma.⁴¹ It would not be surprising if Machiavelli utilizes this method that he so expressively holds in high regard for its effectiveness. Second, this passage speaks of the power of “writers” to convey glory to men; this conclusion would coincide with Machiavelli’s rank of “literary men” who are placed just below generals in the ranking of praiseworthy men that is explicated at the outset of this chapter. Machiavelli is a man of letters, and his writings overflow with designations of praise and blame to men by reference to their actions. Lastly, it must be recognized that Machiavelli blames Caesar where he praises others. Fortune, well-used, and duration of empire are among the virtuous qualities that are constantly honored by Machiavelli and yet Caesar is blamed for them. Machiavelli is notoriously generous in his assessment of the vices of great men and there must be something quite disconcerting in the rule of Caesar or his political lineage that Machiavelli holds especially contemptible.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 32.

⁴¹ See Leo Strauss’ Persecution and the Art of Writing for an analysis of the esoteric art. On page 28 of that work, Strauss mentions the possibility of Aristotelian esotericism. In this same work, Machiavelli is mentioned explicitly three times. The most comprehensive discussion of Machiavelli occurs within the context of Spinoza. On page 150, Strauss discusses Spinoza discussing Machiavelli on the resolution of contradictions in philosophical texts.

Machiavelli states that the corrupt city should be reordered, away “from every imitation of wicked times and...be inflamed with an immense desire to follow the good.” Here, we and Machiavelli, return to our beginning; the central thesis of Aristotle that “politics is the master science.” Machiavelli recognizes the validity of the Aristotelian assertion that the political is the most important by virtue of its capacity to lead humans to follow “the good.” Individual human fulfillment is inextricably linked to the political community. According to both Aristotle and Machiavelli, those who are counted among the greatest of humans are the legislators or founders of political communities who identify the good and lead its citizens to a semblance of its realization. It is at this point that it would be insightful for us to utilize the very words of Machiavelli in order to understand the scope of his enterprise; the character of the Machiavellian goal is expressly specified in his Preface to the Discourses on Livy. “Although the envious nature of men has always made it no less dangerous to find new modes and orders than to seek unknown waters and lands, because men are more ready to blame than to praise the actions of others, nonetheless, driven by that natural desire that has always been in me to work, without any respect, for those things I believe will bring common benefit to everyone, I have decided to take a path as yet untrodden by anyone, and if it brings me trouble and difficulty, it could also bring me reward through those who consider humanely the end of these labors of mine.”⁴² It is important to consider and compare this passage in light of Chapter VI of The Prince, where Machiavelli also famously speaks of paths. In speaking of the “greatest examples” of “excellent men,” Machiavelli states, “For since men almost always walk on paths beaten by others and proceed in their actions by imitation, unable either to stay on the path of

⁴²Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield & Nathan Tarcov, translators. Discourses on Livy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. P. 5.

others altogether or to attain the virtue of those whom you imitate, a prudent man should always enter upon the paths beaten by great men, and imitate those who have been most excellent, so that if his own virtue does not reach that far, it is at least in the odor of it.”⁴³ Here in Chapter VI of The Prince, Machiavelli states that “prudent” men should follow the paths beaten by great men. In the Preface to the Discourses on Livy, Machiavelli proclaims that his intention is to create his own path and become a herald of new modes and orders. Machiavelli claims that his project is undertaken for the “common benefit” of mankind. Machiavelli admits that the Machiavellian enterprise may not be a prudent choice as it may bring him “trouble and difficulty.” However, it is undertaken for the sake of a “common benefit” and has the potential to be great and excellent. There seems to be an inherent disconnect between prudence (a virtue that Aristotle defines under the genus of “practical wisdom” as distinct from “philosophic wisdom”) and greatness or excellence (a chief virtue that Aristotle refers to as magnanimity⁴⁴). However, ironically, the success of Machiavelli’s excellent endeavor is practically dependent upon his prudence and his prudence must lie in the proper understanding of the nature of man. This knowledge will provide the steady foundation to the edifice of the Machiavellian enterprise. It is at this point that we must return to Aristotle and his conception of man as a

⁴³ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 22.

⁴⁴ See Book IV, Chapter 3 of The Nicomachean Ethics. The Oxford Edition translates the Greek form as pride. The 1819 Baxter Edition translates the Greek form as magnanimity. For the purposes of this thesis this virtue will be referred to as magnanimity. The concept of magnanimity has repercussions in the synthesis of Aristotle’s and Machiavelli’s conception of virtue. Aristotle believes that magnanimity is well-deserved pride. It is an individual virtue that relies upon popular opinion. Its correlative virtue on the scale of the community is justice. There is a relation between justice and the magnanimous man. There is also a relationship between Machiavelli’s ideal prince and justice. Machiavelli’s ideal prince is Aristotle’s magnanimous man. Their virtues are individual and they are honored by the community for them. They enjoy honor and pride at both the internal and external levels. Magnanimity is a characteristic chief virtue for both Aristotle and Machiavelli. Prudence is another virtue that is shared between these two philosophers.

political animal. This Aristotelian paradigm provides Machiavelli with the theoretical context to praise the virtues of the most excellent men and attempt to take his place among them.⁴⁵

In The Politics, Aristotle discusses the natural development of the political community from its pre-political origin. Humans, like various other animals, are gregarious beings. But distinct from the other beasts, humans gather together not only for the sake of interaction but more importantly for their fulfillment as a species. Although there are human associations that precede the city, such as the family and the village, these communities fall far short in their ability to lead humans to the good. In the search for “self-sufficiency” the household gives way to the village and the village gives way to the city. It is here at the level of the city that human life becomes self-sufficient and can focus on living well rather than on simply living. “The partnership arising from (the union of) several villages that is complete is the city. It reaches a level of full self-sufficiency, so to speak; and while coming into being for the sake of living, it exists for the sake of living well. Every city, therefore, exists by nature, if such also are the first partnerships. For the city is their end, and nature is an end.”⁴⁶ On one level, the city is necessary because of its capacity to satisfy the basic survival needs of human beings. However, at a higher level, the city is necessary because of the dependence that humans have upon it for their fulfillment as a species. The political community leads humans to not only live but to live well as only humans can. As a result, the city provides an end and represents an end in and of itself. The city is natural insofar as it is a requirement for humans to achieve and fulfill their

⁴⁵ Both Mansfield and Strauss state that Machiavelli is the “principal character in his own thought.” The Prince explains his enterprise of becoming a princely legislator of new modes and orders. This thesis is outlined in Strauss’ Thoughts on Machiavelli and Mansfield’s Machiavelli’s Virtue.

⁴⁶ Aristotle. Carnes Lord, translator. The Politics. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984. P. 36-37, 1252b25-30.

nature. This is the meaning of Aristotle's thesis that man is a political animal. Man is unique as it is the animal that is political in its nature. "From these things it is evident, then, that the city belongs among the things that exist by nature, and that man is by nature a political animal. He who is without a city through nature rather than chance is either a mean sort or superior to man; he is 'without clan, without law, without hearth,' like the person reproved by Homer; for the one who is such by nature has by this fact a desire for war, as if he were an isolated piece in a game of chess. That man is much more a political animal than any kind of bee or any herd animal is clear. For, as we assert, nature does nothing in vain; and man alone among the animals has speech...But speech serves to reveal the advantageous and the harmful, and hence also the just and the unjust. For it is peculiar to man as compared to the other animals that he alone has a perception of good and bad and just and unjust and other things (of this sort)."⁴⁷ Aristotle states explicitly that man is an animal but that he is unique as a species in his ability of speech. This peculiar characteristic gives humans the opportunity to define the advantageous and just from the harmful and unjust. "Nature does nothing in vain" and speech is granted to man so that he may utilize the gift of speech to reason about the form of the good as defined within the political paradigm. Humans can only be truly human within this political context. Politics and its laws are the tools used to mold humans in a manner fitting to their nature. Without the crutch of politics, man falls prey to instinct and typically reverts to a life of sensual pleasures that is appropriate only for the lower animals. Aristotle states as much in The Nicomachean Ethics, where he writes, "Now the mass of mankind are evidently quite slavish in

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 37, 1253a1-20.

their tastes, preferring a life suitable to beasts.”⁴⁸ It is in part due to this tendency that Aristotle asserts in The Politics that a man that is without a city through nature is either an inferior sort or superior sort of being. He strengthens the weight of this suggestion by reaffirming its principle in this statement, “One who is incapable of participating or who is in need of nothing through being self-sufficient is no part of a city, and so is either a beast or a god.”⁴⁹ Using the intellectual authority of Aristotle we can reason and reach three general and important premises: 1. Man can only be man within the city. 2. A man without city is not a man but either a beast or god. 3. Man’s nature is a combination of beast and god. This Aristotelian conception of human nature is essential for a proper understanding of Machiavelli, the Machiavellian notion of virtues, Machiavelli’s heroes, and the Machiavellian project.

Aristotle’s echo is heard in Chapter XVIII of The Prince. The chapter is titled “In What Mode Faith Should Be Kept By Princes” and its ironic conclusion regarding the subject of its title is that a prince should keep faith except when he should not. Though this may be puzzling it is not a contradiction. It is not the same as stating “I am telling a lie.” It is more akin to stating “I tell the truth except when I lie.” Regardless, the ambiguity of this conclusion is based upon Machiavelli’s pragmatic embrace of the appearance-reality distinction. This perspective is reflected by the following passage, “Men in general judge more by their eyes than by their hands, because seeing is given to everyone, touching to few. Everyone sees how you appear, few touch what you are.”⁵⁰ A prince should take advantage of this knowledge in his observance of faith. Though this advice may seem characteristically Machiavellian, it also harkens back to

⁴⁸ Aristotle. The Nicomachean Ethics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. P. 6 NE I.5.

⁴⁹ Aristotle. Carnes Lord, translator. The Politics. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984. P. 37, 1253a25-30.

⁵⁰ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 71.

a statement made by Aristotle in The Nicomachean Ethics regarding the honesty of the magnanimous man, “he is given to telling the truth, except when he speaks in irony to the vulgar.”⁵¹ A rational synthesis of Aristotelian and Machiavellian wisdom would indicate that the vulgar can only judge by the sight of what appears to be, while the great can reach conclusions based upon the truth of touch. The conundrum is whether Machiavelli is addressing the vulgar or the great; whether he is appealing to sight or to touch; or perhaps even more puzzling whether or not he is ironically speaking to both audiences through both sight and touch at a single moment.

The influence of Aristotle deepens further in Chapter XVIII of The Prince when Machiavelli illustrates the nature of combat to his readers. “Thus, you must know that there are two kinds of combat: one with laws, the other with force. The first is proper to man, the second to beasts; but because the first is often not enough, one must have recourse to the second. Therefore it is necessary for a prince to know well how to use the beast and the man. This role was taught covertly to princes by ancient writers, who wrote that Achilles, and many other ancient princes, were given to Chiron the centaur to be raised, so that he would look after them with his discipline. To have as a teacher a half-beast, half-man means nothing other than that a prince needs to know how to use both natures; and the one without the other is not lasting.”⁵² The Machiavellian dichotomy of combat as it is manifested in the laws of man and the force of the beasts is a crude repackaging of the role of politics and the nature of man as it is conceived of by Aristotle. In illustrating the nature of man in The Politics, Aristotle states that

⁵¹ Aristotle. The Nicomachean Ethics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. P. 93, NE IV.3.

⁵² Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 69.

man is man only within a political context and that outside that political paradigm, man is not man, but either beast or god. In illustrating the nature of the prince, Machiavelli operates within the strictures of the political context and concludes that a true prince is a combination of beast and man. Whereas Aristotelian man is a delicate balance of beast and god, the Machiavellian prince, man *par excellence*, is a half-beast and half-man hybrid creature. The divine component of human nature is dropped from Machiavelli's conception of the true prince; Machiavelli's silence on this point is deafening. This ironic asymmetry could not have been lost upon Machiavelli.

Machiavelli, who refers to himself as a herald of new modes and orders, was acutely aware of the inevitable philosophic combat that must be engaged with the ancient tradition. Machiavelli antagonistically confronts the ancients in Chapter XV of The Prince, titled, "Of Those Things for Which Men And Especially Princes Are Praised or Blamed." Machiavelli sarcastically taunts the ancients for their naiveté, "It remains now to see what the modes and government of a prince should be with subjects and with friends. And because I know that many have written of this, I fear that in writing of it again, I may be held presumptuous, especially since in disputing this matter I depart from the orders of others. But since my intent is to write something useful to whoever understands it, it has appeared to me more fitting to go directly to the effectual truth of the thing than to the imagination of it. And many have imagined republics and principalities that have never been seen or known to exist in truth; for it is so far from how one lives to how one should live that he who lets go of what is done for what should be done learns his ruin rather than his preservation. For a man who wants to make a profession of good in all regards must come to ruin among so many who are not good. Hence it

is necessary to a prince, if he wants to maintain himself, to learn to be able not to be good, and to use this and not use it according to necessity.”⁵³ Machiavelli’s initial ironic humility merely highlights the disdain that he holds for the “orders of others.” Machiavelli arms himself and his enterprise with the power of his dialectic diatribe against the theoretical foundation of the ancient tradition. His silence on the divine element of human nature was not an accident but a deliberate call to arms in his philosophic struggle to fashion a new version of morality and virtues. Machiavelli equates the divine with moral goodness and adherence to moral paradigms with practical failure. His prince acts beyond good and evil and drops the god component of human nature in order to embrace the force, ferocity, and guile of the beast. Machiavelli is quite specific and unambiguous on this point and advocates that the prince adopt as his model the characters of the lion and the fox.⁵⁴ According to Machiavelli, in order for a

⁵³Ibid, p. 61.

⁵⁴ In his translation of *The Prince*, Harvey Mansfield places a useful footnote about the possible source for the fox and the lion. He writes on page 69 that “A possible source for this: Cicero, *De Officiis* I.11.34; 13.41.” As the interested student turns to that citation in Cicero he is confronted with an unusual problem. The initial passage that Mansfield cites does not support the fox and lion dichotomy but instead supports the idea of two forms of combat; one of laws and men; the other of force and beasts. Cicero writes, “Something else that must very much be observed in public affairs is the justice of warfare. There are two types of conflict: the one proceeds by debate, the other by force. Since the former is the proper concern of man, but the latter of beasts, one should only resort to the latter if one may not employ the former.” This is especially insightful, especially as it stresses a distinction between Machiavelli and Cicero. Cicero advises that one should resort to force only if debate fails. This is different than Machiavelli who advises us that the art of the prince is the art of war. This is especially evident in Chapter XIV of *The Prince*, “What a Prince Should Do Regarding the Military.” Although Mansfield’s initial citation is useful, the reader expects to read of the lion and the fox. It is the second part of the citation, 13.41 that actually refers to the fox and the lion. Cicero writes in this section, “There are two ways in which injustice may be done, either through force or through deceit; and deceit seems to belong to the little fox, force to a lion. Both of them seem most alien to a human being; but deceit deserves a greater hatred. And out of all injustice, nothing deserves punishment more than that of men who, just at the time when they are most betraying trust, act in such a way that they might appear to be good men.” Cicero refers to the fox and the lion as characteristic of the types of injustices that are committed by men. Machiavelli advocates his prince to follow the example of the lion and the fox. Cicero concludes that the deceit of the fox is morally worse than the force of the lion. Machiavelli praises the fox and states that “the one who has known best how to use the fox has come out best.” (Chapter XVIII of *The Prince*) It is interesting to note that in between the appropriate citations in Cicero, there is a discussion by Cicero about combat over glories and how they should be conducted less bitterly as they do not involve enemies in the traditional sense, but rather rivals for “glories.” The significance of this can be better understood by turning to Machiavelli’s famous letter to Francesco Vettori, dated December 10, 1513.

prince to be successful in all aspects of combat he must resort to the nature of the beast. However, there are numerous varieties of animals, and each has its own particular character; therefore, Machiavelli advises that the prince assume the nature of the lion and the fox. A prince must be a mixture of both animals as a strict adherence to one animal at the expense of the other will lead the prince to ruin. Both the lion and the fox possess a unique set of virtues that will help to aid the success of the prince. However, each animal also has particular defects that would render a prince impotent if he were to simply rely upon the nature of one of these animals. "Thus, since a prince is compelled of necessity to know well how to use the beast, he should pick the fox and the lion, because the lion does not defend itself from snares and the fox does not defend itself from wolves. So one needs to be a fox to recognize snares and a lion to frighten the wolves. Those who stay simply with the lion do not understand this."⁵⁵ It is appropriate to consider the characteristics that are most associated with each animal. The lion is associated with strength, ferocity and nobility. The fox is characterized by its quickness, duplicity, and cunning. The virtue of the lion is that he is able to project an aura of strength that is supported by vigor of action; the reputation of the lion will frighten the wolves. However, it is the hubris of the lion that makes him susceptible to the danger of snares. These snares are cleverly recognized by the fox; who though may be shrewd and quick does not possess the strength or the fortitude to battle the desperate attacks of the wolves. Wolves and snares metaphorically represent the dangers that all princes must face and it is because of Machiavelli's recognition of these dangers that he argues that a prince must combine the intrinsic strengths of these two beasts in order to account for their inherent weaknesses.

⁵⁵ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 69.

Unlike beasts or the masses of mankind, a successful prince must exhibit no weakness and must therefore combine the natures of these two animals in order to convey a comprehensive strength and thereby maintain power.

Machiavelli identifies the nature of the prince to be that of both man and beast, and then of the beast specifically, the lion and the fox. Although this may call to mind the Aristotelian conception of human nature as a combination of beast and god, Machiavelli conspicuously avoids addressing the divine component of humanity in describing the nature of the successful prince. Although Machiavelli may be silent on this point it cannot be assumed that he regards the divine and godlike as unimportant. In fact, it is apparent that Machiavelli regards religion and the divine as essential to the perpetual success of the prince and his modes and orders. One need only reflect on Chapter XI of The Prince and Chapter 11 of Book 1 of the Discourses on Livy. In Chapter XI of The Prince, titled “On Ecclesiastical Principalities,” Machiavelli asserts that ecclesiastical principalities, “alone have states, and do not defend them; they have subjects, and do not govern them; and the states, though undefended, are not taken from them; the subjects though ungoverned, do not care, and they neither think of becoming estranged from such princes nor can they. Thus, only these principalities are secure and happy. But as they subsist by superior causes, to which the human mind does not reach, I will omit speaking of them; for since they are exalted and maintained by God, it would be the office of a presumptuous and foolhardy man to discourse on them.”⁵⁶ Despite his display of piety that would seem to forbid him of analyzing “superior causes which the human mind does not reach,” Machiavelli concludes that religion is effective in rendering a prince and his state

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 45.

“secure and happy.” As the subject of The Prince are principalities, the subject of the Discourses on Livy are republics, and yet both works agree about the practical effectiveness of religion in achieving the perpetual stability that is the goal of the excellent men who found new modes and orders. It is only with the perpetuation of their modes and orders that the founders of new modes and orders are celebrated as excellent; therefore religion is a necessary condition to excellence. Machiavelli supplements the argument of Chapter XI of The Prince in Chapter 11 of the Discourses on Livy. Here, he writes, “And truly there was never any orderer of extraordinary laws for a people who did not have recourse to God, because otherwise they would not have been accepted. For a prudent individual knows many goods that do not have in themselves evident reasons with which one can persuade others. Thus wise men who wish to take away this difficulty have recourse to God.”⁵⁷ Machiavelli states explicitly here what he only implies elsewhere, that religion is a necessary condition for the successful establishment of new modes and orders. Although he advocates that a prince operates as man and beast and remains silent on the divine, Machiavelli is aware of the importance of religion and the effect of the divine on the efforts of excellent men to establish “a path as yet untrodden by anyone.”⁵⁸

Chapter VI of The Prince, is titled “Of New Principalities That Are Acquired through One’s Own Arms and Virtue.” It is the only chapter in The Prince, where the essential word “virtue” is used in the title. Including the use of the word in the title, the word “virtue” is used 13 times in the course of this chapter. Its next closest competitors are Chapters VII, VIII, and XXVI. If this were an analytical exercise of quantitative political science it may be accurately

⁵⁷ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield & Nathan Tarcov, translators. Discourses on Livy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. P. 35

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 5.

concluded that this is the most virtuous of all chapters. Machiavelli begins this chapter by stating that the subject matter of this chapter should be of no great surprise, “No one should marvel if, in speaking as I will do of principalities that are altogether new both in prince and in state, I bring up the greatest examples.”⁵⁹ These greatest examples are Machiavelli’s heroes, the great and excellent men who were successful in implementing and securing the perpetuity of novel modes and orders. Machiavelli advocates here that princes should imitate their actions and walk their paths so that they may reach an “odor” of their virtue. In Chapter XIV, “What a Prince Should Do Regarding the Military” Machiavelli advises that a prince should “never lift his thoughts from the exercise of war.”⁶⁰ He states that this exercise can be accomplished by both “deeds and mind.” In terms of warlike acts of the mind, Machiavelli advocates reading the histories and acts of great men as a part of a princely education. “But, as to the exercise of the mind, a prince should read histories and consider in them the actions of excellent men, should see how they conducted themselves in wars, should examine the causes of their victories and losses, so as to be able to avoid the latter and imitate the former.”⁶¹ Reading such histories allows the prince to identify the paths of great men and therefore walk upon their beaten path so that his personal virtue may be reflective of the great men and obtain the “odor” of their virtue. According to Machiavelli, few men will have the fortune to stride forward among the most excellent of men as it requires the re-ordering of a “corrupt city.” The difficulty of this, most excellent of projects, should not intimidate the prince from taking his guidance from the lives and stories of great men. “No one, therefore, should be

⁵⁹ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 21-22..

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 59.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 60.

terrified that he cannot carry out what has been carried out by others, for as was said in our preface, men are born, live, and die always in one and the same order.”⁶² The resolute order of life should provide heart to the potential orderer of men.

In the Preface to the Discourses on Livy, Machiavelli prescribes a remedy to the corruption of modern man. The prescription he offers is a return to the nobility of the ancients and this return can only be possible by an understanding of them. He writes in the preface that ancient things are treasured everywhere except where it is most important, in the sphere of politics. The nature of man can only be re-invigorated by political man being re-fashioned by new modes and orders. The novelty of these modes and orders will actually be in their reflection of the deep wisdom of antiquity. “Nonetheless, in ordering republics, maintaining states, governing kingdoms, ordering the military and administering war, judging subjects, and increasing empire, neither prince nor republic may be found that has recourse to the examples of the ancients. This arises, I believe, not so much from the weakness into which the present religion has led the world, or from the evil that an ambitious idleness has done to many Christian provinces and cities, as from not having a true knowledge of histories, through not getting from reading them that sense nor tasting that flavor that they have in themselves. From this it arises that the infinite number who read them take pleasure in hearing of the variety of accidents contained in them without thinking of imitating them, judging that imitation is not only difficult but impossible-as if heaven, sun, elements, men had varied in motion, order, and power from what they were in antiquity.”⁶³ Machiavelli’s cure to the evils of

⁶² Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield & Nathan Tarcov, translators. Discourses on Livy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. P. 36.

⁶³ Ibid, p.6.

his time is an education in the histories of the noble and great ancients. Such histories provide much more than just idle entertainment, but are in fact a blueprint for the re-ennoblement of humanity. In The Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle compares knowledge of the political science and its goal of the human good to the targets utilized by archers. In The Prince, Machiavelli compares knowledge of the ancients and their virtue to the targets utilized by archers. “He should do as prudent archers do when the place they plan to hit appears too distant, and knowing how far the strength of their bow carries, the set their aim much higher than the place intended, not to be able with the aid of so high an aim to achieve their plan.”⁶⁴ Even if the example of the ancients appears too great and distant, by aiming at these targets humanity is closer to their virtue than they would be if they were not aiming at all, as if they are blind to the ancient example. Machiavelli claims to be motivated out of a concern for the common benefit of mankind; he is a physician providing a cure to the disease of man. The medicine he prescribes is an understanding, appreciation, and imitation of the virtues of great and excellent men; these men are his heroes whose noble virtues extend beyond the grave, echo in history, and will save mankind by their mere memory. Machiavelli reminds his readers of the virtuous lives of Theseus, Romulus, Cyrus, and Moses.

⁶⁴ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 22.

PART TWO: "Change of values-that is a change of creators. Whoever must be a creator always annihilates."-Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra

Aristotle states that politics is the master science. This hypothesis is based upon the rationale that man is a political animal and his essence can only be achieved within the context of the political community. Without the city, man is not man, but either beast or god. Man is beast because he lacks the virtue that the city and its laws create. Man would also be god were he to be entirely self-sufficient and his virtues independent of the city and its laws. The masses of mankind need good laws to instill the virtue that is necessary for them to live well. The legislator that creates those laws for the common benefit is "godlike" according to Aristotle. Aristotle leads us to the conclusion that man's nature is a delicate balance of beast and god. This balance can only be accomplished within the confines of the city and its laws.

These ideas would seem to have an influence on the thought of Machiavelli. Machiavelli advises his readers that his intention is to create new modes and orders that will be created for the common benefit of humanity. Machiavelli's modes and orders are in all actuality a return; a return to the virtues of the ancient heroes. Machiavelli advises his prince to model himself upon the excellence of law-givers such as Theseus, Romulus, Cyrus, and Moses. Machiavelli further recommends that the prince take upon himself the natures of both man and beast; and of the beast, in particular, the lion and the fox. Machiavelli remains silent on the divine component of the prince and yet elsewhere he advocates the use of religion to further the political ends of the prince. Machiavelli's conception of the ideal prince is reminiscent of the Aristotelian notion of man being borne of both beast and god. Man is ironically paradoxical in

that he is the creature that uniquely partakes of the seemingly conflicting elements of beast and god. Machiavelli explicitly and implicitly advocates that his prince, man *par excellence*, embrace the animal, the human, and the divine in the pursuit of satisfying his desire of acquisition, power, and glory. Machiavelli's ideal prince is, therefore, also, ironically paradoxical. In considering this advice: of imitation of beast and man; of utilizing the divine; and of imitation of excellent men; it seems reasonable to hypothesize that the histories of the actions, lives, and virtues of Machiavelli's heroes would reflect these instructions. To test the validity of this hypothesis it is then necessary to turn to the lives of excellent men and their chronicles; if we are educated in their noble virtue, all so much the better.

Plutarch's Theseus:

Plutarch's Lives, is a celebration of the lives of ancient heroes. In the course of this collection of histories, Plutarch pairs up a Greek hero with a Roman hero, writes on their lives, and then concludes with a comparison of the two men. This manner of writing not only gives us a sense of the virtues and the lives of "excellent men" that Machiavelli advocates for study, it also gives us a sense of Plutarch's philosophy by virtue of his comparative analysis of their respective virtues. In the Discourses on Livy, Machiavelli refers to Plutarch as "a very grave writer."⁶⁵ Machiavelli takes Plutarch seriously, and as we are students of Machiavelli we should also take Plutarch seriously. Plutarch begins by writing that he commences his account on the very edge of history; where history blends with myth and legend. "Beyond this there is nothing but prodigies and fictions, the only inhabitants are the poets and the inventors of fables; there

⁶⁵ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield & Nathan Tarcov, translators. Discourses on Livy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. P. 125.

is no credit, or certainty any farther.”⁶⁶ Plutarch informs his readers that he has chosen to begin with Romulus and considered to himself, “Whom shall I set so great a man to face? Or whom to oppose? Who’s equal to the place?”⁶⁷ Plutarch chooses to compare the life of Romulus to the life of Theseus. “I found none so fit as him that peopled the beautiful and far-famed city of Athens, to be set in opposition with the father of the invincible and renowned city of Rome.”⁶⁸ Plutarch begins his work by beginning at the beginning and provides his readers with a history of the lives of the founders of two of the greatest cities and empires on record. These regimes are famous not only for their success as regimes, but also for the excellence of philosophy, art, and action that was produced by their citizens. Plutarch’s effort that chronicles the histories of great men is a testament to the success of both Theseus and Romulus. Plutarch remarks on the similarities of these two law-givers, “Theseus seemed to me to resemble Romulus in many particulars. Both of them, born out of wedlock and of uncertain parentage, had the repute of being sprung from the gods. ‘Both warriors; that by all the world’s allowed.’ Both of them united with strength of body an equal vigour of mind; and of the two most famous cities of the world, the one built Rome, and the other made Athens be inhabited. Both stand charged with the rape of women; neither of them could avoid domestic misfortunes nor jealousy at home; but towards the close of their lives are both of them said to have incurred great odium with their countrymen, if, that is, we may take the stories least like poetry as our guide to the truth.”⁶⁹ It is remarkable as Plutarch records the similarities of these men in this passage, to note the extent to which their similarities reflect Machiavelli’s thought. On the

⁶⁶ Plutarch. The Dryden Translation. Lives. New York: The Modern Library, 2001. P. 1.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 1-2.

most important point, both Theseus and Romulus were law-givers, legislators who founded new modes and orders. Aristotle states that such men are “finer and more god-like” than other virtuous human beings because of the positive influence that they have upon their fellows. Machiavelli regards such founders as being the most excellent and noble of men who are worthy of the greatest honors and emulation. Both men also shared a number of personal characteristics that enabled them to rise to the level of leadership and distinguish themselves from the masses. Theseus and Romulus were both warriors and both were strong in body and mind. This combination of strength is reminiscent of Machiavelli’s thesis that a prince must be both beast and man and capable of engaging skillfully in the combat of force and laws. In addition to this, is the divine component of man, as it is incorporated in the stories of the parentage of Theseus and Romulus. Divine origins can be extremely influential in establishing recognizable political authority. “-They subsist by superior causes, to which the human mind does not reach, I will omit speaking of them; for since they are exalted and maintained by God, it would be the office of a presumptuous and foolhardy man to discourse on them.”⁷⁰ Although Machiavelli proceeds to display his presumptuousness by discoursing on these subjects, most men will refrain from their thought because “they subsist by superior causes to which the human mind does not reach.” The divine origin of a founder is a basis of authority that enables the initial establishment and perpetuity of new modes and orders. As we are taught by both Machiavelli and Plutarch, the veracity of divine origin is not essential. What is essential is the public acceptance of divine origin. Divine origin is only important insofar as it is accepted by the people. If divine origin is a “noble lie” it is unjust only insofar as it is perceived untrue, and it is

⁷⁰ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 45.

untrue only as far as it is unaccepted. If a lie evolves into a truth, it ceases being unjust to the extent that it develops into truth. Lies become justice, as these injustices become a basis for political tranquility. Political justice, therefore, is founded upon an initial injustice.⁷¹

Before addressing the life of Theseus in particular, it is important to make note of another similarity between these two excellent men. Both legislators were accused of an extreme act of aggression towards women. If these accusations are true, we readers are given yet another reason to take pause and speculate why such violent men are praised by Machiavelli. Plutarch makes note that both men are charged with the rape of women. Such acts are neither just, nor honorable, nor noble, nor courageous. There is a lack of virtue in the actions of Theseus and Romulus. This is a logical and moral conclusion and in reaching it we must remind ourselves that, according to Machiavelli, Fortune is a woman. He writes in Chapter XXV of The Prince, “I judge this indeed, that it is better to be impetuous than cautious, because fortune is a woman; and it is necessary, if one wants to hold her down, to beat her and strike her down. And one sees that she lets herself be won more by the impetuous than by those who proceed coldly. And so always, like a woman, she is friend of the young, because they are less cautious, more ferocious, and command her with more audacity.”⁷² The violence that these two “excellent men” perpetuate upon women is unjust and yet indicative of the nature of these men; they proceed with the nature of the beast and control variable Fortune by resolute, yet violent action. The injustice of their private action cannot be excused; it can only be excused by Machiavelli insofar as their public enterprise is successful. Lady Fortune

⁷¹ One of the most important discussions of such an idea is found in Plato’s Republic and the story of the perfectly just regime being founded upon the “noble lie” of the “myth of the metals.”

⁷² Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 101.

provided these men with the opportunity to exhibit their virtue. They were able to take advantage of the opportunity that Fortune presented them with and reordered the corrupt city, thereby insuring a lasting monument to their virtue. Machiavellian success entails controlling and taking advantage of Lady Fortune. It is apparent that these men and their enterprises were successful as they are honored by Machiavelli. Temperance is not discussed as a virtue in The Prince and yet prudence is. Aristotle regards both temperance and prudence as virtues. It is highly doubtful that Aristotle would praise such men for their “virtues.” On the other hand, Machiavelli advocates his prince to emulate the actions of these “excellent men” for their virtues. This point leads us to raise an important distinction between Machiavelli and Aristotle.

In The Prince, Machiavelli explicitly praises Theseus on two specific points: 1. Being an armed prophet. 2. Uniting Athens when it was dispersed. In the Discourses on Livy, Machiavelli once again praises Theseus for the political union of a dispersed Athens. Machiavelli remarks that Theseus’ action is a particular instance of a general genus. “-I say that all cities are built either by men native to the place where they are built or by foreigners. The first case occurs when it does not appear, to inhabitants dispersed in many small parts, that they live securely, since each part be itself, both because of the site and because of the small number, cannot resist the thrust of whoever assails it; and when the enemy comes, they do not have time to unite for their defense. Or if they did, they would be required to leave many of their strongholds abandoned; and so they would come at once to be the prey of their enemies. So to flee these dangers, moved either by themselves or by someone among them of greater authority, they are restrained to inhabit together a place elected by them, more advantageous to live in and easier to defend. Of these, among many others, were Athens and Venice. The

first was built for like causes by the dispersed inhabitants under the authority of Theseus.”⁷³

Theseus had the personal virtues to unite a collection of individuals, families, and villages into the city of Athens. This unification may have resulted in the personal glory of Theseus but it was also beneficial to the common welfare of the newly united Athenian citizens. Machiavelli's discussion of the coalescence of the city is reminiscent of Aristotle's discussion of the evolution of the household to the city. According to Aristotle, neither the household nor the subsequent stage of the village is sufficient to fulfill the survival needs of humans. Man needs the strength of the city, both to live, and to live well. Machiavelli, here, states that Theseus provided Athens with the vision and leadership that was necessary for the dispersed villages of what was to become Athens to unite as a political community and fulfill its essence as a city. Athens can be viewed as a corrupt city and Theseus, the legislator, created the new modes and orders that would stabilize and govern it. The fulfillment of the city consists of nothing more and nothing less than the fulfillment of its citizens. There can be no greater testament to the fulfillment of the political community of Athens than the fact that it produced Socrates; the perfectly fulfilled individual.⁷⁴ However, there can be no greater indictment against the political community of Athens than that it put that very same Socrates to death. Theseus was the founder of the Athenian regime that nurtured and then destroyed the philosopher Socrates. Machiavelli does

⁷³ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield & Nathan Tarcov, translators. Discourses on Livy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. P.7.

⁷⁴ Strauss, Leo. *The Problem of Socrates* in The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism. “Hence the philosopher, and only the philosopher, can be simply just, regardless of the quality of the city in which he lives; and vice versa, the nonphilosopher will not be simply just, regardless of the quality of the city in which he lives. Socrates speaks less of doing one's job well than simply of doing one's job, which has a common meaning of minding one's own business, not to be a busybody, or to lead a retired life. To lead the just life means to live a retired life, the retired life *par excellence*, the life of the philosopher. This is the manifest secret of the *Republic*. The justice of the individual is said to be written in small letters, but the justice of the city is in large letters. Justice is said to consist in minding one's business, that is to say, in not serving others. Obviously the best city does not serve other cities. It is self-sufficient.” P. 161. Contrast this idea with Machiavelli's Chapter VI of The Prince and the Preface to the Discourses on Livy. Also compare with Aristotle's idea of the “finer and godlike” legislator.

not praise Socrates for his virtues; in fact, Socrates is not mentioned by name in either The Prince or the Discourses on Livy. His most famous student, Plato, is not mentioned by name in The Prince. This work is, of course, about principalities and Machiavelli makes only allusions to Platonic philosophy in his discussion of “imagined republics and principalities” in Chapter XV (whose subject-matter regards the praise and blame of princes). In the Discourses on Livy, whose subject is the republic, Plato is mentioned explicitly. In Book III, Chapter 6 (which is titled, “Of Conspiracies”), section 16, in the course of a discussion of conspiracies against tyrants, Machiavelli mentions Plato by name. “Certain young Athenians conspired against Diocles and Hippias, tyrants of Athens. They killed Diocles; and Hippias, who was left, avenged him. Chion and Leonidas, Heracleans and disciples of Plato, conspired against Clearchus and Satirus, tyrants; they killed Clearchus, and Satirus, who remained alive avenged him.”⁷⁵ In Machiavelli’s discussion of republics he mentions Plato’s disciples as conspirators against tyrants. The title of Plato’s most famous work is The Republic and it is the story of Socrates creating the best regime in speech. This should remind us of Machiavelli’s critique of those who create “imagined republics” that are based upon what “ought” to be rather than what “is.” Machiavelli makes no moral judgment about the conspiracy but he does mention it as a specific example of a genus of conspiracies that are bound to fail. Plato’s disciples were unsuccessful in their conspiracy because one of the two tyrants remained alive and exacted vengeance. Machiavelli discusses these types of conspiracies, “For the causes that have been said, one cannot bring the thing to perfection when one conspires against one head; but one does not easily bring it to perfection when one conspires against two heads. Indeed it is so difficult that

⁷⁵ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield & Nathan Tarcov, translators. Discourses on Livy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. P.230.

it is almost impossible that it succeed. For to do a like action at the same time in different places is almost impossible that it succeed. For to do a like action at the same time in different places is almost impossible, for one cannot do it at different times if one does not wish the one to spoil the other. So if conspiring against a prince is a thing doubtful, dangerous, and hardly prudent, conspiring against two is altogether vain and flighty.”⁷⁶ Much in the same manner that their master Plato’s imaginative philosophic speculations are criticized in The Prince, his disciples are criticized in the Discourses on Livy for the impracticality of their enterprise of conspiracy due to its’ “vain and flighty” nature. Machiavelli criticizes Plato’s disciples for their inability to save Theseus’ regime from tyranny. Students of the author of The Republic were unable to destroy a tyranny and reorder it according to the principles of its republican origins. Machiavelli traces this inability to the impracticality of their enterprise. Machiavelli states that conspiring against a prince is “doubtful, dangerous, and hardly prudent.” These Platonic disciples lacked the virtue to reorder Theseus’ accomplishment. They lacked Theseus’ virtue. To better understand the deficiencies of Plato’s disciples we must understand Theseus’ virtue; to do that we must return to Plutarch.

According to Plutarch, the details of Theseus’ parentage and birth are clouded in obscurity. There are two accounts of his birth; one consists of the defiance of a god; the other consists of his conception by a god. Both accounts, therefore, contain reference to divine elements. According to one account, Aegeus, a prince of the dispersed city of Athens, consulted the Oracle at Delphi which warned him of being in the company of women before his

⁷⁶ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield & Nathan Tarcov, translators. Discourses on Livy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. P.229.

return to Athens. Aegeus was confused by this statement of the oracle and in the course of his travels encountered Pittheus, a governor of the “small city of the Troezenians.”⁷⁷ Aegeus told Pittheus about the oracle’s advice and Pittheus understood the riddle and according to Plutarch, “it is uncertain whether by persuasion or deceit, (convinced Aegeus) to lie with his daughter Aethra.”⁷⁸ In this version of the birth of Theseus, the divine sanction is ignored and Aegeus is deceived. This is reflective of Machiavelli’s implicit denial of the divine; indicated in the nature of his prince being a combination of man and beast. The other version of Theseus’ parentage was, according to Plutarch, manufactured by his duplicitous grandfather, Pittheus. “Aethra for some time concealed the true parentage of Theseus, and a report was given out by Pittheus that he was begotten by Neptune; for the Troezenians pay Neptune the highest veneration. He is their tutelary god; to him they offer all their first fruits, and in his honor stamp their money with a trident.”⁷⁹ It appears that even the stories of Theseus’ divine parentage were based upon a deceit contrived by his grandfather. Whereas Pittheus uses the oracle’s proclamation as a means to deceive Aegeus to father his grandson, Pittheus also utilizes the divine to bestow that grandson, conceived in deceit, with an aura of divine legitimacy. In both stories Theseus is conceived by virtue of a deceit. The fox-like nature of Pittheus reflects both aspects of Machiavellian thought regarding the divine; a denial of divine restrictions upon individual actions and a utilization of the divine to achieve legitimacy and authority among the masses.

⁷⁷ Plutarch. The Dryden Translation. Lives. New York: The Modern Library, 2001. P. 2.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 3.

Another important component of the story of Theseus is represented in his travels to Athens. Although his mother and his grandfather beseeched him to travel by sea to avoid the dangers that were prevalent along the road to Athens, Theseus refused, as he wished to walk in the path of the great Hercules, who was his cousin. Plutarch writes of the admiration that Theseus had for Hercules, "But he, it seems, had long since been secretly fired by the glory of Hercules, held him in the highest estimation, and was never more satisfied than in listening to any that gave an account of him...entertaining such admiration for the virtue of Hercules, that in the night his dreams were all of that hero's actions, and in the day a continual emulation stirred up to perform the like. Besides, they were related, being born of cousins-german...He thought it therefore a dishonorable thing, and not be endured, that Hercules should go out everywhere, and purge both land and sea from wicked men, and he himself should fly from the adventures that actually came in his way."⁸⁰ Theseus is an admirer and student of the virtue of Hercules and wished to walk in his path in order to achieve glory and honor. This should remind us of the passage of Chapter VI of The Prince, where Machiavelli writes of walking the paths beaten by great men in order to reach an "odor" of their virtue and greatness. Theseus wishes to emulate Hercules and in order to do so, walks in his path on his journey to Athens.

Along his travels, Theseus encounters a number of criminals, monsters, and beasts; he vanquishes each. An interesting trait of Theseus was to defeat an enemy in battle and take for himself the weapon of his enemy. An example of this was his battle with Periphetes where Theseus killed him and then took his club as his own. Plutarch informs us that "Theseus carried

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 4.

about him this club; overcome indeed by him, but now in his hands, invincible.”⁸¹ Theseus’ habit of utilizing the arms of others does not seem consistent with the words of Machiavelli, particularly in Chapter VI where the greatest examples are princes (including Theseus) who conquered with their own arms and virtue. Using the arms of others makes Theseus “invincible.” Machiavelli writes in Chapter XIII of The Prince that “the arms of others either fall off your back or weigh you down or hold you tight.”⁸² Machiavelli warns the prince against using the arms of others to accomplish your end. The point may be raised that Machiavelli makes this comment in the course of his discussion of utilizing auxiliary, mixed or one’s own soldiers for the purpose of combat. One may object and state that Machiavelli is referring to “one’s own arms” in terms of arms and laws, not of weapons as is the case of Theseus. However, to illustrate the argument of Chapter XIII, Machiavelli uses a famous story of an individual using his own weapons rather than another man’s arms to vanquish his enemy; here, Machiavelli is talking of individual weapons and not of soldiers, “I want further to recall to memory a figure of the Old Testament apt for this purpose. When David offered to Saul to go and fight Goliath, the Philistine challenger, Saul to give him spirit, armed him with his own arms-which David, as soon as he had them on, refused, saying that with them he could not give a good account of himself, and so he would rather meet the enemy with his sling and his knife.”⁸³ David refuses the arms of Saul and faces Goliath with his own knife and sling. David is famously successful in vanquishing his enemy when he appears to be overmatched. Theseus is

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 5.

⁸² Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 56.

⁸³ Ibid. In his translation, Mansfield makes the point in a footnote that Machiavelli’s version of this story “differs significantly from the Biblical original in I Samuel 17: 38-40, 50-51.”

also successful in defeating his enemies but he uses the arms of others to do so.⁸⁴ Machiavelli's model for using one's own arms is the Biblical David. David is an armed prophet and this leads to his success. In Chapter VI of The Prince, Machiavelli concludes that only and all armed prophets conquer. "From this it arises that all armed prophets conquered and the unarmed ones were ruined."⁸⁵ Theseus is also successful and therefore must also be an armed prophet despite using the arms of others. In Chapter VI, Machiavelli mentions Theseus as an armed prophet. "Moses, Cyrus, Theseus, and Romulus would not have been able to make their peoples observe their constitutions for long if they had been unarmed, as happened in our times to Brother Girolamo Savonarola."⁸⁶ In Chapter XIII, Machiavelli writes about the necessity of using one's own arms, "I concluded, thus, that without its own arms no principality is secure; indeed it is wholly obliged to fortune since it does not have virtue to defend itself in adversity."⁸⁷ Mansfield writes in a footnote on page 57 of his translation of The Prince that the four historical examples that Machiavelli writes about in this chapter are Cesare Borgia, Hiero, David, and Charles VII. Mansfield makes a point to mention that these are not the same four "excellent" men who are named in Chapter VI. In Chapter XIII, where Machiavelli addresses using one's own arms and gives examples of this, he does not mention the most excellent men of Chapter VI whom he regards as armed prophets within the specific context of Chapter VI. Machiavelli gives us the example of David and we are led to contrast it with the story of

⁸⁴ Even Theseus' "own arms" were given to him by his father Aegeus. See Plutarch's Lives, p. 2.

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 24.

⁸⁶ Ibid. Savonarola was a contemporary of Machiavelli and was executed. Machiavelli attributes this to his being an unarmed prophet. He was unarmed in the sense that Savonarola attempted to use the arms of others. His attempt to use the religious arms of the Church rendered him impotent and ultimately resulted in his failure as evident in his execution. He tried to use the "arms" of the Catholic Church against itself and was unsuccessful in doing so.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 57.

Theseus in Plutarch. It appears that Theseus is an armed prophet who uses the arms of others and despite this is successful. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that Machiavelli does not mention Theseus in Chapter XIII. However, Machiavelli writes near the conclusion of Chapter XIII that, “And one’s own arms are those which are composed of either subjects or citizens or your creatures: all others are either mercenary or auxiliary.”⁸⁸ To better appreciate the complexity of the problem of how Theseus is an armed prophet who uses the arms of others we must turn one last time to Plutarch’s history of Theseus. The story of the defeat of the Minotaur will point us in the appropriate direction.

Plutarch chronicles many of the important victories of Theseus. During many of these battles, Theseus faced and defeated animals and man-beasts. Plutarch mentions Phaea (the Crommyonian woman-sow), the bull of Marathon, and his famous battles with the centaurs. Theseus’ conquests are indicative of his mastery of the beast-like nature of the prince that is advocated by Machiavelli. However, his most important and famous battle occurred with the Minotaur of Crete. The Athenians were required by Crete to pay a tribute of human sacrifices to the Minotaur of seven young men and virgins every nine years. The Minotaur is a creature that is uniquely reflective of the beast-man component of the prince. Plutarch quotes Euripides in describing the Minotaur, “A mingled form where two strange shapes combined, and different natures, bull and man, were joined.”⁸⁹ This “mingled form” represents the Machiavellian ideal of the prince. This hybrid-being was the enemy of Athens and the only way for the Athenians to stop the tribute was to destroy the Minotaur. Theseus took this task upon himself and

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Plutarch. The Dryden Translation. Lives. New York: The Modern Library, 2001. P. 8.

through strength of mind and body was able to slay the Minotaur and secure the welfare of Athens.⁹⁰

After a series of adventures Theseus returned to Athens and upon his triumphant return, he forgot to send the signal that informed his father that he remained alive and all was well. This led to the death of Aegeus. As Plutarch writes, “Aegeus, who, in despair at the sight, threw himself headlong from a rock, and perished in the sea.”⁹¹ Plutarch continues that after the death of his father, Theseus took control of the city and reordered it. “Now, after the death of his father Aegeus, forming in his mind a great and wonderful design, he gathered together all the inhabitants of Attica into one town and made them one people of one city, whereas before they had been dispersed, and were not easy to assemble upon any affair for the common interest.”⁹² Plutarch remarks that Theseus did away with “regal power” and instituted “popular government.” The story of Theseus is the story of a legislator reordering a corrupt city for the common benefit of its peoples. By the Machiavellian and Aristotelian political standard of judgment he is an excellent man and fine and god-like. Theseus utilized the nature of both man and beast to defeat the Minotaur; this victory not only saved Athens from its tribute to Crete but this action also provided the basis for Theseus’ political rule. Theseus was thus armed with his virtue and was victorious both in battle and in the organization of the city. Theseus is an armed prophet because he utilizes his own virtue and not the virtue of others. His virtue is wholly independent and self-sufficient. He represents the god-like being that Aristotle mentions in The Politics who has no need of the city for his virtue. In fact the city is in need of

⁹⁰ Plutarch makes note of the aid that Ariadne’s Thread provided in the ultimate success of Theseus’ enterprise.

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 13.

⁹² Ibid, p. 14.

his virtue instead. Theseus, in his character and through his actions, is the epitome of the virtuous man. The stature of his virtue is reflected in the manner of his memory in Athens. Plutarch writes, “-In succeeding ages, besides several other circumstances that moved the Athenians to honor Theseus as a demigod, in the battle which was fought at Marathon against the Medes, many of the soldiers believed they saw an apparition of Theseus in arms, rushing on at the head of them against the barbarians.”⁹³ Athens celebrates Theseus as a “demigod” and the image of Theseus in arms provides inspiration to Athenians in battle long after his mortal death. His virtue seems to be unsurpassed in Athens and Theseus seems to be rightly regarded by Machiavelli as a model prince, worthy of study and emulation.

Before moving to the history of Romulus and his virtues, there is an interesting passage from Plutarch that can be used as a transition between the discussions of Theseus and Romulus. In his comparison between Theseus and Romulus, Plutarch makes a compelling point that he did not mention within the history of Theseus. Plutarch writes, “But Theseus, in his forgetfulness and neglect of the command concerning the flag, can scarcely, methinks, by any excuses, or before the most indulgent judges, avoid the imputation of parricide.”⁹⁴ The virtue and success of Theseus is based upon his victory over the Minotaur. This victory had the direct result of the death of his father and thereby Theseus’ ascension to the throne of Athens. Plutarch accuses Theseus of parricide; this led to the creation of the Athenian regime. Romulus is famous for a fratricide, the murder of his brother, Remus; this led to the creation of the Roman regime. The basis of the political power of Machiavelli’s excellent men is stained with

⁹³ Ibid, p. 24.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 51.

the blood of their families. Justice and virtue is founded upon injustice and vice. It appears that the nature of the beast is of utmost importance in the initial creation of the city.

Machiavelli's excellent men must exhibit the moral capacity to operate without moral scruples.

To support this claim we must turn to the evidence of Romulus' life that is provided by Plutarch.

Plutarch's Romulus:

Romulus is an armed prophet and is praised in Chapter VI as one of the "greatest examples" of a prince. Romulus stands with Theseus, Cyrus, and Moses as those men who are most worthy of emulation for their virtues. In Chapter VI, Machiavelli remarks that circumstances did account for the situation that allowed the virtue of Romulus to be displayed. "It was fitting that Romulus not be received in Alba, that he should have been exposed at birth, if he was to become king of Rome and founder of that fatherland."⁹⁵ But Romulus, through his virtue, was able to recognize and then take advantage of the opportunity that Fortune presented him with. In Chapter XXVI of The Prince, Machiavelli encourages the liberation of Italy from the barbarians. Machiavelli's Italy was in need of a new prince to reorder it away from its corruption. Fortune had once again supplied excellence with an opportunity. On one level, Machiavelli's The Prince is a blueprint on just how to achieve the liberation of Italy and embrace greatness. However, greatness needs a model. In Chapter XXVI, Machiavelli mentions three of the four examples of excellent men who are identified in Chapter VI. "And if, as I said, it was necessary for anyone wanting to see the virtue of Moses that the people of Israel be enslaved in Egypt, and to learn of the greatness of spirit of Cyrus, that the Persians be

⁹⁵ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 23.

oppressed by the Medes, and to learn the excellence of Theseus, that the Athenians be dispersed, so at present to know the virtue of an Italian spirit it was necessary that Italy be reduced to the condition in which she is at present, which is more enslaved than the Hebrews, more servile than the Persians, more dispersed than the Athenians, without a head, without order, beaten, despoiled, torn, pillaged, and having endured ruin of every sort.”⁹⁶ Italy is representative of the corrupt city that presents the opportunity for the greatest of glories for the new prince. Italy is the historical heir to the magnificent Roman Republic that was established through the virtue of Romulus. Yet in Chapter XXVI, in the course of his discussion of the challenges that were faced by his most excellent of men, Machiavelli fails to mention Romulus. Romulus is the founder of the order that has been corrupted. Machiavelli wishes to recreate a semblance of the glory of Rome, and despite this, Romulus is not mentioned at all during the course of Chapter XXVI. Machiavelli is silent on Romulus in Chapter XXVI of The Prince and yet mentions him explicitly in Chapter VI. The reason for this may be found in Machiavelli’s discussion of Romulus in the Discourses on Livy.

In Book III, Chapter I of the Discourses on Livy, Machiavelli uses the impressive title, “If One Wishes a Sect or a Republic to Live Long, It Is Necessary to Draw It Back Often toward Its Beginning.” Machiavelli writes that long life entails a renewal of its origins. “It is a very true thing that all worldly things have a limit to their life; but generally those go the whole course that is ordered for them by heaven, that do not disorder their body but keep it ordered so that either it does not alter or, if it alters, it is for its safety and not to its harm...So those are better ordered and have longer life that by means of their orders can often be renewed or indeed that

⁹⁶Ibid, p. 102.

through some accident outside the said order come to the said renewal. And it is a thing clearer than light that these bodies do not last if they do not renew themselves...The mode of renewing them is, as we said, to lead them back toward their beginnings. For all the beginnings of sects, republics, and kingdoms must have some goodness in them, by means of which they may regain their first reputation and their first increase. Because in the process of time that goodness is corrupted unless something intervenes to lead it back to the mark, it of necessity kills that body.”⁹⁷ Renewal of origins is essential for durable success and this explains Machiavelli’s reverence of the ancients. Machiavelli proceeds and makes reference to Livy’s history and the invasion of Rome by the French and how this defeat led to a rebirth of Roman virtue by virtue of a return to the virtue instituted by Romulus. “It ought to be easily presupposed that they were beginning to take less account of other good institutions ordered by Romulus and by the other prudent princes than was reasonable and necessary to maintain their free way of life. Thus came the external beating, so that all the orders of the city might be regained and that it might be shown to that people that it was necessary not only to maintain religion and justice but also to esteem its good citizens and to take more account of their virtue than of those advantages that it appeared to them they lacked through their works.”⁹⁸ Machiavelli attributes a Roman rebirth to a return to the “good institutions ordered by Romulus,” and yet in the concluding chapter The Prince, which is an exhortation to return Italy to its Roman eminence, Machiavelli is silent on Romulus. This silence is even more surprising considering a passage in Book I, Chapter 19 of the Discourses on Livy. Machiavelli writes, “From

⁹⁷ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield & Nathan Tarcov, translators. Discourses on Livy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. P.209.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 209-210.

this, all princes who hold a state may find an example. For he who is like Numa will hold it or not hold it as the times or fortune turn under him, but he who is like Romulus, and like him comes armed with prudence and with arms, will hold it in every mode unless taken from him by an obstinate and excessive force.”⁹⁹ Whereas Numa is dependent upon the dictates of time and fortune, Romulus is independent of these factors by virtue of his prudence and arms. Only an “obstinate and excessive force” can overcome the modes and orders of the armed prophet Romulus. The character of that obstinate and excessive force may be better understood by an analysis of Book I, Chapter 11 of the Discourses on Livy. This chapter is titled, “Of the Religion of the Romans.”

Machiavelli honors Romulus as an excellent man in The Prince for his founding of Rome; in Book I, Chapter 11 of the Discourses on Livy, he acknowledges Romulus as the first orderer of Rome. However, the perpetuity of the Roman regime could not be solely dependent upon his individual virtue. Once he passed there had to be something else to sustain it. “Although Rome had Romulus as its first orderer and has to acknowledge, as daughter, its birth and education as from him, nonetheless, since the heavens judged that the orders of Romulus would not suffice for such an empire, they inspired in the breast of the Roman Senate the choosing of Numa Pompilius as successor to Romulus so that those very things omitted by him might be ordered by Numa. As he found a very ferocious people and wished to reduce it to civil obedience with the arts of peace, he turned to religion as a thing altogether necessary if he wished to maintain a civilization; and he constituted it so that for many centuries there was never so much fear of God as in that republic, which made easier whatever enterprise the Senate or the great men of

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 53.

Rome might plan to make.”¹⁰⁰ Here, Machiavelli seems to begrudgingly attribute the founding of Rome to Romulus. It appears that Rome owes a debt to Romulus and must pay him homage accordingly; as a debtor does a creditor. However, Machiavelli argues that the stability of the regime was not consummated until the rule of Numa and his institution of religion among the Romans. Religion placated a “ferocious people” and allowed the government and the “great men” of Rome to act unhindered. Romulus exemplifies the nature of the prince as indicated in Chapter XVIII of The Prince: he is beast and man. However it was left to his successor, Numa, to instill religion among the Romans, the very thing “omitted by him (Romulus).” Machiavelli appears to be critiquing one of his heroes for ignoring the importance of the divine and religion in the installation of new modes and orders. This sentiment is strengthened by another passage in this chapter where Machiavelli actually denigrates the importance of Romulus as founder. “Whoever considers well the Roman histories sees how much religion served to command armies, to animate the plebs, to keep men good, to bring shame to the wicked. So if one had to dispute over which prince Rome was more obligated to, Romulus or Numa, I believe rather that Numa would obtain the first rank; for where there is no religion, arms can easily be introduced, and where there are arms and not religion, the latter can be introduced only with difficulty. One sees that for Romulus to order the Senate and to make other civil and military orders, the authority of God was not necessary; but it was quite necessary to Numa, who pretended to be intimate with a nymph who counseled him on what he had to counsel to the people. It all arose because he wished to put new and unaccustomed orders in the city and

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 34.

doubted that his authority would suffice.”¹⁰¹ Machiavelli judges Numa to be the superior founder, and this is due to Romulus’ not recognizing of the power of religion to create and sustain the order of a people. Romulus lacked an appreciation for the divine component of human nature that is advanced by Aristotle in The Politics; for this he is judged inferior to Numa. This is despite the fact that Numa lacks the strength and authority of Romulus; Numa lacks the virtue of Romulus and yet he recognizes his individual deficiency and because of this embraces religion and the power of the divine for the sake of the common good.

The foundation of Rome was based upon the virtue of Romulus, who exemplifies the nature of the beast and the man, and yet he, and Rome, lacked the divine and this had to be remedied by Numa. It is in this, that Machiavelli, the “teacher of evil,” criticizes one of his heroes for his lack of religion. Romulus did not need God for his authority; his virtue would suffice. The individual virtue of a great man is necessary to create new modes and orders, but it is not enough to sustain them. Religion is necessary as it is part of the nature of man. The ideal, new prince’s nature may be a combination of beast and man but all subsequent princes must be comprised of beast, man, and god. Machiavelli explicates this in Chapter XVIII of The Prince, “Nay, I dare say this, that by having them and always observing them, they are harmful; and by appearing to have them, they are useful, as it is to appear merciful, humane, honest, and religious, and to be so; but to remain with a spirit but so that, if you need not to be those things, you are able and know how to change to the contrary. This has to be understood: that a prince, and especially a new prince, cannot observe all those things for which men are held good, since he is often under a necessity to maintain his state, of acting against faith, against

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 34-35.

charity, against humanity, against religion. And so he needs to have a spirit disposed to change as the winds of fortune and variations of things command him, and as I said above, not depart from good, when possible, but know how to enter into evil, when forced by necessity. A prince should thus take great care that nothing escape his mouth that is not full of the above-mentioned five qualities and that, to see him and hear him, he should appear all mercy, all faith, all honesty, all humanity, all religion. And nothing is more necessary to appear to have than this last quality.”¹⁰² Machiavelli, here, advocates following traditional moral virtues when possible but states that these scruples should be sacrificed for the welfare of the state and its citizens. He notes that a new prince, like Romulus, “cannot observe all those things for which men are held good,” these founders must sacrifice their moral humanity for the sake of the masses and for this sacrifice they will be honored. This ability to transcend good and evil is what constitutes their virtue and because of this they are regarded as noble and excellent. However, as Machiavelli mentions, this virtue is not enough to sustain the state beyond the mortal life of the initial founder. Religion, and an appeal to the divine component of man that is stressed by Aristotle, must be the foundation of the perpetuity of those institutions. The subsequent virtues of morality and religion are founded upon an initial basis of the virtues of immorality and the nature of the beast. Machiavelli writes, “For where the fear of God fails, it must be either that the kingdom comes to ruin or that it is sustained by the fear of a prince, which supplies the defect of religion. Because princes are of short life, it must be that the kingdom will fail soon, as his virtue fails. Hence it arises that kingdoms that depend solely on

¹⁰² Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 70. Contrast this sentiment with Thomas Hobbes thoughts on religion in Chapter XII of the Leviathan.

the virtue of one man are hardly durable, because that virtue fails with the life of that one; and it rarely happens that it is restored by succession, as Dante prudently says: Rarely does human probity descend by the branches; and this He wills who gives it, that it be called for from him. Thus it is the safety of a republic or a kingdom to have not one prince who governs prudently while he lives, but one individual who orders it so it is also maintained when he dies.”¹⁰³ In Chapter XXVI of The Prince, Machiavelli’s goal is to create and maintain a new Italian empire, with Rome as its model. In his patriotic call to arms, Machiavelli does not mention Romulus the founder of Rome. Machiavelli recognizes that the maintenance of new modes and orders cannot happen without religion and as Romulus rejects religion, Machiavelli rejects Romulus. On the other hand, Machiavelli also recognizes that the initial re-ordering of a corrupt city is based on the irreligious ferocity of a new prince’s virtue. In this respect, Romulus is a model for the new prince and a hero of Machiavelli. To gain an appreciation for the virtues of Romulus we turn our attention to Plutarch.

Romulus is famous for the circumstance of his birth. The stories regarding his parentage are questionable but Plutarch reports that most evidence points to Romulus being in the lineage of Aeneas.¹⁰⁴ Plutarch states that according to the most reliable of accounts, Romulus was the son of a daughter of Numitor, who is a descendent of Aeneas. The name of the daughter is lost to history, though it is believed that her name was Ilia, Rhea, or Silvia. Numitor was involved in a political dispute with his brother Amulius, and Amulius was victorious. Amulius, who was wary of Numitor’s daughter bearing sons to challenge his rule, bound her to

¹⁰³ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield & Nathan Tarcov, translators. Discourses on Livy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. P.35-36.

¹⁰⁴ Virgil’s Aeneid is a source to this legend. When Aeneas visits the underworld, he is informed that his descendent, Romulus, will found the city of Rome.

live the cloistered life of a Vestal virgin. However, she became pregnant and had twin boys. Plutarch informs us that the father of the boys is not known but that many traditions hold that they were the sons of the god Mars.¹⁰⁵ Similar to the story of Theseus, there is an element of divine origin to the birth of the founder of Rome. Plutarch remarks that the birth of these twin boys greatly alarmed Amulius, “In time she brought forth two boys, of more than human size and beauty, whom Amulius, becoming yet more alarmed, commanded a servant to take and cast away.”¹⁰⁶ The brothers were left at the side of an overflowing river and the river took them up and placed them at “a smooth piece of ground, which they now call Cermanus, formerly Germanus, perhaps from *Germani*, which signifies brothers.”¹⁰⁷ Plutarch states that the boys were saved and nurtured by a she-wolf and a woodpecker, both animals which are holy to the god Mars. This tradition would seem to verify the divine origin of the twins, who would be called Romulus and Remus. The story of the birth of these two brothers is reflective of the Aristotelian conception of man being a balance of beast and god. Tradition holds that the twins were conceived by the god Mars and nurtured by two beasts. The initial conception and subsequent survival of these twins was dependent upon the dual natures of humanity. Romulus and Remus represent the perfect metaphor for Aristotle’s conception of human nature. Rome would not have existed without the man who was conceived by a god and nurtured by beasts. Machiavelli’s hero is manifestly god and beast.

Faustulus, the servant who was supposed to have cast the twins in to the river, raised them as his children. Plutarch remarks that the twins were natural superiors in body and virtue.

¹⁰⁵ Once again, in Book VI of the Aeneid, it is remarked that Romulus is the son of the god Mars.

¹⁰⁶ Plutarch. The Dryden Translation. Lives. New York: The Modern Library, 2001. P. 27.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

“In their very infancy, the size and beauty of their bodies intimated their natural superiority; and when they grew up, they both proved brave and manly, attempting all enterprises that seemed hazardous, and showing in them a courage altogether undaunted. But Romulus seemed rather to act by counsel, and to show the sagacity of a statesman, and in all his dealings with his neighbors, whether relating to feeding or flocks or to hunting, gave the idea of being born rather to rule than to obey.”¹⁰⁸ Plutarch remarks that both brothers were naturally superior to other men but that Romulus had a special nature that indicated his capacity to rule.

The superiority of the brothers and their natural leadership skills were made manifest in the revolt they led against Amulius. They were successful in leading this rebellion and instead of taking political power for their own they delivered the kingdom to the hands of their grandfather Numitor. “Amulius now being dead and matters quietly disposed, the two brothers would neither dwell in Alba without governing there, nor take the government into their own hands during the life of their grandfather. Having therefore delivered the dominion up into his hands, and paid their mother befitting honour, they resolved to live by themselves, and build a city in the same place where they were in their infancy brought up.”¹⁰⁹ This action is extremely reflective of Machiavellian thought. The brothers were able to secure victory through their own virtue but did not want to take part in ruling a principality that was initially acquired through another’s arms and virtue. Machiavelli writes that, “These persons rest simply on the will and fortune of whoever has given a state to them, which are two very inconstant and unstable things. They do not know how to hold and they cannot hold that rank: they do know

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 28.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 30-31.

how, because if one is not a man of great ingenuity and virtue, it is not reasonable, that having always lived in private fortune, he should know how to command...Then, too, states that come to be suddenly, like all other things in nature that are born and grow quickly, cannot have roots and branches, so that the first adverse weather eliminates them.”¹¹⁰ The brothers seem to recognize that ruling an established state not only has its practical difficulties; it is not honorable as it is not self-sufficient, nor reliant upon the virtue of the individual who is ruling. Both Machiavelli and Aristotle agree that self-sufficiency is the hallmark of a virtuous man. Aristotle’s ideal man is perfectly self-sufficient and Machiavelli’s ideal prince relies only upon his own arms and virtue. Up to this point Romulus and Remus are partners in their victories and their virtues. Neither of the twins is self-sufficient; in fact, they could be perceived as co-dependent. Romulus would separate himself and his virtues from his brother in his infamous act of fratricide. It is by virtue of this act, that Romulus becomes self-sufficient and the model of Machiavelli’s ideal prince.

Prior to the murder of Remus, the twins were partners in the building of Rome from its humble beginnings. Plutarch attributes the growth of Rome to its founding mission as a “universal city.” Rome was founded by the brothers as a place “of refuge for all fugitives.” As Plutarch writes, “Not long after the first foundation of the city, they opened a sanctuary of refuge for all fugitives, which they called the temple of the god Asylaeus, where they received and protected all, delivering none back, neither the servant to his master, the debtor to his creditor, nor the murderer into the hands of the magistrate, saying it was a privileged place,

¹¹⁰ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 26.

and they could so maintain it by an order of the holy oracle; insomuch that the city grew presently very populous, for they say it consisted at first of no more than a thousand homes.”¹¹¹ It is interesting that Plutarch specifically mentions that the order of the city was maintained by the “order of the holy oracle,” and yet Machiavelli in Book I, Chapter 11 of the Discourses on Livy, criticizes Romulus for disregarding the importance of religion in the maintenance of new modes and orders. Given the motley assemblage of people that would be attracted to a city like Rome it is apparent that religion would be fundamental in establishing a measure of stability. Virtue can create, but the divine must maintain. Furthermore, Rome’s future status as the City of God and seat of the redemptive Catholic Church is anticipated by its origins; which are based upon emancipation and forgiveness of conventional transgressions. It is fitting that the American motto, *E Pluribus Unum* is a line from the preeminent Roman poet Virgil. From this modest beginning, Rome grew into the great empire. However, this city and its subsequent empire grew from the foundation of fratricide.

Plutarch recounts that the situation that led up to the murder of Remus at the hands of his brother was political. The brothers were trying to decide where they would build the city of Rome. They decided to resolve the matter through Fortune, or an act of divination regarding vultures. “Concluding at least to decide the contest by a divination from the flight of birds, and placing themselves apart at some distance, Remus, they say, saw six vultures, and Romulus double that number; others say, Remus did truly see his number, and that Romulus feigned his, but when Remus came to him, that then he did indeed see twelve.”¹¹² Romulus attempted to

¹¹¹ Plutarch. The Dryden Translation. Lives. New York: The Modern Library, 2001. P. 31.

¹¹² Ibid.

deceive Remus and establish the city upon his own design. Rome was founded initially upon a deception of brother by brother. Plutarch informs us that Remus became aware of “the cheat” and “he was much displeased.” As Romulus was working on constructing the “foundation of the city-wall,” Remus “turned some pieces of the work to ridicule, and obstructed others; at last, as he was in contempt leaping over it...Romulus struck him.”¹¹³ Remus died from the blow and in the course of the scuffle, Faustulus, the man who was supposed to cast the twins into the river but instead ended up raising them, was also killed. The physical construction of Rome was based upon murder. Furthermore, the augmentation of Rome was exacerbated by the rape of the Sabine women by the Romans. Plutarch recounts this episode in this passage, “Upon discovery of this alter, Romulus, by proclamation, appointed a day for a splendid sacrifice, and for public games and shows, to entertain all sorts of people: many flocked thither, and he himself sat in front, amidst his nobles clad in purple. Now the signal for their falling on was to be whenever he rose and gathered up his robe and threw it over his body; his men stood all ready armed, with their eyes intent upon him, and when the sign was given, drawing their swords and falling on with a great shout, they ravished away the daughters of the Sabines, they themselves flying without any let or hindrance.”¹¹⁴ Romulus, who is celebrated as an excellent man, whose virtue is worthy of emulation, and who is one of Machiavelli’s heroes, is a murderer and rapist. If Rome is founded upon the actions of Romulus, it seems as if these actions are not virtues but vices; the redemptive City of God is founded upon sin.

¹¹³ Ibid, p. 32.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 35.

St. Augustine, taking the role of proponent of an ancient code of ethics, analyzes the actions of Romulus and the foundation of Rome in the City of God. St. Augustine recognizes the irony of calling Rome the City of God. St. Augustine makes a distinction between the earthly city of Rome and its criminal foundations and the City of God which is spiritual and founded without sin. Rome is referred to as an “earthly city.” Earthly cities are cities of men and are founded and maintained by the vices of men. This perspective embodies the Machiavellian conception of political virtue transcending traditional notions of good and evil. St. Augustine discusses the founding of Rome in Book XV, Chapter V, which is titled “Of the first founder of the earthly city, whose fratricide was reproduced by the founder of Rome.” St. Augustine draws a parallel between the first city and the city of Rome. The founder of the first city of men was Cain. Cain murdered his brother Abel and when questioned by God of Abel, Cain responded, “Am I my brother’s keeper?”¹¹⁵ The first city was founded by fratricide and St. Augustine remarks that this act was reflected in the founding of Rome, “Those walls were dripping with a brother’s blood.”¹¹⁶ St. Augustine does draw an important distinction between the first city and the city of Rome. He remarks that Cain was a citizen of the earthly city of sin while Abel was a pilgrim from the City of God. On the other hand, Romulus and Remus were both competitors for the temporal glories that the earthly city provides. It is this competition for earthly glory that led to the sin of fratricide and the founding of Rome. “For this is how Rome was founded, when Remus, as Roman history witnesses, was slain by his brother Romulus. The difference from the primal crime was that both brothers were citizens of the

¹¹⁵ Genesis 4:9. The response of Cain, the founder of the first city, indicates the eternal tension between the individual and the community.

¹¹⁶ St. Augustine. City of God. New York: Penguin Books, 1984. Page 600. St Augustine quotes Lucretius I, 95.

earthly city. Both sought the glory of establishing a Roman state but a joint foundation would not bring to each the glory that a single founder would enjoy. Anyone whose aim was to glory in the exercise of power would obviously enjoy less power if his sovereignty was diminished by a living partner. Therefore, in order that the sole power should be wielded by one person, the partner was eliminated; and what would have been kept smaller and better by innocence grew through crime into something bigger and worse.” St. Augustine attributes the murder of Remus to the competition for glory characterized by the foundation of the earthly city.

According to St. Augustine, cities of man and especially glorious empires are based upon crime and such actions are vain in regards to the fleeting nature of the glories provided by the earthly city. St. Augustine, though, is extremely perceptive of the nature of the founders of these great cities and how their motivation is singular, selfish and yet self-sufficient. The cup of earthly glory is tasted best if drunk alone and this wisdom is reflected by Machiavelli in Book I, Chapter 9 of the Discourses on Livy. The affinity between St. Augustine and Machiavelli on the nature of earthly glory is reflected in the title of the chapter, “That It Is Necessary to Be Alone If One Wishes to Order a Republic Anew or to Reform It Altogether outside Its Ancient Orders.” While Machiavelli may agree with St. Augustine about the nature of glory as manifest in the city of man; they fundamentally disagree about the distinction between the earthly city and the City of God. To St. Augustine, Romulus is a citizen, founder, and sinner of the earthly city; Romulus has no part of the City of God. The citizens of the City of God are spiritual beings. These humans bear striking parallels to the self-sufficient man, man *par excellence*, of Aristotle. To Machiavelli, Romulus is an excellent man worthy of emulation for his virtues. Romulus is founder of both the earthly city and the City of God. Machiavelli makes no distinction between

the spiritual City of God and the secular city of Rome. The City of God is the city of Rome and Romulus is its founder. In creating new modes and orders, Romulus found it necessary to display his virtue and act with the ferocity of the beast-like nature of man. From its' beast-like origin, Rome could grow into a city of men and laws and then evolve to the City of God. Machiavelli explains this in the Discourses on Livy. Book I, Chapter 9 of the Discourses on Livy is the *Apology* of Romulus.

Machiavelli begins this chapter with an apology. He states that many of his readers will be anxious to hear of the founding of Rome. He admits that there is a measure of embarrassment regarding its origins. “-I say, that many will perhaps judge it a bad example that a founder of a civil way of life, as was Romulus, should first have killed his brother...That opinion would be true if one did not consider what end had induced him to commit such a homicide.”¹¹⁷ It appears that his audience may be too modest to comprehend the virtues exhibited in the vocation of Romulus. People are too far removed from their beast-like nature to see the wisdom in Romulus' actions. The intent of this chapter is to excuse Romulus and demonstrate the necessity of criminality in the initial establishment of new modes and orders. For in fact, it was Romulus' ferocity that allowed for the modesty and domestication of modern man that indicts him.

Machiavelli identifies the fratricide committed by Romulus as a specific case indicative of a general rule. Machiavelli begins his apology of Romulus by explicating that general rule, “This should be taken as a general rule: that it never or rarely happens that any republic or

¹¹⁷ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield & Nathan Tarcov, translators. Discourses on Livy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. P.29.

kingdom is ordered well from the beginning or reformed altogether anew outside its old orders unless it is ordered by one individual. Indeed it is necessary that one alone give the mode and that any such ordering depend on his mind. So a prudent orderer of a republic, who has the intent to wish to help not himself but the common good, not for his own succession but for the common fatherland, should contrive to have authority alone; nor will a wise understanding ever reprove anyone for any extraordinary action that he uses to order a kingdom or constitute a republic. It is very suitable that when the deed accuses him, the effect excuses him; and when the effect is good, as was that of Romulus, it will always excuse the deed; for he who is violent to spoil, not he who is violent to mend, should be reprov'd."¹¹⁸ Machiavelli utilizes a series of premises to logically excuse the fratricide committed by Romulus: The first premise is that regimes are better ordered by one. The second premise is that one should give the modes, and the orders should come from his mind alone. The third premise is that prudent orderers whose interest is the common good should have authority alone. The fourth premise is that wisdom will not reprove any extraordinary action used to create a regime. The fifth premise is that deeds are excused by effects. The sixth premise is that good effects excuse any deed. The seventh premise is that destruction and not creation is worthy of reproach. These seven premises lead to the general conclusion that Romulus' deed of fratricide is excused by its effect; i.e., the founding of Rome.

Of course, this all rests upon a main, unspoken, premise that governments are good. If governments are not good then Rome is not good and the deed of fratricide committed by Romulus may be inexcusable. Machiavelli's first premise rests upon an assumption that

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

political regimes are good for humans. This assumption reflects the Aristotelian thesis that man is a political animal. Man is a political animal because his nature can only be fulfilled within the context of the political community. Machiavelli accepts the Aristotelian thesis so wholeheartedly that he leaves it unsaid. Machiavelli excuses Romulus by virtue of the Aristotelian assumption that man is better off with government. Romulus' action provided the basis for a government that aided in the fulfillment of its citizens, therefore the act of fratricide is excused. The deed accuses Romulus but the effect of the deed (the founding of Rome) excuses him. Romulus is "finer and more god-like" than the mass of humanity by virtue of his utilization of his "virtue" to create "new modes and orders" for the "common benefit to everyone."¹¹⁹ Machiavelli ends this chapter with this conclusive statement: "Thus having considered all these things, I conclude that to order a republic it is necessary to be alone; and for the death of Remus..., Romulus deserves excuse and not blame."¹²⁰ Socrates would have been well-served to have had Machiavelli stand in his stead against Meletus. Having been educated in the virtues of Romulus, Machiavelli advocates that we turn to the example of Cyrus. To learn of Cyrus, it is best if we turn to Socrates' student and friend, Xenophon, and his Cyropaedia.

Xenophon's Cyrus:

It is commonly accepted that Cyrus is the most historical and the least mythological of Machiavelli's four heroes. His birth is not cloaked in tradition. His actions are known and

¹¹⁹ Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics and the Preface to the Discourses on Livy.

¹²⁰ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield & Nathan Tarcov, translators. Discourses on Livy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. P.30.

documented. The example and subsequent study of Cyrus should be simple. However, it is in the course of learning of the virtues of Cyrus that we come closest to Machiavelli's philosophical nemesis. This proximity causes problems. Strauss explicates the nature of the Machiavellian break with traditional philosophy and in doing so identifies Machiavelli's antithesis. "Machiavelli claims to have taken a way not yet trodden by anyone and thus to have discovered new modes and orders. His discovery is implied in the principles that one must take one's bearings by how men live as distinguished from how they ought to live, or that one must pay proper regard to man's badness, i.e., to the roots, the pre-political or sub-political roots, of society or the phenomena indicated by the expression 'the wholly new prince in a wholly new state': not the one end by nature common to all which is visible in the sky—a pattern laid out in heaven—but the roots hidden in the earth reveal the true character of man or society. The teaching which derives from this principle is obviously opposed to that of classical political philosophy or of the Socratic tradition."¹²¹ According to Strauss, Machiavelli is commandeering political philosophy from the hands of Socrates. Socrates may have brought philosophy down from the heavens, but he did so to put it on a pedestal. Machiavelli takes philosophy off that pedestal and wields it as a weapon. Machiavelli advocates a new set of virtues that are taught by ancient princes and not ancient philosophers.

Machiavelli wants to instill the virtues of Theseus, Romulus, Cyrus, and Moses to political man. The incorporation of these princely virtues can only be accomplished through the education and study of the lives and actions of these outstanding men. This leads us to the study of Cyrus, which brings us by Machiavelli's explicit direction to the works of Xenophon,

¹²¹ Strauss, Leo. Thoughts on Machiavelli. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958. P. 290.

and in reading Xenophon we are in the presence of Socrates. This proximity causes problems. While there are numerous accounts of the life of Cyrus, Machiavelli's source was Xenophon's Cyropaedia. In Chapter XIV of The Prince, Machiavelli discusses how great men learn their virtues from other great men. Machiavelli writes, "Alexander the Great imitated Achilles; Caesar, Alexander; Scipio, Cyrus. And whoever reads the life of Cyrus written by Xenophon will then recognize in the life of Scipio how much glory that imitation brought him, how much in chastity, affability, humanity, and liberality Scipio conformed to what had been written of Cyrus by Xenophon."¹²² In speaking of those leaders that learn of virtue through studying the actions of other great men, Machiavelli addresses the example of Scipio. It is important to note that Machiavelli mentions Scipio one other time in The Prince. Chapter XVII is titled, "Of Cruelty and Mercy, and Whether It Is Better to Be Loved Than Feared, or the Contrary." In this chapter, Machiavelli compares the cruelty of Hannibal to the mercy of Scipio and the latter is found wanting. Scipio's armies rebelled against him and Machiavelli attributes this to his mercy. "This arose from nothing but his excessive mercy, which had allowed his soldiers more license than is fitting for military discipline. Scipio's mercy was reprov'd in the Senate by Fabius Maximus, who called him the corruptor of the Roman military."¹²³ Machiavelli writes that the art of the prince is the art of war¹²⁴ and it appears as if his earlier praise of Scipio may have been misguided; it seems that Scipio's characteristics of "chastity, affability, humanity, and liberality"

¹²² Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 60.

¹²³ Ibid, p. 68.

¹²⁴ Machiavelli writes in Chapter XIV of The Prince, that, "Thus, a prince should have no other object, nor any other thought, nor take anything else as his art but that of war and its orders and discipline." P. 58 The preeminence of the art of war implies that the military is of utmost importance. Therefore, to criticize Scipio's characteristics for corrupting the military is a very strong indictment indeed. Machiavelli writes in the Discourses that these types of corrupting men are worthy of much reproach. And yet, Scipio is honored by history as a great Roman general and man.

were not virtues as they led to his excessive mercy and reputation as “the corrupter of the Roman military.” To corrupt the military is to corrupt the regime and a true prince does not corrupt the regime; he either creates it or maintains it. Scipio’s characteristics may be moral but they are not virtues in the Machiavellian sense. Scipio’s virtues do not lead to success and therefore are not referred by Machiavelli as virtues.¹²⁵

Scipio’s imitation of Cyrus confronts us with a dilemma. Machiavelli has established a general rule for achieving greatness: imitating the actions and virtues of great men. We are presented with the case of Scipio, who follows Machiavelli’s general rule and imitates one of the Machiavellian heroes of Chapter VI. This imitation leads to an excessive amount of mercy. This in turn leads to the corruption of the Roman military and a personal criticism of Scipio by Machiavelli. Scipio’s deed excuses but the effect accuses. Yet the effect is caused by a deed that is advocated by Machiavelli. If Scipio’s imitation of Cyrus leads to a bad end, why should anyone imitate Cyrus? Why does Machiavelli designate Cyrus as one of his princes worthy of honor and emulation? According to Machiavelli, Scipio learned his virtues through an imitation of Cyrus as they are chronicled in the Cyropaedia. Xenophon is the author of this book. Xenophon was a contemporary of Socrates, but he was also a student, and more importantly a friend. Machiavelli’s indictment of Scipio is a criticism of Cyrus, and this criticism of Cyrus is a censure of Xenophon, and this censure of Xenophon is a challenge to Socrates.¹²⁶ Machiavelli

¹²⁵ A historical digression must be added at this point, we must remind ourselves that it was the armies of the “merciful” Scipio that defeated the “cruel” Hannibal at Carthage. This leads one to reevaluate Machiavelli’s conception of success.

¹²⁶ W.R. Newell writes in his article, *Machiavelli and Xenophon on Princely Rule: A Double-Edged Encounter*, that a distinction must be made between the Cyrus of Chapter VI and the Cyrus of Chapter XIV in The Prince. The Cyrus of Chapter XIV is referred to as the Cyrus of Xenophon while Chapter VI does not mention Cyrus in the context of Xenophon. Machiavelli’s indictment (or blame) is of Xenophon’s Cyrus in Chapter XIV, while his praise of Cyrus as

writes in Book III, Chapter 20, section 1 of the Discourses on Livy that Xenophon worked very hard to teach that Cyrus was successful despite adhering to a sense of morality. “Among them Xenophon toils very much to demonstrate how many honors, how many victories, how much good fame being humane and affable brought to Cyrus, and not giving any example of himself either a proud, or as cruel, or as lustful, or as having any other vice that stains the life of men.”¹²⁷ Machiavelli makes a point to stress the point that Xenophon stresses the point that Cyrus achieved temporal success despite his aversion to vice. Machiavelli’s version of Xenophon’s version of Cyrus is all innocence and morals; Cyrus does not display any indication of the beast-like nature of man, Cyrus appears to be only man and god. In the language of Aristotle, Cyrus is a “superior sort” of man, but to Machiavelli this superior sort of man is an inferior form of prince.

Despite this, Machiavelli clearly designates Cyrus as an excellent man, worthy of emulation for his virtues. In the Machiavellian pantheon, Cyrus stands alongside Theseus, Romulus and Moses. We have already learned of the vices of Theseus and Romulus and they are presented to us as virtues. Scipio’s virtues are presented as vices. Cyrus’ virtues are presented as virtues. It appears that in this case, Xenophon’s Cyrus’ moral virtues are consistent with Machiavellian virtues. Machiavelli’s designations of excellence and virtues are indeed puzzling and troubling, but they cannot be haphazard. It had appeared as if we had solved the riddle of Machiavelli. It seemed as if Machiavelli’s thought could be summarized in short witticisms such as: vices are virtues or if the deed accuses the effect excuses, etc.

an excellent man occurs in Chapter Vi where there is no reference to Xenophon. According to this interpretation, the criticism of Scipio can be interpreted as an indictment of Xenophon rather than as a critique of Cyrus.

¹²⁷ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield & Nathan Tarcov, translators. Discourses on Livy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. P.262.

Machiavelli's proclamation of Cyrus as a model prince and his presentation of his virtues as virtues is troubling because just as we begin to believe we have Machiavelli cornered he draws us in deeper through the looking glass. The person of Cyrus and the question of his virtues represent a problem that must be solved in order to understand Machiavelli.

Machiavelli's unusual treatment of Cyrus may be due to Machiavelli's unusual relationship with Socrates. If Machiavelli is the thesis, Socrates is the antithesis, and perhaps the difficulty of Xenophon's Cyrus is that he represents the synthesis. The definitive story of Cyrus was chronicled by Xenophon. Xenophon was a student and friend of Socrates. Plato was also a student of Socrates. Aristotle was a student of Plato. Machiavelli has declared a decisive break with the virtues of the classical philosophers as represented in the school of Athens. Cyrus is an archetype of the new virtues for Machiavelli's modern prince. Xenophon educates us in the virtues of Cyrus, and Xenophon is a classical philosopher, friend, and student of Socrates, who in turn is the philosophical enemy of Machiavelli. The implications of these perplexing relationships are unclear at this point, but we are directed to seek answers in the Cyropaedia. We must keep in mind though that in turning to the Cyropaedia we are turning to Xenophon and in turning to Xenophon we are approaching the figure of Socrates.

The complex nature of the difficulty of Cyrus requires that we take a unique approach. W.R. Newell claims that his scholarship provides a key to unlocking the wisdom of Machiavelli and Xenophon. Newell writes, "So far as I am aware, this comparative analysis of Machiavelli and Xenophon has not been undertaken elsewhere by a political theorist."¹²⁸ Despite his claims

¹²⁸ Newell, W.R. *Machiavelli and Xenophon on Princely Rule: A Double-Edged Encounter* in *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 50, No.1 p. 110.

of uniqueness Newell follows the lead of Strauss's Thoughts on Machiavelli. Newell writes, "Among political theorists, the strongest cases for Xenophon's anticipation of Machiavelli and modern political thought generally have been made by Strauss and Wood."¹²⁹ Just as Machiavelli may be indebted to and therefore challenged by Xenophon, Newell is indebted to and challenged by Strauss. Strauss writes of Machiavelli, "For him the representative par excellence of classical political philosophy is Xenophon, whose writings he mentions more frequently than those of Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero taken together or those of any other writer with the exception of Livy."¹³⁰ Newell counters with this observation, "One of the puzzling aspects of Machiavelli's political philosophy is the prominent place occupied in it by Xenophon. To be sure, this is more puzzling to a present-day reader than it would have been to Machiavelli's contemporaries. Castiglione and other contributors to the 'mirror of princes' genre typically linked Xenophon with Plato, Aristotle and Cicero as being among the chief ancient authorities on good government. But Machiavelli goes much further than merely including Xenophon. Rather, he discusses him more frequently in *The Prince* and the *Discourses* than Plato, Aristotle and Cicero combined, and often in contexts where those unquestionably more influential authors are conspicuous by their absence."¹³¹ On the enterprise of the Cyropaedia, Strauss writes, "Xenophon's *Education of Cyrus* is for him is the classic presentation of the imagined prince."¹³² Newell writes, "The *Education of Cyrus* is Xenophon's most sustained investigation of princely rule, a monarchical utopia as opposed to the republican

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 109.

¹³⁰ Strauss, Leo. Thoughts on Machiavelli. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958. P. 291.

¹³¹ Newell, W.R. *Machiavelli and Xenophon on Princely Rule: A Double-Edged Encounter* in *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 50, No.1 p. 108.

¹³² Strauss, Leo. Thoughts on Machiavelli. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958. P. 291.

utopias of Plato and Aristotle.”¹³³ Newell writes of the dual strains of Xenophon’s works, “For Xenophon, Socrates and Cyrus are the exemplars, respectively, of the philosophic life and the excellence attainable by statesmanship.”¹³⁴ Strauss is more subtle in his assessment, “Xenophon’s thought and work has two foci, Cyrus and Socrates. While Machiavelli is greatly concerned with Cyrus, he forgets Socrates.”¹³⁵ Newell offers the insightful thesis that Machiavelli engages Xenophon more directly than any of the other ancients because their political views share such common ground. It is Machiavelli’s recognition of the affinities between his thought and the thought of Xenophon that leads him to usurp the image of Cyrus as his own. Xenophon appears to have two distinct and oppositional heroes: Socrates the philosopher and Cyrus the prince. Xenophon’s Socrates personifies the modes and orders that Machiavelli is attempting to transcend. Xenophon’s Cyrus is a mollification of the historical Cyrus whose virtue Machiavelli is attempting to resurrect. Imitation of Xenophon’s Cyrus led Scipio to excessive mercy and the corruption of the Roman military. Machiavelli’s reconfigured Cyrus will lead humanity to a rebirth of the ancient princely virtues of the beast and the man and the lion and the fox. Xenophon’s Socrates has contaminated Xenophon’s Cyrus. Machiavelli attempts to remedy this unfortunate influence by his intellectual coup d’état. Cyrus must be undomesticated. Yet this reconfiguration of Cyrus is complex, for an examination of Book I of the Cyropaedia shows that the commonalities between Xenophon and Machiavelli run deep indeed.

¹³³ Newell, W.R. *Machiavelli and Xenophon on Princely Rule: A Double-Edged Encounter* in *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 50, No.1 p. 112.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 111.

¹³⁵ Strauss, Leo. Thoughts on Machiavelli. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958. P. 291.

In order to appreciate the depth of the affinity between Xenophon and Machiavelli, it is important that we concentrate our attention and resist the temptation to become too broad and ambitious. A focus on Book I of the Cyropaedia will be sufficient to give us a glimpse of the reflective anticipation of Machiavelli by Xenophon.¹³⁶ Although the subtitle of the Cyropaedia is “The Education of Cyrus” most of what we would call his early formative education occurs in Book I. Much of the rest of Xenophon’s work does not examine his education in the traditional sense but instead focuses upon his actions as prince. However, it is his education that instills in him the virtues that are the essence of the Machiavellian pedagogical project of renewal. In addition, in a battle between poets, it is best if the reporter is diligently observant and keeps comments to a minimum. We will take this approach as our guide.

Xenophon makes a remark near the beginning of the Cyropaedia that calls to mind Machiavelli’s discussion of cruelty and mercy and love and fear in Chapter XVII of The Prince. Xenophon remarks, “Cyrus was able so to penetrate that vast extent of country by the sheer terror of his personality that the inhabitants were prostrate before him: not one of them dared lift hand against him. And yet he was able, at the same time, to inspire them all with so deep a desire to please him and win his favour that all they asked was to be guided by his judgment and his alone...For ourselves, considering his title to or admiration proved, we set ourselves to inquire what his parentage might have been and his natural parts, and how he was trained and brought up to attain so high a pitch of excellence in the government of men. And all we could learn from others about him or felt we might infer for ourselves we will here endeavor to set

¹³⁶ Xenophon is not alone in anticipating the thoughts of Machiavelli. In Book I of Plato’s Republic, Socrates reports that the sophist Thrasymachus “hunched up like a wild beast, he flung himself at us as if to tear us to pieces.” Thrasymachus was frustrated with the course that the argument about justice was taking. Thrasymachus advocated a very “Machiavellian” argument that justice is simply “the advantage of the stronger.”

forth.”¹³⁷ Xenophon advocates that we educate ourselves in the education of Cyrus so that we may understand the influences that fashioned his virtues. The virtues of Cyrus are manifest in the manner of his reception by his subjects. Xenophon presents Cyrus as a ruler who is both loved and feared. Machiavelli considers this delicate balance ideal, but practically impossible. “From this a dispute arises whether it is better to be loved than feared, or the reverse. The response is that one would want to be both the one and the other; but because it is difficult to put them together, it is much safer to be feared than loved, if one has to lack one of the two. For one can say this generally of men: that they are ungrateful, fickle, pretenders and dissemblers, evaders of danger, eager for gain. While you do them good, they are yours, offering you their blood, property, lives, and children, as I said above, when the need for them is far away; but, when it is close to you, they revolt...I conclude, then, returning to being feared and loved, that since men love at their convenience and fear at the convenience of the prince, a wise prince should found himself on what is his, not on what is someone else’s.”¹³⁸ Machiavelli admits that a balance of love and fear among the people would be ideal for the prince. This balance is delicate though and Machiavelli states that one must understand that love is a dependent variable while fear is an independent variable. A prince cannot make himself loved but he can make himself feared. Since the prince can command fear and is subject to love, the wise choice is to govern through fear. This indisputable fact is due to the nature of men. Men are selfish and will act in their own benefit despite any obligations to love. Fear does not have to rely upon obligation; fear insists upon obligation. The choice between love and fear is a

¹³⁷ Xenophon. Henry G. Dakyns, translator. Cyropaedia: The Education of Cyrus. New York: Dodo Press, 1985. P. 2.

¹³⁸ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 66, 68.

pragmatic one. Love may inspire action but fear will always dictate action. Cyrus transcends this dilemma. Cyrus is presented as having the unique ability of stirring feelings of both love and fear in his people. This ability strengthens the foundation of his rule. This ability comes from Cyrus' virtue and this virtue was molded by his education.

Cyrus was the product of two educations. He father was a prince of the Persians. The Persians were an austere and severe people. The Persian regime was similar to that of Sparta. It was a small, but self-sufficient republic. Christopher Bruell writes of the parallels between Persia and Sparta: Persia was "a model republic along Spartan lines, an improved Sparta."¹³⁹ This regime and its laws were singularly focused on producing traditional virtue among its citizens. As Xenophon writes, "the Persian laws try, as it were, to steal a march on time, to make their citizens from the beginning incapable of setting their hearts on any wickedness or shameful conduct whatsoever."¹⁴⁰ The Persian laws were created to render citizens "incapable" of "wickedness or shameful conduct." Cyrus was raised in a virtuous regime with virtuous citizens. It appears that the nature of man that necessitates ruling by fear is not inherent but malleable. The case of Persia refutes the Machiavellian premise. Xenophon indicates that the nature of man is capable of being shaped and improved. Xenophon's perspective is reflective of Aristotle's thesis that virtue can be instilled in man by virtue of good laws legislated by a fine and god-like law giver. Aristotle articulates this sentiment in the Nicomachean Ethics, "-we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts. This is confirmed by what happens in states: for legislators make the citizens good by forming

¹³⁹ Bruell, Christopher. *Xenophon in History of Political Philosophy*. Third Edition. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, editors. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987. P. 92.

¹⁴⁰ Xenophon. Henry G. Dakyns, translator. *Cyropaedia: The Education of Cyrus*. New York: Dodo Press, 1985. P. 3.

habits in them, and this is the wish of every legislator, and those who do not effect it miss their mark, and it is this that a good constitution differs from a bad one.”¹⁴¹ Humanity can be improved and indeed fulfilled; this is the ultimate project of classical politics. On the other hand, Machiavelli insists that the nature of man is constant and “evil.” Man cannot be fulfilled; this is the essential principle that obliges the Machiavellian creation of new modes and orders. The old modes and orders based upon fulfillment and traditional virtue were ineffective and this was due to their faulty foundation. Machiavelli’s enterprise is to build a new edifice upon a stable foundation, i.e., man’s inherent evil nature. This nature requires Machiavelli to construct an “evil” wisdom that rests upon his discovery. Machiavelli assumes that if humanity is given the choice between a selfish action and a selfless action, humans will always choose the one that benefits them most. For the masses of mankind, selflessness must be manufactured by a moral paradigm that designates good from evil through a system of rewards and punishments. Mass, moral virtue is the product of the ferocious virtue of the excellent men, such as Cyrus, who paved the path to the social stability that allows morality to bloom. As Aristotle states, a man without a city is not a man but either beast or god.

As we have already stated, Cyrus was the product of a dual education. His father was a prince of Persia. His mother was a princess of the Medes. The kingdom of the Medes was a tyranny and it was large, prosperous, and its citizens extravagant. Cyrus’ grandfather, the King of the Medes, called for Cyrus and his mother to visit him so that Cyrus may come to know his grandfather and the way of the Medes. Xenophon indicates the tremendous difference between the two regimes in this passage that describes the initial meeting of Cyrus with his

¹⁴¹ Aristotle. The Nicomachean Ethics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. P. 29, NE II.1.

grandfather. “So it fell out that Mandane came to Astyages, bringing her son Cyrus with her. And as soon as they met, the boy, when he heard that Astyages was his mother’s father, fell on his neck and kissed him without more ado, like the loving lad nature had made him, as though he had been brought up at his grandfather’s side from the first and the two of them had been playmates of old. Then he looked closer and saw that the king’s eyes were stenciled and his cheeks painted, and that he wore false curls after the fashion of the Medes in those days (for the adornments, they are all Median first and last, not Persian; the Persian, as you find him at home even now-a-days, still keeps to his plainer dress and his plainer style of living.) The boy, seeing his grandfather’s splendor, kept his eyes fixed on him, and cried, ‘Oh, mother, how beautiful my grandfather is!’”¹⁴² Cyrus’ introduction to the Medes brought out his innate appreciation for extravagance and beauty.

Humanity’s natural inclination towards beauty and extravagance is articulated by Machiavelli as the desire to acquire. Machiavelli outlines this in Chapter III of The Prince, “And truly it is a very natural and ordinary thing to desire to acquire, and always, when men do it who can, they will be praised or not blamed; but when they cannot and wish to do it anyway, here lie the error and blame.”¹⁴³ Despite Cyrus’ ascetic Persian education, he is instinctually drawn to the luxuries of the Median kingdom. Xenophon informs us that Cyrus’ grandfather showers him with gifts of robes, jewelry, and horses and that Cyrus was “pleased” and “overjoyed.” It appears that the strict education of the republican Persians is easily corrupted

¹⁴² Xenophon. Henry G. Dakyns, translator. Cyropaedia: The Education of Cyrus. New York: Dodo Press, 1985. P. 7-8.

¹⁴³ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 14-15.

by the lavishness of the tyrannical Medes. Cyrus' mother is acutely aware of this tendency as evidenced by this passage, "What everyone takes to be just and righteous at our grandfather's court is not thought to be so in Persia. For instance, your own grandfather has made himself master over all and sundry among the Medes, but with the Persian equality is held to be an essential part of justice: the first and foremost, your father himself must perform his appointed services to the state and receive his appointed dues: and the measure of these is not his own caprice but the law. Have a care then or you may be scourged to death when you come home to Persia, if you learn your grandfather's school to love not kingship but tyranny, and hold the tyrant's belief that he and he alone should have more than all the rest.' 'Ah, but, mother,' said the boy, 'my grandfather is better at teaching people to have less than their share, not more. Cannot you see,' he cried, 'how he has taught all the Medes to have less than himself? So set your mind at rest, mother, my grandfather will never make me, or any one else, an adept in the art of getting too much.'" ¹⁴⁴ Mandane is aware that the court of her father has corrupted the virtues that were instilled in Cyrus by the Persian education. She perceives in her son the inclination to tyranny, or what Machiavelli refers to as the natural desire of "acquisition." Cyrus ironically recognizes the acquisitive nature of the tyrant by stating that tyrannies do not educate its citizens in the art of acquiring since only the tyrant acquires.

Cyrus' education at Medes is now complete; he recognizes the seductive advantages of the Median regime. He understands that this type of regime allows humanity the freedom to flourish; it gives humans an attainable, material end. However, the lessons of his Persian

¹⁴⁴ Xenophon. Henry G. Dakyns, translator. Cyropaedia: The Education of Cyrus. New York: Dodo Press, 1985. P. 12.

education have also been appreciated. The virtues of the Persians provide the means to achieve the Median ends. The virtue of the masses is the tool to achieve the glory and honor of the prince. The prince, though, must have the requisite virtue to alter the Persian notion of common good to his advantage. This is the virtue of the prince, changing the modes and orders in a way fitting for aggrandizement. Christopher Bruell argues that Cyrus recognizes the natural attraction to the luxuries of the Median regime. Bruell writes of Cyrus, “he formed the opinion that his comrades back in Persia would be attracted as he was by ‘Median’ opportunities for wealth and distinction unavailable to them in the incomparably austere Persian republic.”¹⁴⁵ Cyrus understands that his glory depends upon his ability to lead others and that the most convincing method to lead is by appealing to human’s natural acquisitiveness. This tactic is outlined by Machiavelli in Chapter XXII of The Prince. Machiavelli writes, “the prince should think of the minister so as to keep him good-honoring him, making him rich, obligating him to himself, sharing honors and burdens with him so that he sees he cannot stand without the prince and much wealth does not make him desire more wealth, and many burdens make him fear changes.”¹⁴⁶ Bruell argues that Cyrus understands that the modes of the Medes will appeal to the Persians. The virtue of the Persians is a tool to achieve mass extravagance and personal glory. Cyrus’ enterprise becomes one of utilizing his virtue to persuade his comrades to accept the new modes and orders he proposes. However, Cyrus’ virtue is not yet equipped for this difficult enterprise. His education is not yet complete. Upon his return to Persia, his father will initiate him in a secret knowledge, or what Cyrus refers to as “the lore of

¹⁴⁵ Bruell, Christopher. *Xenophon in History of Political Philosophy*. Third Edition. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, editors. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987. P. 94.

¹⁴⁶ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 93.

selfishness.”¹⁴⁷ This lore will complete his education and thereby his virtue. This knowledge is, in essence, the wisdom of Machiavelli.

Upon his return to Persia, Cyrus is interested in the path to political authority. Xenophon describes a central discussion that Cyrus has with his father, Cambyses. As the discussion opens, we learn that Cyrus is of the persuasion that following the laws is the method of obtaining respect and leadership among the people. “Our laws themselves, I think, enforce this double lesson:—‘Rule thou and be thou ruled.’ And when I come to study the secret of it all, I seem to see the real incentive to obedience lies in the praise and honour that it wins against the discredit and the chastisement which fall of the disobedient.”¹⁴⁸ Cyrus believes that obedience to the laws is the key to gaining honor among the citizens. In seeking honor, rulers should adhere to the laws that the people are subject to. As the people see the ruler obeying the rules they will follow that example and hold both the laws and the ruler to be authoritative and good. Cyrus’ father counters that argument by introducing him to the secret doctrine. “That my son,’ said the father, ‘is the road to the obedience of compulsion. But there is a shorter way to a nobler goal, the obedience of the will. When the interests of mankind are at stake, they will obey with joy the man whom they believe to be wiser than themselves.”¹⁴⁹ Cambyses makes an important distinction between forms of obedience; obedience by compulsion and obedience by will. He argues that obedience by will is both “shorter” and “nobler.” It is shorter and nobler because it does not rely upon political power and its rewards and punishments but rather it relies simply on political authority. Cyrus’ father offers the thesis

¹⁴⁷ Xenophon. Henry G. Dakyns, translator. Cyropaedia: The Education of Cyrus. New York: Dodo Press, 1985. P. 33.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 29.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

that people will choose to obey wisdom when their interests are at stake. Wisdom becomes a basis for political power and political authority. This idea is reflective of the Socratic tradition that is exemplified in Plato's Republic and Aristotle's Politics. The question remains whether or not the character of that wisdom is also consistent with the Socratic tradition.

Cyrus is intrigued by this shorter and nobler path to authority. "You will have me understand," said Cyrus, "that the best way to secure obedience is to be thought wiser than those we rule?" "Yes," said Cambyses, "that is my belief." "And what is the quickest way," asked Cyrus, "to win that reputation?"¹⁵⁰ Cyrus, at this point, is of the opinion that the mere reputation of wisdom will be sufficient to obtain the obedience of the masses. Reputation's reliance upon opinion and not truth is echoed in Chapter XVIII of The Prince, where Machiavelli advocates the idea that people judge by appearance and not reality. Cambyses disagrees with this notion and informs Cyrus that the only way to gain the reputation of wisdom is to be truly wise; Cambyses states, "whenever you wish to seem wise, be wise."¹⁵¹ Wisdom is wisdom, through and through. One cannot appear to be wise; wisdom is not based upon opinion, it is intertwined with truth. Cambyses argues that deception relies upon a web of deceit that will unravel and leave the imposter revealed. Deception may be a short term solution to gaining power but it does not provide a stable basis for rule. A prince must be wise in the wisdom of ruling; this knowledge will provide the ruler with an unwavering foundation of authority. Cambyses' opinion of the character of princely wisdom is shared by Machiavelli. Cambyses introduces the wisdom of the prince in this passage. "If your general is to succeed he must

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p. 30.

prove himself an arch-plotter, a king of craft, full of deceits and stratagems, a cheat, a thief, and a robber, defrauding and overreaching his opponent at every turn.”¹⁵² A prince cannot deceive that he is wise but the wisdom he must possess is the wisdom of deceit. A prince must be wise in the knowledge of deception and fraud. A prince’s authority is based upon his ability to execute the doctrine of treachery; Cambyses’ princely wisdom consists of “virtue” in the Machiavellian sense. Cyrus is understandably taken aback by this idea. “Heavens!’ said Cyrus, and burst out laughing, ‘is this the kind of man you want your son to be!’ ‘I want him to be,’ said the father, ‘as just and upright and law-abiding as any man who ever lived.’ ‘But how comes it,’ said the son, ‘that the lessons you taught us in boyhood and youth were exactly opposed to what you teach me now?’ ‘Ah,’ said the father, ‘those lessons were for friends and fellow-citizens, and for them they still hold good, but for enemies-do you not remember that you were also taught to do much harm?’ ‘No, father,’ he answered, ‘I should say certainly not.”¹⁵³

Cambyses makes three important points in this passage. The first point regards the nature of justice. Justice, proper, is not simply following the laws. Justice in the specific case of the masses is obedience and unquestioning deference to the laws. On the other hand, princely justice consists of the ability to transcend the law when it is necessary. Prudence becomes the essential virtue of the prince. It is appropriate to refer to Aristotle’s characterization of prudence, “We shall gain a knowledge of prudence by considering whom we call prudent. Now it appears to be the part of a prudent man to be able to deliberate well upon things which are

¹⁵² Ibid, p. 31.

¹⁵³ Ibid, p. 31.

good and expedient for him, not in part, as what things are conducive to health and strength; but what things are conducive to a good life universally. And a proof of this is, that what we call men prudent in some particular thing, when, with a view to arrive at some particular end, they reason well in things of which there is no art, Wherefore he who is able to deliberate, is wholly prudent.”¹⁵⁴ The prince must have the prudence to recognize the circumstances that dictate adherence to the laws and the circumstances that dictate the transcendence of the laws. The principle of “justice” as obedience to the laws is absolute to the masses and relative to the prince. Cambyses’ theory of justice reflects the Aristotelian virtue of prudence and anticipates Machiavelli. The second point is that the manner of justice is distributed according to the distinctions of “friends and fellow citizens” and “enemies.” Once again, prudence is the essential virtue because the prince must be able to distinguish between friends and enemies and dispense justice accordingly. This second point is not shared with Machiavelli as he makes no distinction between friend and or fellow-citizen in the application of his teaching. Lastly, Cambyses informs Cyrus that the Persian education also taught him how “to do much harm.” Cyrus appears to be oblivious to this facet of his education. This passage is indicative of the dual nature of the Persian education. There is a set of modes and orders that are applicable to the masses and a different set of modes and orders that are for the rulers only. This princely wisdom is considered so dangerous that it is not disseminated until the student has reached a certain amount of intellectual maturity. This point is also not shared with Machiavelli. Though The Prince is expressly dedicated and addressed to princes; its lessons are available to all who understand it. The Persians are careful and selective regarding the students worthy of

¹⁵⁴ Aristotle. The Nicomachean Ethics. Oxford: Baxter Printers, 1819. Book VI, Chapter V.I. p. 148.

receiving the “lore of selfishness.” Furthermore, it is not apparent whether this pedagogical initiation is class based or merit based. Machiavelli is egalitarian in the distribution of his teaching; it is readily available for all those who have the talent to understand, absorb, and execute it. In this sense, Machiavelli agrees with Cambyses on a certain principle: wisdom is the basis of authority; princely wisdom is wisdom through and through. A prince cannot deceive regarding his understanding of the wisdom of deception. As Cambyses states, “You succeed at first in a very pretty piece of deception, and then by and by the test comes, and the imposter stands revealed.”¹⁵⁵

Part of the general Persian education included doing harm. Cyrus does not recognize this component of his education. Cambyses reminds Cyrus of his interactions with the beasts. Cambyses states that those associations consisted of doing harm. His education with the animals is what develops and refines his beast-like nature; a quality that Machiavelli deems necessary for the greatest prince. Cambyses informs Cyrus that his hunting expeditions were in fact teaching him the ways of deception and how to commit harm. “Then why were you taught to shoot? Or to hurl the javelin? Or to trap wild-boars? Or to snare stags with cords and caltrops? And why did you never meet the lion or the bear or the leopard in fair fight on equal terms, but were always trying to steal some advantage over them? Can you deny that all that was craft and deceit and fraud and greed?”¹⁵⁶ His interactions with the animals developed the dual qualities of the lion and the fox. The ways of the lion were taught by his use of weapons and force. The ways of the fox were taught by his use of traps and deception. The centrality of

¹⁵⁵ Xenophon. Henry G. Dakyns, translator. Cyropaedia: The Education of Cyrus. New York: Dodo Press, 1985. P. 30.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 31.

hunting to developing the requisite qualities of the prince is also a theme shared with Machiavelli. In Chapter XIV of The Prince, “What a Prince Should Do Regarding the Military” Machiavelli informs us that a prince should never lift his thoughts from war, “nor take anything else as his art but that of war and its orders and discipline.”¹⁵⁷ Machiavelli advocates that even in times of peace a prince must be focused upon war and combat. He argues that this focus can be accomplished by deeds and by the exercise of the mind. As we have already discussed, by acts of the mind he means education in the histories of great men such as Cyrus. In terms of deeds, Machiavelli suggests that a prince engage in hunting. It is an act that refines the art of war and combat. “Therefore, he should never lift his thoughts from the exercise of war, and in peace he should exercise it more than in war. This can be done in two modes, one with deeds, and the other with the mind. And as to deeds, besides keeping his armies well ordered and exercised, he should always be out hunting.”¹⁵⁸ The Persian education recognizes the benefits that hunting provides to the abilities of their citizens to do harm and practice the beast-like art of combat.

Cyrus makes the distinction between his actions towards the beasts and his actions towards men. He argues that if he ever deceived humans he was punished. “‘Why of course,’ answered the young man, ‘in dealing with animals, but with human beings it was different; if I was ever suspected of a wish to cheat another, I was punished, I know, with many stripes.’”¹⁵⁹ Cyrus’ argument makes an important distinction between beast and men and indicates the

¹⁵⁷ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 58.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 59.

¹⁵⁹ Xenophon. Henry G. Dakyns, translator. Cyropaedia: The Education of Cyrus. New York: Dodo Press, 1985. P. 31.

Machiavellian division between the two forms of combat: the laws of men and the force of the beasts. Cambyses responds that this argument is true in essence, but that enemies must be treated like beasts. “‘True,’ said the father, ‘and for the matter of that we did not permit you to draw bow or hurl javelin against human beings; we taught you merely to aim at a mark. But why did we teach you that? Not so that you may injure your friends, either then or now, but that in war you might have the skill to make the bodies of living men your targets. So we also taught you the arts of deceit and craft and covetousness, not among men it is true, but among beasts; we did not mean you ever to turn these accomplishments against your friends, but in war we wished you something better than raw recruits.’”¹⁶⁰ Cambyses informs Cyrus that the art of hunting animals is mere practice and prelude to the art of combat with human enemies. The Persian’s definition of justice of helping friends and harming enemies is similar to the argument of Polemarchus in The Republic.¹⁶¹ The distinction between friends and enemies is not important to Machiavelli as he argues that it is often expedient to harm both one’s enemies and one’s “friends.”

Upon hearing this, Cyrus asks his father why these lessons are not taught directly instead of indirectly. “‘But, father,’ Cyrus answered, ‘if to do men good and to do men harm were both them things we ought to learn, surely it would have been better to teach them in actual practice.’”¹⁶² Cambyses states that there was a time when such knowledge was taught directly to the young and that it resulted in much harm to the community. This teaching must

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 32.

¹⁶¹ Plato. Allan Bloom, translator. The Republic. New York: Basic Books, 1991. P. 8. 322a-d. Socrates easily refutes this definition of justice. The rest of The Republic is in essence a reply to the definition of justice being “the advantage of the stronger.”

¹⁶² Xenophon. Henry G. Dakyns, translator. Cyropaedia: The Education of Cyrus. New York: Dodo Press, 1985. P. 32.

be kept secret until the young reach beyond a certain stage of maturity. The principle of this teaching is dangerous and corrupts the youth; it must be disseminated with selectivity and caution. Cambyses states, “My son, we are told that in the days of our forefathers there was such a teacher once. This man did actually teach his boys righteousness in the way you suggest, to lie and not to lie, to cheat and not to cheat, to calumniate and not to calumniate, to be grasping and not grasping. He drew the distinction between our duty to our friends and our duty to enemies; and he went even further still; he taught men that it was just and right to deceive even a friend for his own good, or steal his property...Now some of his scholars showed such excellent aptitudes for deception and overreaching, and perhaps no lack of taste for common money-making, that they did not even spare their friends, but used their arts on them. And so an unwritten law was framed by which we still abide, bidding us teach our children as we teach our servants, simply and solely not to lie, and not to cheat, and make them humane and law-abiding citizens. But when they came to manhood, as you have come, then, it seemed, the risk was over, and it would be time to teach them what is lawful against our enemies. For at your age we do not believe you will break out into savagery against your fellows with whom you have been knit together since childhood in ties of friendship and respect.”¹⁶³ The wisdom of this unnamed teacher bears an unmistakable and striking resemblance to Machiavelli. Both the methods and the application of those methods are undistinguishable with the basic premise of The Prince. Furthermore, unlike the Persians, the teacher drops the distinction between enemies and friends. The “lore of selfishness” is applied indiscriminately to the benefit of all those that possess that wisdom. Cambyses stresses the ill effects this type of teaching has

¹⁶³ Ibid.

upon the community and that it is therefore relegated to the background until maturity is reached; it is upon this point that this teaching should be known and applied. Cambyses informs Cyrus that the successful application of this knowledge will enable him to “out-villain villainy.”¹⁶⁴ The ability to do harm that was transmitted to Cyrus by virtue of his actions towards animals develops his beast-like nature and this is an essential part of ruling well. Cambyses reinforces this sentiment in this passage, “I say, therefore, that if you choose to act like this against human beings, you would soon have no enemies left to fight, or I am much mistaken.”¹⁶⁵ Xenophon, through Cambyses, puts forth the thesis that the ferocity and deceptions of the beasts contains the wisdom that enables the prince to gain the shorter and nobler path to authority. In this, Xenophon’s Cyropaedia, anticipates much of the Machiavellian doctrine. The friend and student of Socrates, the enemy of Machiavelli, transmits the princely “lore of selfishness” prior to Machiavelli. Through this we see the reflective nature of Machiavelli. However, it must be acknowledged that Machiavelli was the first thinker to boldly proclaim the “lore of selfishness” in his own name as good. Machiavelli’s new modes and orders consist of an emancipation and celebration of this teaching; Machiavelli brings it from the background to the foreground. Socrates, Xenophon, and Cambyses would argue that this action is dangerous and irresponsible. Machiavelli would argue that it is necessary and proper; it is a new strategy for a new age. In this, Machiavelli follows the advice of Cambyses, “Indeed, a an ardent student, you must not confine yourself to the lessons you have learnt; you must show yourself a creator and discoverer, you must invent stratagems against the foe; just as a real musician is

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 34.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

not content with the mere elements of his art, but sets himself to compose new themes.”¹⁶⁶ It appears as if Machiavelli’s enterprise is one of aesthetic liberation from the virtues of the ancients. Machiavelli utilizes Xenophon’s *Cyrus* as a tool to transcend the Socratic tradition. In studying *Cyrus*, we are brought close to Socrates and yet, even here, there is also an element of Machiavelli that is present. *Cyrus*’ virtues are virtues because they represent the prudent application of Machiavelli’s lessons. It is through this, that Machiavelli regards *Cyrus* as an excellent man; worthy of emulation and honor.

Machiavelli’s thought is evident in Xenophon’s *Cyrus*. There is much evidence to support Machiavelli’s focus upon the necessity of the beast-like component of the prince. However, Aristotle’s thought is also apparent in the education of *Cyrus*. Cambyses makes the distinction between friends and enemies and the subsequent application of justice. The application and adherence to law is just towards friends. On the other hand, the law must be transcended with enemies; in combat there is no law. Aristotle’s thesis regarding human nature is replicated here. Humans are human within the context of government and its laws. The laws are just in this particular instance. Humans without government and law are beasts and operate by force. Combat is a circumstance devoid of any form of authority. Combat operates without government and law. It is one lawful government against another lawful government; but the combat between lawful governments operates without authority to regulate their interactions. It is a devolution from man’s law to nature’s law. In Aristotle’s parlance, the city is a group of friends regulated by man’s law; combat is a situation without

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 33.

laws and this results in humans reverting back to their beast-like component. Cyrus' education is an introduction to Machiavelli by way of Aristotle

What remains to be seen in Xenophon's *Cyrus* is the element of the divine. Book I of the Cyropaedia, can be analyzed as an exposition of the man and beast components of human nature. As we have discussed, in his dealings with friends, a prince should act like a man and according to man's laws. In dealing with enemies, a prince should act like a beast and transcend laws for the sake of combat. Xenophon remains silent on the divine until the close of Book I. Cambyses introduces Cyrus to the necessity of the divine, "So little does human wisdom know how to choose the best, helpless as a man who could but draw lots to see what he should do. But the gods, my son, who live forever, they know all things, the things that have been and the things that are and the things that are to be, and all that shall come from these; and to us mortals who ask their counsel and whom they love they will show signs, to tell us what we should do and what we should leave undone. Nor must we think it strange if the gods will not vouchsafe their wisdom to all men equally; no compulsion is laid on them to care for men, unless it be their will."¹⁶⁷ The close of Book I of the Cyropaedia is an homage to the gods and a discussion of the limitation of man's reason and knowledge in the face of divine revelation. The Aristotelian conception of the god-like nature of man is introduced; a good legislator is "finer and more god-like" than other men, and yet even he can only be "god-like" and not god. The limitations of human wisdom can be transcended with a counsel with the gods, who know all. Modes and orders founded upon such divine counsel would rest upon a

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 35

stable foundation that infinitely transcends those based upon human wisdom. This moment provides an opportune transition to Moses.

Moses' Pentateuch:

In a letter to Ricciardo Becchi, Machiavelli writes of a sermon given by Girolamo Savonarola. Savonarola is referred to by Machiavelli in Chapter VI of The Prince as an example of an “unarmed prophet” that inevitably comes to ruin. In the sermon the unarmed prophet, Savonarola, discusses one of Machiavelli’s heroes, the armed prophet Moses. “The next morning, still preaching on Exodus and coming to that section where the Bible says that Moses killed an Egyptian, the friar declared that the Egyptian symbolized evil men and that Moses represented the prophet who killed them by uncovering their evil ways, and he said: ‘O Egyptian, I shall give you a thrust of my sword!’”¹⁶⁸ Moses is recognized and praised by Savonarola for being an armed prophet. His murder of the Egyptian is justified because it is an example of “good” triumphing over “evil.” The action of Moses is made acceptable by a higher moral code set forth by religion. Savonarola’s defense of this action is indicative of the success of Moses in having his modes and orders accepted and perpetuated. Savonarola’s praise is a testament to the power of religion to lend a legislator’s actions legitimacy and his new modes and orders authority. Machiavelli admires such measures; Machiavelli wants to initiate a new morality where if the deed accuses, the effect excuses. Moses exemplifies that capacity.

In Book II, Chapter 8 of the Discourses on Livy, Machiavelli discusses the colonization of new lands by a new people and he uses Moses and the Jews as an example. “Such peoples go

¹⁶⁸ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Peter Bondanella and Mark Musa, editor and translator. *Letter to Ricciardo Becchi* in The Portable Machiavelli. New York: Penguin Books. P. 57.

out of their countries, as was said above, expelled by necessity; the necessity arises either from famine or from war and oppression inflicted on them in their own countries such that they are constrained to seek new lands. When they are a great number, then they enter with violence into the countries of others, kill the inhabitants, take possession of their goods, make a new kingdom, and change the province's name as did Moses."¹⁶⁹ Machiavelli states that Moses led his people to commit great violence to those whose lands they were taking. They entered the new lands by the use of extreme force and maintained them in the same manner. Moses was willing to use violence against his enemies. This violence was not against God's law but in fact mandated by it.

In Book III, Chapter 30 of the Discourses on Livy, Machiavelli again addresses the example of Moses and his capacity to do violence. "And whoever reads the Bible judiciously will see that since he wished his laws and orders to go forward, Moses was forced to kill infinite men who, moved by nothing other than envy, were opposed to his plans."¹⁷⁰ This passage indicates the difficulty that Moses had in getting his new modes and orders accepted. These problems exist in spite of Moses having the exceptional authority of speaking with God. The universal founding dilemma is due to human nature and it is this nature that necessitates the use of arms in order for a new prince to be successful. There is no recourse but to violence in the creation of new modes and orders. "Those like these men, who become princes by the paths of virtue, acquire their principality with difficulty but hold it with ease; and the difficulties they have in acquiring their principality arise in part from the new orders and modes that they

¹⁶⁹ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield & Nathan Tarcov, translators. Discourses on Livy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. P.144.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 280.

are forced to introduce so as to found their state and tier security. And it should be considered that nothing is more difficult to handle, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage, than to put oneself at the head of introducing new orders...It is however necessary, if one wants to discuss this aspect well, to examine whether these innovators stand by themselves or depend on others; that is whether to carry out their deed they must beg or indeed can use force. In the first case they always come to ill and never accomplish anything; but when they depend on their own and are able to use force, then it is that they are rarely in peril. From this it arises that all the armed prophets conquered and the unarmed one were ruined. For, besides the things that have been said, the nature of peoples is variable; and it is easy to persuade them of something, but difficult to keep them in that persuasion. And thus things must be ordered in such a mode that when they no longer believe, one can make them believe by force.”¹⁷¹ Moses is an armed prophet and must apply those arms prudently against his own people as well as his enemies. Moses finds it necessary to display the same Machiavellian virtue as did the other excellent legislators. Moses, the ultimate hero of the Old Testament, is also a hero of The Prince.

Moses is named by Machiavelli in Chapter VI of The Prince as an example of a legislator who created new modes and orders by means of their own arms and virtue. According to Machiavelli, then, Moses possesses both arms and virtue; but as Machiavelli states, Moses also possesses something unique that distinguishes him from the other three excellent men that we have already discussed. “But to come to those who have become princes by their own virtue

¹⁷¹ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 24.

and not by fortune, I say that the most excellent are Moses, Cyrus, Romulus, Theseus, and the like. And although one should not reason about Moses, as he was a mere executor of things that had been ordered by God, nonetheless he should be admired if only for the grace which made him deserving of speaking with God.”¹⁷² Machiavelli’s discussion of Moses among these other founders raises some questions and difficulties. On one hand, Machiavelli seems to relegate Moses to a secondary level among these other founders as he was a “mere executor” of God’s will. But Machiavelli quickly adds that Moses should be admired for having the “grace” to be the chosen executor of God’s will. Moses’ status among the Machiavellian pantheon of Theses, Romulus, and Cyrus is problematic.

In trying to reach a conclusion about Moses’ stature as a founder it may be appropriate to remind ourselves of a passage from the Discourses on Livy. Book I, Chapter 10 begins with this unambiguous statement: “Among all men praised, the most praised are those who have been heads and orderers of religions. Next, then, are those who have founded either republics or kingdoms.”¹⁷³ It is apparent that Theseus, Romulus, and Cyrus were all men of the second order: those who have founded republics or kingdoms. It is also obvious that they all utilized a measure of religion to lend their regimes authority and stability. However, it is not apparent that they were in fact men of the first order: those “who have been heads and orderers of religions.” Moses is unique; Moses is the father of the kingdom of Israel. Moses is also the orderer of the Jewish religious tradition. Moses is the only example named by Machiavelli who

¹⁷² Ibid, p. 22.

¹⁷³ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield & Nathan Tarcov, translators. Discourses on Livy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. P.31.

is a man of both the first and second order.¹⁷⁴ While Machiavelli appears to regard Moses as a mere executor of God's will in The Prince; Moses appears to stand alone among men in the Discourses on Livy. Moses may in fact be the Machiavellian ideal of the model prince.

In Chapter XI of The Prince, Machiavelli discusses Ecclesiastical Principalities. He concludes that only these religious governments are secure and happy. However, he states that since they subsist by superior causes he will not reason upon them. Machiavelli then proceeds to reason upon them. This represents Machiavelli's general persuasion regarding religion. He is able to step beyond the pale of religion to comment upon it as a political truth and not a divine truth. Machiavelli's designation of Moses as an example of an excellent man is indicative of this attitude towards religion. Steven Marx writes of this in his article *Moses and Machiavellianism*, "Machiavelli was one of the first people to read the Bible not as revelation but as a secular text, the same way he read classical histories. Its God was no more or less real to him than the Greek or Roman deities. Such a humanist approach allowed him to recognize a wealth of fact, plot, and character in the Bible's account of the birth of the Israelite nation...While skeptical of orthodox interpretations of the Bible, Machiavelli was an avid student of the actual text. He combined what he learned from it about the formation of Israel with what he learned from the classics about the formation of Greece and Rome to arrive at universal theories about the rise and fall of nations and practical prescriptions for political success. In the Bible's often brutal portrayal of authority, rebellion, and war, he found a precedent for his own remorseless value judgments. In the Moses of the Pentateuch,

¹⁷⁴ Marx, Steven. *Moses and Machiavellianism* in Journal of the American Academy of Religion. Vol. 65, No. 3. P. 552.

Machiavelli also discovered an ideal hero, a model of the qualities that inhered in those who founded durable institutions.”¹⁷⁵ Marx appears to indicate that Machiavelli’s ability to separate the political from the divine and then synthesize it again, led to his astute conclusions regarding the power of religion to lend authority and mold people. This type of pragmatic wisdom is what has led to Machiavelli’s enduring success at providing practical political advice. Furthermore, Marx concludes that Machiavelli found kinship in the stories of the Old Testament and the violence and virtue that led to the establishment of the Jewish state in the face of tremendous odds. It was Moses’ virtuous ability to transcend good and evil that allowed the morality of the Hebrews to develop.

John H. Geerken supplies an interesting thesis about another possibility regarding Machiavelli’s designation of Moses as an “excellent man” in Chapter VI. Geerken explores the manner in which Machiavelli seems to open a discussion of Moses and then proceeds to immediately disqualify it. “In a word Machiavelli was manipulating basically secular and potentially skeptical readers into more willing acceptance of a religious dimension by inserting it and then immediately withdrawing it. Had Machiavelli *not* thus qualified Moses’ presence in *The Prince*, his readers might have themselves dismissed Moses, arguing that he was too special, heroic, and unusual to warrant inclusion in a discussion aimed at imitative political behavior. By anticipating such an objection and articulating it, Machiavelli neutralized it. *All* of the people on his list of *virtuosi*, Machiavelli insists, are amazing: their actions were no different from those of Moses, despite the latter’s tutor. So God, too, appears neutralized. Cyrus, Romulus, and Theses did not need divine tutelage and support to achieve outcomes equal to

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 551-552.

those of Moses who did have that need. There is thus no reason to exclude Moses (or his teacher), and they remain for later exploitation.”¹⁷⁶ Geerken argues that Machiavelli is manipulating his readers to consider both Moses and religion as a matter of political fact. To consider Moses as a viable political variable is to consider God as a viable political variable. The sacredness and divinity of Moses and God are brought down from the heavens and “neutralized.” Geerken argues that by placing Moses upon the same plane as Theseus, Romulus, and Cyrus, two goals are accomplished. First, Machiavelli is able to engage his secular audience in the consideration that religion is an important political factor that cannot be ignored; religion must be taken seriously. Secondly, Machiavelli is able to engage religion as one political factor among many; religion cannot be taken too seriously. In one stroke, Machiavelli champions religion among the secular and demeans religion among the devout. Geerken interprets Machiavelli as both ironic and deceptive; a personification of the ideal of the fox. Machiavelli is engaging in combat; but the question remains with whom is he battling?

Moses stands as one of the four men explicitly praised by Machiavelli for their virtue and their ability to establish long-lasting modes and orders. Machiavelli holds up these men as excellent examples for his new prince. The virtue of a prince consists, in part, in his ability to imitate the virtue of others through attentive study. Strauss articulates the image of prince as imitator in this passage, “The new prince in a new state in his turn may be an imitator, i.e., adopt modes and orders invented by another new prince, or in other ways follow the beaten track. But he may also be the originator of new modes and orders, or a radical innovator, the

¹⁷⁶ Geerken, John H. *Machiavelli's Moses and Renaissance Politics* in Journal of the History of Ideas. Vol. 60, No. 4. P. 591.

founder of a new type of society, possibly the founder of a new religion-in brief, a man like Moses, Cyrus, Theseus, or Romulus. Machiavelli applies to men of the highest order the term 'prophets.' That term would seem to fit Moses rather than the three others. Moses is indeed the most important founder: Christianity rests on a foundation laid by Moses."¹⁷⁷ Strauss stresses the important distinction that Machiavelli makes regarding those princes that create, as opposed to those that imitate. The creator is superior to the imitator. Moses, the executor of God's will, is regarded by Strauss to be a "prophet" of the first order. His virtue appears to transcend that of the other great men. Strauss considers Moses to be the most important founder, as his modes and orders provide the basis for Christianity. It appears that Strauss believes that Machiavelli considers Christianity to be of central importance to the Machiavellian enterprise. Moses is important not just for his own personal virtue but also for his contribution to the emergence of Christianity. Moses' ferocious virtuosity allowed Christianity to evolve. In order to understand the Christian tradition it is important to understand its origins. Its ancient origins lie in Moses' virtues. Moses is a legislator of the first rank; he gave both Judaism and Christianity, God's law as manifest in the Ten Commandments. The enduring quality of the Ten Commandments is due to Moses' success as a legislator, which in turn is due to his virtue. We must study and attempt to appreciate Moses' virtues. The history of Moses' virtues is documented in the Old Testament and specifically the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Machiavelli recommends that his students study the histories of great men. In Moses we may have discovered Machiavelli's ideal prince, and if our initial hypothesis is correct, in our study of Moses we will find a suggestion of Aristotle.

¹⁷⁷ Strauss, Leo. Thoughts on Machiavelli. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958. P. 70-71

Machiavelli states in Chapter VI, that Moses' virtue had the capacity to display itself by virtue of Fortune. "It was necessary then for Moses to find the people of Israel in Egypt, enslaved and oppressed by the Egyptians, so that they would be disposed to follow him so as to get out of their servitude."¹⁷⁸ The circumstances of the Hebrews' situation provided Moses with the context to practice his art. Without Fortune, Moses would have been unlikely to become a man of the first order. However, without his virtue, Fortune's opportunity would have passed without effect. Machiavelli discusses the role of Fortune in Chapter XXV of The Prince. "I judge that it might be true that fortune is arbiter of half of our actions, but also that she leaves the other half, or close to it, for us to govern."¹⁷⁹ Fortune and virtue are mutually dependent in the production of greatness through the creation of new modes and orders. Moses has both the fortune and the virtue to become a great man. The circumstances of his fortunate opportunity and personal virtue are addressed in Exodus.

At the time of Moses' birth, the "children of Israel" were in bondage. "And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour: And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour...And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive."¹⁸⁰ The Jews were in slavery and the Pharaoh attempted to control the growth of their population by killing the sons of Israel. It was this decree that led to Moses being cast into the river and found by Pharaoh's daughter. She recognized the child as one of the Hebrews but had compassion for

¹⁷⁸ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 23.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 98.

¹⁸⁰ Exodus 1:13-14, 22.

him. She gave the child to a Hebrew nurse to raise and the child was eventually returned to Pharaoh's daughter to raise as her own. "And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter; and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water."¹⁸¹ Moses' birth is similar to that of Romulus and Remus in that they were cast into rivers, found, and raised by foster parents. Furthermore, their exact parentage was unknown but significant. In this case, Machiavelli's prince rose out of humble circumstances and was nurtured by his enemy. These passages indicate the immense role that Fortune played in both the plight of the Jews and the birth of Moses.

In the next section of Exodus we are confronted with Moses' capacity to commit violence. It is this innate ability that makes him special and gives him the power to be a founder of new modes and orders. "And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, *one* of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that *there was* no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand. And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? Intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely *this* thing is known. Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well."¹⁸² This situation represents the first instance that Moses is involved in an act of violence

¹⁸¹ Exodus 2:10.

¹⁸² Exodus 2:11-15.

in the support of his community. However, at this point Moses is ambivalent regarding the righteousness of the act and is afraid of the power of the pharaoh. Moses is not yet confident in either his virtues or in his duty. This passage also foreshadows the Jews' hesitant acceptance of Moses as their judge and legislator. As Moses is attempting to resolve a conflict between two Hebrews he is questioned about his authority to deal with the matter. The two Jews ask him where he gets his authority from and whether he is going to rely upon his violent power like he did in the conflict between the Hebrew and the Egyptian. This is an interesting comparison to make. When Moses is confronted with a conflict between Jew and Egyptian he operates through force and power. He is acting the part of the lion. On the other hand, when he is confronted with a conflict between Hebrew and Hebrew he attempts to operate through debate and authority. Moses is acting the part of man rather than lion or fox. The Jews do not accept his authority; this reflects Machiavelli's thesis regarding the difficulties a founder is presented with in attempting to gain authority and found new modes and orders. Ironically though, the two men mockingly refer to Moses as a "prince" and "judge." This sarcasm is ironic because it anticipates Moses' future role as emancipator, prince, legislator, and judge of the Israeli people.

As Moses is living in the desert in exile, he receives the divine inspiration for his enterprise in the symbol of the burning bush. God manifests himself physically in the burning bush that does not consume itself. God commands Moses to lead his people out of their bondage by the Egyptians. "Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou

mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.”¹⁸³ Moses does not question the mission but he does express doubt about his ability to carry out this duty. He is worried about his authority to lead. “And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?”¹⁸⁴ God comforts Moses by informing him that he will be with him and that Moses speaks in his name. Moses has the authority of God to lead the Hebrew people. This passage indicates Machiavelli’s characterization of Moses as a mere executor of God’s will. “And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this *shall be* a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain. And Moses said unto God, Behold *when* I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What *is* his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.”¹⁸⁵ Regardless of perspective, this passage indicates Moses’ virtue. A religious reader will read this passage and appreciate the personal virtue that Moses must possess in order to speak with God and be his chosen voice. God uses Moses as a political representative and legislator of God’s will. A secular reader will read this passage and interpret this as a religious justification for secular power. Moses uses God to gain political power and justify his new modes and orders. In any case, Moses is an example of Machiavelli’s excellent man and Aristotle’s finer and god-like legislator.

¹⁸³ Exodus 3:10

¹⁸⁴ Exodus 3:11

¹⁸⁵ Exodus 3:12-14.

The title of Chapter 4 of Exodus is interesting and gives meaning to Machiavelli's use of the term "armed prophet." Theseus, Romulus, and Cyrus were armed with weapons and legions of men. Moses must accomplish the emancipation of Israel from the pharaoh without such "arms." Moses is not armed in the traditional sense and yet Machiavelli makes it a point to refer to Moses as an "armed prophet." Chapter 4 of Exodus is titled "God Equips Moses." In this chapter, Moses is granted the "arms" of God to use in order to free the Hebrews from Egypt and establish God's law. Theseus, Romulus, and Cyrus were all equipped with secular weapons to wield against their enemies and gain authority. Moses does not have such weapons but does have the power of religion and the power of God to wield against pharaoh. "And the Lord said unto him, "What *is* that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled before it...And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs...And the Lord said unto Moses, When thou goest to return to Egypt, see that thou do all *those* wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand."¹⁸⁶ Moses' weapon is his rod that is blessed by God. It is important to note that God explicitly states that it is Moses that is committing the actions through his own rod, but that it is God that is the source of the "wonders" that Moses would commit by his own hands. It is appropriate that Machiavelli places Moses among those princes that have acquired new principalities through their own arms and virtue. Moses may not have a sword or an army but he possesses his staff which is blessed as the staff of God. Machiavelli writes in Chapter XXVI of The Prince, "Thus, if your illustrious house want to follow those excellent men who redeemed their countries, it is necessary before all other things, as the true

¹⁸⁶ Exodus 4:2, 4:17, 4:21

foundation of every undertaking, to provide itself with its own arms; for one cannot have more faithful, nor truer, nor better soldiers.”¹⁸⁷ In this passage Machiavelli advises that his idea of “arms” is metaphorical and transcends the idea of weapons. The arms of a prince may encompass weapons and soldiers but more importantly a prince’s arms are made up of his virtue. As Machiavelli states, there is not a more faithful, truer, or better soldier committed to your enterprise than yourself. The ability to create new modes and orders rests upon the ability to command and lead; these abilities rest in turn on an individual’s virtue. Moses’ staff is a physical manifestation of his virtue.

Thus armed, Moses returns to Egypt to undertake his mission. When Moses demands that pharaoh let his people go, pharaoh refuses and this brings about the plagues. These plagues were manifestations of God’s power through Moses. The plagues run their course through frogs, flies, hail, etc., but culminate in the death of the first-born sons of Egypt. “And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more. But against my children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know that the Lord doth put a difference between Egyptians and Israel.”¹⁸⁸ This action indicates the immense amount of violence that was necessary to free the Hebrews from their slavery in Egypt. Neither God nor Moses shies away from committing immense harm on their enemies in the pursuit of establishing the new modes and orders for the benefit of their community. This act is virtuous in the Machiavellian sense as it establishes authority through fear and awe. It is apparent why Machiavelli regards Moses to be an

¹⁸⁷ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 104.

¹⁸⁸ Exodus 11:6-7.

exemplar of the model prince. It also evident that the God of the Old Testament, in his willingness to commit acts of violence, is a God much more in line with Machiavellian thought than is the God of the New Testament. Machiavelli's project of renewal may represent a return to the Hebrew God of the Old Testament. In Book III, Chapter I of the Discourses on Livy, titled, "If One Wishes a Sect or a Republic to Live Long, It Is Necessary to Draw It Back Often toward Its Beginning" Machiavelli argues that orders grow weak with time and that they must return to their origins in order to maintain themselves. Virtue is lost with time unless there is a renewal and return. Machiavelli may be advocating that Christianity return to its origins and embrace the virtues that helped to establish it. It is insightful to note that Machiavelli mentions Moses as a great man and although he addresses Christianity as an institution, he never mentions its founder, Jesus Christ, explicitly. Machiavelli is silent on the personage of Jesus in both The Prince and the Discourses on Livy. Jesus appears to be an example that defies Machiavelli's general rule. Jesus is an unarmed prophet who conquers.

With the death of the first-born of Egypt, pharaoh's hand is forced and he relents and allows the Jews to leave Egypt. Upon their exodus from Egypt, God blesses the Hebrews with a number of miracles through the hand of Moses. The Red Sea is parted, water flows from rocks, and manna drops from heaven. These miracles and blessings are quickly forgotten as Moses goes to Mount Sinai to receive God's law made manifest in the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments is the supreme act of legislating as it is God's law that is executed and maintained through God's will. The extent of God's insistence on following his law is made in this passage. "Thou shalt not make unto thee *any* graven image, or any likeness *of any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth:

Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God *am* a jealous God visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.”¹⁸⁹ In outlining the law, God makes sure to explicitly remind his people of divine censure and reward. Machiavelli must have been aware of the fact that God does not mention the soul in either the rewards or punishment but rather focuses upon the effect of obedience or disobedience in this world. Punishment of the father is handed down through the third or fourth generation. Merciful rewards are granted to those who both love God and keep his commandments. God is silent on the soul as is Machiavelli.

The Ten Commandments is the supreme act of legislation because of the power of the legislator and its sacred administration. Such power far transcends the political power of Theseus, Romulus, and Cyrus. This is the supreme act of creating new modes and orders. God speaks of Angels being the executors of his will. “Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name *is* in him. But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries.”¹⁹⁰ Moses is on par with the angel as he is the executor and counselor of God. This role is apparent in the chapter on the golden calf. As Moses was with God on Mount Sinai, the people grew restless and created a golden calf to worship which has expressly prohibited by the Law. As God is witness to this he

¹⁸⁹ Exodus 20:4-6.

¹⁹⁰ Exodus 23: 20-22.

expresses to Moses his wish to destroy the people and start over again with Moses as the father of a new nation. “Now therefore let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.”¹⁹¹ God, in his anger that the people of Israel have turned against him so quickly, wants to start over again with Moses as the father of a new nation. Moses is also upset with the people, but instead of embracing this honor bestowed upon him, he proceeds to debate with God about the merits of destroying the people and starting anew. He argues that the Egyptians would scoff at this and reminds God that he has made a promise to “Abraham, Isaac, and Israel.”¹⁹² Moses is no mere executor of God’s will, here in this passage he shows the true power of his virtue when he is able to change God’s mind and soften his anger. “And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.”¹⁹³ Moses is able to transform the will of God but he also takes the matter of punishment from God’s hand and into his own. Moses punishes the people not by God’s authority but by his own. Although he claims that he is acting out of God’s will, nowhere in Exodus is it mentioned that God orders Moses to punish in the manner that he does. “Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, *Who is on the Lord’s side? Let him come* unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, *and* go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor. And the children of Levi did according to the word of

¹⁹¹ Exodus 32:10.

¹⁹² Exodus 32: 13.

¹⁹³ Exodus 32: 14.

Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.”¹⁹⁴ Moses is able to convince God to have mercy on the people of Israel but he takes it upon himself to be sure that their transgressions were punished. God and Moses are capable of not only doing harm to their enemies to establish new modes and orders, they also exhibit the virtue to harm their fellows in the pursuit of their goal. Moses exemplifies the Machiavellian notion that one should govern out of fear and only secondly through love. Love asks while fear compels. Moses reestablishes God’s and his own authority through this act of violence that instills fear and obedience in the people of Israel. Moses’ violent action is reflected by Machiavelli in Chapter XVII of The Prince. “A prince, therefore, so as to keep his subjects united and faithful, should not care about the infamy of cruelty, because with very few examples he will be more merciful than those who for the sake of too much mercy allow disorders to continue, from which come killings or robberies; for these customarily hurt a whole community, but the executions that come from the prince hurt one particular person. And of all princes, it is impossible for the new prince to escape a name for cruelty because new states are full of dangers.”¹⁹⁵ Cruelty well used is not a vice but becomes a virtue when it helps to establish and maintain the community. Moses’ reaction to the idolatry is an act of compassion when compared to the divine retribution that he saved his people from.

The books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy establish the details of God’s law that were laid down generally in the Ten Commandments. God speaks to his people through Moses and Moses establishes the law according to God’s prescriptions. Moses also

¹⁹⁴ Exodus 32:26-28.

¹⁹⁵ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 65-66.

outlines who will rule in his stead when he is gone because he will not reach the promised land with the people. God says to Moses, “Yet thou shalt see the land before *thee*; but thou shalt not go thither unto the land which I give the people of Israel.”¹⁹⁶ Moses establishes the laws and leads the people to the gates of real political power; the birth of a sovereign nation in a new land. However, Moses does not rule in a temporal manner as does Theseus, Romulus, or Cyrus. These were political leaders who ruled a people, a nation, and a land. Moses was the prince of the Hebrew people, he ruled the Jewish nation; but he did not rule over a land. His people were wanderers who were searching for the promised land that Moses himself would never reach. And yet, Machiavelli regards him as a prince worthy of emulation for his virtues. This designation of Moses as a prince may force us to reevaluate Machiavelli’s conception of rule.

Moses did not reach the Promised Land. Moses did establish the modes and orders that were maintained and perpetuated by the people of Israel. Moses was not the ruler of a kingdom in the traditional sense. Moses is the creator of a moral code that is based upon a religious foundation. This moral code and its ecclesiastical basis is still the foundation of Judaism and Christianity. True power is not manifested in practical reality and the fleeting honors of political rule. Political rule is a temporal tool to achieve eternal honor; that is the goal of a true prince. True power exists in the initial transformation and subsequent education of humanity. “And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. In all the signs and the wonders, which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, And in all *that* mighty hand, and in

¹⁹⁶ Deuteronomy 32: 52.

all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel."¹⁹⁷ Moses, through terror, and armed only with his staff defeated the temporal arms of the pharaoh and led his captive people to the borders of the Promised Land. Moses is Machiavelli's ideal prince because his virtue is that that he shares with a God.

¹⁹⁷ Deuteronomy 34: 12.

PART THREE: “Remember, O man, that you are dust, and unto dust you shall return.”-Genesis

3:19

Having addressed the case studies, it is appropriate to return to our preliminary hypothesis and examine whether or not there is in fact a link between Machiavelli and Aristotle. This is a difficult connection to establish. It goes against the current of much of the traditional interpretation of these two great philosophers. Harvey C. Mansfield characterizes the nature of this tradition in this passage, “The peculiar character of Machiavelli’s political science emerges only by contrast to Aristotle’s, which was, with humanist and scholastic variations, the dominant political science of Machiavelli’s time...In the great dispute between Machiavelli and Aristotle, two philosophers...sought, in Machiavelli’s phrase, ‘to acquire the world.’”¹⁹⁸ Mansfield agrees with our initial premise that you cannot appreciate Machiavelli without first appreciating Aristotle. However, Mansfield characterizes this relationship as one of “contrast” and of “dispute.” Our hypothesis is that Machiavelli represents, in essence, a “re-packaging” of certain Aristotelian premises. The image we have attempted to utilize to characterize the nature of this relationship is a prism. However, it is appropriate to remember that a prism does not clarify images so much as it separates the parts and brings out beauty and color to that which we cannot see. If Aristotle is a prism to Machiavelli’s thought then we should see that light refracted in our case studies; in the lives of Machiavelli’s heroes.

We put forth three major theses of Aristotle that we hypothesized were shared by Machiavelli. The first thesis is that politics is the master science. The second thesis is that man is a political animal. The third thesis is that human nature is a balance of beast and god. Our

¹⁹⁸ Mansfield, Harvey C. Machiavelli’s Virtue. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998. P. xiv.

argument was that Machiavelli essentially agrees with all three of these fundamental Aristotelian premises. We argued that this harmony would be reflected in the lives of Machiavelli's heroes. Machiavelli demands that his students examine the lives of these men to learn of their virtue. If Aristotle is influential in Machiavellian thought it would be safe to surmise that elements of Aristotelian thought would be perceptible in the lives of these great men. An evaluation of the histories of these excellent men would indicate the extent of Aristotle's influence. This is obviously not to state that Theseus, Romulus, Cyrus, or Moses read Aristotle; however, Machiavelli did. Aristotle established ideas about human nature and its relationship with politics that if influential to Machiavelli, should be evident in the lives of his heroes. Machiavelli appreciated the universal appeal of the political virtues of these men. He also appreciated the universality of Aristotle's basic political ideas. Machiavelli wished to construct a universal political philosophy that would be applicable to all men, in all places, and for all time.¹⁹⁹ To achieve this ambition he had to incorporate Aristotle and synthesize elements of his thought with his own. If our hypothesis is correct then our case studies should synthesize and reconcile Machiavelli with Aristotle.

“Politics is the master science.”

Aristotle writes in The Nicomachean Ethics that politics is the master science. This distinction arises from politics' ability to legislate that which is good for humans. In the pursuit

¹⁹⁹ An important example that highlights the universality of some of the common themes we have established between Aristotle and Machiavelli is Abraham Lincoln's Address before the Springfield Young Men's Lyceum on January 27, 1838. In this speech, Lincoln outlines many of the same propositions that we have explored in terms of Aristotle's "finer and godlike" legislator and Machiavelli's models of excellent men. Lincoln gives these ideas a uniquely American context. The parallels are stunning and point to universal threads that run throughout political communities and transcend the contingencies of context.

of legislating that good, all other arts are subordinate and directed towards the achievement of that politically defined end. Furthermore, individual honor awaits those who legislate and create a political system that leads other humans to live well, fulfill their nature, and achieve a semblance of the good. “For even if the end is the same for a single man and for a state, that of the state seems at all events something greater and more complete whether to attain or to preserve; though it is worth while to attain the end merely for one man, it is finer and more godlike to attain it for a nation or for city-states. These, then, are the ends at which our inquiry aims, since it is political science, in one sense of that term.”²⁰⁰ Aristotle states that attaining the good for nations or states is “finer and more godlike’ than attaining it solely for oneself. It appears that Aristotle states that the greatest glory awaits those that lead and attain the common good for a political community. Individual virtue should be applied to the political context in the creation of enduring political institutions. Machiavelli does not merely reflect this thought, he integrates it. Machiavelli writes in Chapter VI of The Prince that the examples of the most excellent men are those who created new modes and orders that governed a strong and stable political community. The virtue of these individual men was focused entirely upon the context of politics and with a political goal. They are celebrated and honored by history as great men and this is an example of the respect accorded to individual virtue. However, they would not be celebrated and honored as outstanding individuals if their personal virtues were not exercised with the common benefit in mind as the goal. Their individual aspirations are correlated with the common good of the whole.

²⁰⁰ Aristotle. The Nicomachean Ethics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. P. 2 NE I.2

It may be bluntly objected that these men were not excellent. These founders were often cruel and deceptive towards their people. Plutarch accuses Theseus of parricide. Romulus commits fratricide. Cyrus is educated by his father in the “lore of selfishness” and the art of deception. Moses brought plagues down upon the Egyptians and had his own disobedient people executed at the foot of holy Mount Sinai. However, it must be acknowledged that these actions were focused upon a greater good; the creation of a strong and enduring regime. It is not certain that enduring institutions would have existed without these violent and deceptive acts. It *is* certain that enduring institutions did exist because of these violent and deceptive acts. In studying their lives it is apparent that these men exhibited much of what we would classify as vice; that cannot be disputed. However, it also cannot be disputed that these actions resulted in a greater good. Aristotle writes in The Nicomachean Ethics, that “acting unjustly does not necessarily imply being unjust...He acts unjustly, then, but is not unjust.”²⁰¹ Machiavelli writes that if the deed accuses the effect excuses. Machiavelli writes of “cruelty well-used.” Theseus, Romulus, Cyrus, and Moses were all confronted with a people whose virtues and cities were weak, if existent at all. Through their individual action they strengthened the people and improved the circumstances of their situation through the creation of new modes and orders. Their virtues legislated virtue among their fellows; virtue is that which is good. Aristotle writes, “The true student of politics, too, is thought to have studied virtue above all things; for he wishes to make his fellow citizens good and obedient to the laws...And if this inquiry belongs to political science, clearly the pursuit of it will be in

²⁰¹ Ibid, p. 122. NE V.6.

accordance with our original plan.”²⁰² Aristotle states that politics is the master science because it legislates that which is good for humans. Machiavelli understands this premise and accepts it as a fundamental truth. Our case studies prove this. These men are good for their individual virtues but they evolve and become “finer and godlike” when they apply that which is theirs alone to the political context and for the welfare of the state and its citizens. Politics is the master science: it manufactures that which is good for the people and it is the canvas upon which the great practice their art. It is a misconception and a stereotype that the ancients focus entirely upon the community while the moderns focus exclusively upon the individual. The individual is intertwined with the community and vice versa. Each relies upon the other; they are inseparable and in the highest sense, it appears that that which is best for one is best for the other. The nature of this relationship is reflected in Aristotle’s thesis that man is a political animal.

“Man is a political animal.”

In Book I, Chapter 2 of The Politics, Aristotle explains his argument that man is a political animal. He states that the city is natural as it is necessary for man to fulfill his nature. As man exists by nature and as natural man needs politics for fulfillment it follows that the means to achieve that natural end is also natural. Neither the city nor the art of politics is conventional; both are natural. In fact, it is because of humans being political animals that politics is the master science. The latter rests upon the former; if man is not a political animal then politics is not the master science. Aristotle asserts that man is unique among the other animals in the dependence he has upon politics. Aristotle does not state that man is the only political animal

²⁰² Ibid, p. 24-25, NE 1.13.

but that he is the most political. “That man is much more a political animal than any kind of bee or any herd animal is clear.”²⁰³ Aristotle defines speech as the key distinction between humans and the other gregarious animals. He admits that the other animals have voice and that this noise indicates pleasure and pain; attainment of pleasure and avoidance of pain constitutes the primary fulfillment of the animals. Human fulfillment transcends the sensory realm and speech is the tool utilized to attain that transcendent fulfillment. Aristotle writes, “But speech²⁰⁴ serves to reveal the advantageous and the harmful, and hence also the just and the unjust. For it is peculiar to man as compared to the other animals that he alone has a perception of good and bad and just and unjust and other things (of this sort); and partnership in these things is what makes a household and a city.”²⁰⁵ Reason as manifest by speech allows humans the capacity to perceive the advantageous and just from the harmful and unjust. Humans possess the ability to define ourselves, redefine ourselves, and then define ourselves again in the pursuit of that which is good. Speech grants us the possibility of creation, degradation, destruction, renewal, and creation anew. Speech and reason grants humans the gift of evolution and improvement. Machiavelli recognizes this power. His entire enterprise rests upon the utilization of human speech and reason to understand his thought, apply it, and subsequently improve the human condition. Machiavelli writes in his dedicatory letters in both The Prince and the Discourses on Livy that these works contain everything he has learned and understood. In his Preface to the Discourses on Livy, Machiavelli writes, “If poor talent, little experience of present things, and weak knowledge of ancient things make this attempt of mine

²⁰³ Aristotle. Carnes Lord, translator. The Politics. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984. P. 37, 1253a5.

²⁰⁴ Lord translates the Greek word “logos” as speech. Logos implies speech and reason.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 37, 1253a10-20.

defective and not of much utility, it will at least show the path to someone who with more virtue, more discourse and judgment, will be able to fulfill this intention of mine, which, if it will not bring me praise, ought not to incur blame.”²⁰⁶ Machiavelli humbly offers his apology in the case that his work is defective and does not fulfill its intention. However, he unequivocally states that this work contains within it, the path to fulfillment. This path can be discovered through virtue, discourse, and judgment. Machiavelli’s path is revealed through speech and reason.

Machiavelli accepts the Aristotelian premise that man is a political animal and that this nature is manifest in the ability of speech. As Aristotle states, speech allows people to make decisions about what is advantageous and just. The advantageous and just comprises that which is good and Aristotle asserts that the attainment of the good is the goal of politics. In order for people to accept the advantageous and just they must be led to transcend their base instincts. There must be an authoritative voice that leads the people and provides the ultimate judgment upon the good for the rest of the community. This is the role of Aristotle’s fine and godlike legislator. The virtues of the legislator are writ large upon the political community. Aristotle’s legislator takes the form of Machiavelli’s excellent men as defined in Chapter VI of The Prince. Machiavelli writes that the greatest examples of princes and men are those who have founded new modes and orders through their own arms and virtue. Theseus, Romulus, Cyrus, and Moses are all legislators in the highest sense as they led their people to accept new conceptions of what was considered to be advantageous and just. These founders were armed

²⁰⁶ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield & Nathan Tarcov, translators. Discourses on Livy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. P. 5

with their virtue of speech and reason. Force and deeds is an essential component of the founding mission but deeds and force do not persuade without meaningful context.

Machiavelli writes of cruelty well-used. That leads us to conclude that there is such a thing as cruelty poorly-used. Cruelty can only be well-used when it is applied reasonably and with a purpose. That purpose is identified by speech and reason and applied to the pursuit of that which has been defined as advantageous and just.

In Book I, Chapter 2 of the Discourses on Livy, Machiavelli gives his readers a magnificent synopsis of Book I, Chapter 2 of Aristotle's Politics.²⁰⁷ "These variations of government arise by chance among men. For since the inhabitants were sparse in the beginning of the world, they lived dispersed for a time like beasts; then, as generations multiplied, they gathered together, and to be able to defend themselves better, they began to look to whoever among them was more robust and of greater heart, and they made him a head, as it were, and obeyed him. From this arose the knowledge of things honest and good, differing from the pernicious and bad. For, seeing that if one individual hurt his benefactor, hatred and compassion among men came from it, and as they blamed the ungrateful and honored those who were grateful, and thought too that those same injuries could be done to them, to escape like evil they were reduced to making laws and ordering punishments for whoever acted against them: hence came the knowledge of justice. That thing made them go after not the most hardy but the one who would be more prudent and more just when they next had to choose a prince."²⁰⁸ Machiavelli directly reflects Aristotle's contention that the pre-

²⁰⁷ Machiavelli must have been aware that his Book I, Chapter 2 resembled Aristotle's Book I, Chapter 2.

²⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 11-12. Mansfield argues in Machiavelli's Virtue (p. 117) that Machiavelli does not believe that humans are political animals. He argues that humans become political beings by chance and not by nature. He may have

political community is unable to fulfill man's nature and this leads to the natural creation of political authority and the ensuing knowledge of justice. Nature drives humans to form political associations. To highlight another similarity, Aristotle incorporates the terms advantageous and just and contrasts them with the concepts of harmful and unjust. Machiavelli maintains the thesis but substitutes the Aristotelian language with his own. Machiavelli employs the terminology of the honest and the good and compares that to the pernicious and the bad. According to this passage from Machiavelli, necessity and evil compels the creation of authority. Aristotle states that necessity and justice requires the establishment of politics. Man is a political animal because his essence obliges it. Speech and reason allows humans the capacity to create and improve that which they need. The histories of Machiavelli's heroes are, in essence, the chronicles of man's greatest adventures as a political animal. These founders create and improve that which is, of by definition and necessity, just. Theseus unites a dispersed Athens under his lawful authority. Romulus creates the foundation of the great Roman Empire. Cyrus unified a collection of disjointed principalities into the Persian Empire. Moses emancipated his people, legislated a religiously based moral code, was the father of Israel, and provides the foundation for Judaism and Christianity. These great men accomplished these great things through their great virtue. Their virtue instituted justice. Part of their virtue consists of their abilities of speech and reason.²⁰⁹ However, it is because of the

in mind Machiavelli's statement that "variations of government arise by chance among men." However, Machiavelli states in this passage that variations of government arise by chance; not government, per se.²⁰⁹ The central importance of speech is indicated in Exodus. As God charges Moses with his mission, Moses is reluctant in his ability to lead. He states that he will lack authority because he is "slow of speech." Moses identifies speech as a key component of leadership. God also recognizes the significance of speech by his appointment of Aaron as Moses' spokesman in the early stages of Exodus. Later, as Moses' authority grows so does his ability of speech. There is a direct correlation of speech and political authority in the Pentateuch.

nature of men that a simple reliance on speech and reason does not suffice. Human nature compels great men to embrace compulsion. Compulsion is best achieved through force.

“One who is incapable of participating or who is need of nothing through being self-sufficient is no part of the city, and so is either a beast or a god.”

Speech and reason represent the innate virtues and abilities of men. However, as Machiavelli states, there is nothing more dangerous to accomplish than to create new modes and orders. A legislator cannot rely simply on speech and reason to persuade people. The nature of man is such that they often will have to be compelled rather than persuaded. Where speech and reason fail one must turn to deeds and force. Force is characterized by Machiavelli as the princely combat of the beast. Machiavelli’s ideal prince must be a balance of beast and man. “Thus, you must know that there are two kinds of combat: one with laws, the other with force. The first is proper to man, the second is proper to beasts: but because the first is often not enough, one must have recourse to the second. Therefore it is necessary for a prince to know well how to use the beast and the man.”²¹⁰ Machiavelli’s ideal prince seems to be an ironic distortion of Aristotle’s conception of human nature being a composite of beast and god. Machiavelli is silent on the divine.²¹¹ However, it is our contention that Machiavelli reflects three Aristotelian theses; and this is the third and final thesis and it is also the most important. The preceding two premises rely upon the stable foundation of the third. If human nature is

²¹⁰ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield, translator. The Prince. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 69.

²¹¹ Machiavelli does not mention the divine in his sketch of the ideal prince. God figures prominently in Chapters XXV and XXVI of The Prince. Machiavelli In Chapter XXV articulates his notion that fortune and God are arbiters of one half of our actions. However, he seems to characterize Fortune as a goddess that can be controlled. In Chapter XXVI, Machiavelli cites God and utilizes religious language in his exhortation to liberate Italy.

not a balance of beast and god, then man is not a political animal, and consequently politics is not the master science. Therefore, in order to verify our hypothesis, Machiavelli must be ironic in his ironic distortion of Aristotle's thesis of human nature. Machiavelli's silence on the divine must be an indication of its significance. To comprehend this we must understand Aristotle's perception of human nature, Machiavelli's characterization of the ideal prince, and how these perspectives are either evident or absent in the histories of Machiavelli's heroes.

We have already addressed Book I, Chapter 2 of the Discourses on Livy. We have commented on the surprising extent to which it mirrors Book I, Chapter 2 of The Politics. But there is another important correlation to explore. "For since the inhabitants were sparse in the beginning of the world, they lived dispersed for a time like beasts; then as generations multiplied, they gathered together, and to be able to defend themselves better, they began to look to whoever among them was more robust and of greater heart, and they made him the head, as it were, and obeyed him."²¹² In this passage Machiavelli follows Aristotle's example of the evolution of the pre-political to the political. Machiavelli states that prior to gathering together, humans lived dispersed "like beasts." According to Machiavelli then, humans were like beasts prior to gathering together to form the community. This sentiment echoes Aristotle's statement in The Politics regarding human nature, "One who is incapable of participating or who is in need of nothing through being self-sufficient is no part of a city, and so is either a beast or a god."²¹³ That which appears to be human is not human unless it exists within the context of the political community. Aristotle states that one who is incapable of

²¹² Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield & Nathan Tarcov, translators. Discourses on Livy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. P. 11.

²¹³ Aristotle. Carnes Lord, translator. The Politics. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984. P. 37, 1253a25.

participating in the city is a beast. On the other hand a being who is completely self-sufficient and is of no need of the city is a god. A few lines earlier in The Politics, Aristotle refers to a man without city as either a “mean sort or superior to man.”²¹⁴ Aristotle constructs a prototype of human nature that indicates that man’s nature is a balance of beast and god. Human is human only within the city. Beyond the city, that which appears human is not human, but either a beast or a god. A “man” is a beast as it reverts to animal instinct, is servile to pleasures, and exhibits no sense of virtue; virtue is the tool needed in the attainment of the good, which in turn entails the fulfillment of man. A “man” is a god insofar as he possesses virtue and attains fulfillment through achievement of that which is good, independently of the city. Humans are human as they control their animal instincts and become educated in virtue by the political community. Thus, the city is the crutch that props up humanity. The foundation of humanity, therefore, lies in the founder of the modes and orders that mold political animals into humans.

Machiavelli states that these founders must possess incredible virtue through their individual nature. Machiavelli defines the nature of the prince to be a combination of beast and man. Machiavelli incorporates two components of Aristotle’s theory of human nature into his theory of the ideal prince. He does not mention the divine. However, the lack of explicit articulation should not lead us to automatically designate it as irrelevant. To test the validity of the third and final component of our hypothesis we must analyze Machiavelli in light of Aristotle and within the framework provided by the histories of Machiavelli’s excellent men.

²¹⁴ Ibid, 1253a1-5

On the Beast:

Aristotle writes about the character of humans without the benefits provided by the city and the law. "For just as a man is the best of animals when completed, when separated from law and adjudication he is the worst of all. For injustice is harshest when it is furnished with arms; and man is born naturally possessing arms for (the use of) prudence and virtue which are nevertheless very susceptible to being used for their opposites. This is why, without virtue, he is the most unholy and the most savage (of the animals), and the worst with regard to sex and food. (The virtue of) justice is a thing belonging to the city."²¹⁵ Aristotle argues that man has the potential to be either the best or the worst of animals. Politics refines man's nature and ennobles it with virtue. It is man's virtue that leads him to be better than the other animals. However, without the benefits of politics, man is the most terrible of all animals. Aristotle goes so far as to call apolitical man "savage" and "unholy." The propensity and ability to commit evil is due to man possessing "arms." These arms of men are natural, and when they are not directed by prudence and virtue they are capable of committing the worst of all possible evils. Aristotle affirms this thesis in a passage from The Nicomachean Ethics, "-a bad man will do ten thousand times as much evil as a brute."²¹⁶ Aristotle believes that human's natural essence is capable of virtue but that these virtues must be instilled by the habit of following good laws. The city civilizes man's beast-like nature; the political animal is tamed by the political art. Aristotle explicitly states that man is an animal. However, he believes that component of human nature must be disciplined by the political community. Politics is the master science and

²¹⁵ Ibid, p. 37-38, 1253a30-35.

²¹⁶ Aristotle. The Nicomachean Ethics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. P. 175, NE. VIII.7.

man is a political animal because politics is essential to man's fulfillment as a species. Humanity is delicate and must be cultivated. Man's fulfillment entails a suppression of his animal instinct.

Machiavelli declares emphatically that the ideal prince is part beast. It is this animal component of human nature that allows the prince to conduct combat by force. Machiavelli agrees with the Aristotelian conception of human nature; Machiavelli's epitome of humanity, the ideal prince, is part beast. Machiavelli also agrees with Aristotle regarding the capacity for violence that is represented in this component of human nature. Machiavelli's departure with Aristotle is that he believes that this element of human nature is effectual and therefore good. A prince must be violent and ferocious in the creation and maintenance of his modes and orders. A prince must emulate the strength of the lion and the cunning of the fox. Aristotle advocates that man be domesticated, while Machiavelli argues that the lion and the fox must be celebrated as essential components to human nature. To tame the lion and trap the fox is to distort the nature of man. Machiavelli wishes to free man from the bonds that make him docile. Machiavelli stresses to his students that they must study the lives and virtues of his excellent men. It is apparent through their acts of ferocious violence that these men embraced the beast-like component of their nature. None of these men would have been successful had they been unwilling to use the combative arts of the beasts. Theseus, Romulus, Cyrus, and Moses all utilized the natures of the lion and the fox to found new modes and orders. Their histories are filled with acts of righteous violence and honorable deception. Aristotle writes that men are capable of being the worst of all animals because they have the "arms" to commit great evil when these arms are not applied with prudence and virtue. Theseus, Romulus, Cyrus, and Moses are all excellent men because they utilized their natural arms with prudence and

virtue and directed them at something that is good. Machiavelli celebrates the beast-like component of man not for its violence; violence is not the end but a tool. The beast-like nature of man gives a prince the capacity to commit violence and deception when there is a greater good in mind. The virtues of the beast represent the violent and deceptive foundations of human goodness and virtue. Aristotle states that man cannot be man without the city. According to Machiavelli, the city cannot come into being without the virtues of the beasts. Therefore, humanity is dependent upon the beast. The actions and virtues of Machiavelli's heroes reflect the simple truth of this relationship.

Of Man:

We have already mentioned on several occasions that Aristotle argues that man can be man only within the political context. Humans need laws and its discipline to manufacture virtue and fulfillment. According to Aristotle, virtues are essential tools to fulfillment. Humans cannot be fulfilled unless they are virtuous. Virtue is a habit that must be exercised and that exercise should be composed of adherence to laws. Good laws produce virtue, virtue produces good citizens, good citizens produce good regimes, and good regimes validate the nobility of the founder. Aristotle establishes the basis for this argument in The Nicomachean Ethics, "Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit...This is confirmed by what happens in states; for legislators make the citizens good by forming habits in them, and this is the wish of every legislator, and those who do not effect it miss their mark, and it is in this that

a good constitution differs from a bad one.”²¹⁷ The role of the good legislator is to create the modes and orders that will create habits of virtue among the citizens. Virtuous citizens are good citizens in that they follow the laws that produce the virtue that they possess. Laws produce good citizens and good citizens follow the laws; this is a reciprocal relationship and one that is understood and applied by Machiavelli. This thought is summarized by Aristotle, “And yet the one who first constituted (a city) is responsible for the greatest of goods.”²¹⁸

Machiavelli writes that his ideal prince is half-beast and half-man. The human component of the prince is that which conducts combat through the laws. Just as violence and deception represent the artful arms of the prince, so does the legislation of laws. Violence is the realm of the beast while legislation is the realm of man; beasts do not legislate behavior they compel behavior through force. Humans, through speech and reason, make laws and legislate behavior according to the principles of that which is defined as advantageous and just. Beast-like violence and deception are necessary components of the initial establishment of modes and orders. It is impossible to legislate the establishment of new modes and orders. However, these modes and orders are sustained by and contained in the laws. Laws are the humane “arms” that relegate behavior through authority and habit. Laws represent humane combat because they make the people servile and obedient without resorting to violence and deception. A good legislator is a good warrior in the sense that he utilizes the law as arms that render the people and the regime good and stable. A good founder needs the beast-like nature to establish new modes and orders. A good legislator needs human nature to create the laws

²¹⁷ Ibid, p. 28-29, NE II.1.

²¹⁸ . Aristotle, Carnes Lord, translator. The Politics. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984. P. 37, 1253a30.

that maintain the modes and orders. The ideal prince is both a founder and a legislator, therefore he is both beast and man. It is apparent that Theseus, Romulus, Cyrus, and Moses were all founders and legislators of the first order. They created new modes and orders and to accomplish this they had to act the part of the beast. However, they also legislated the laws that maintained the endurance of their modes and orders and to accomplish this they had to use their human “arms” of speech and reason. The ideal prince is both founder and legislator and must be man as well as beast. A prince is not excellent if he merely creates and then that creation is immediately destroyed. It is the creation and the maintenance of perpetual institutions that makes a prince and a regime great. Establishment of modes and orders must occur with the beast and cruelty well used. The perpetuity of those modes and orders can only occur with the man and reason well used. That is the hallmark of a great prince and it is the nature of Machiavelli’s heroes.

Aristotle’s discussion of the magnanimous man describes an individual who is unique in his capacity for virtue. This individual is political in the sense that his honor is dependent upon the city. However, he is also self-sufficient in that his self-worth is independent of the community. However, the magnanimous individual must be integrated within the political community in order to receive the just honors that he deserves. Delba Winthrop gives an outstanding synopsis of this ironic, yet symbiotic relationship. “At this point, we should briefly recall the other comprehensive virtue of character, pride, or greatness of soul. Whereas justice is said to be the whole of virtue towards others, pride is said to be the ornament of the virtues. It presupposes all of the virtues and makes them better. The proud man or woman deserves great honors and does not fail to claim them...Furthermore, we might suppose that should the

law fail to command all the virtues, the proud individual, insisting that, being virtuous, he-like the gods-is worthy of honor, presents himself as a model of virtue for us to admire and imitate. He is *justly* contemptuous of inferiors and shows his hates and loves openly, although he is not incapable of ironic self-depreciation. While accepting honors, he nonetheless disdains them, because to take honors seriously would be to judge his own worth by the estimates of the inferiors who accord him honors. The only one he could live for would be a friend. Yet he willingly helps and benefits others, because as a benefactor, he can take pleasure in demonstrating his superiority. For the same reason, he is loathe to ask for help and does not like to recall benefits conferred on him, although he will repay them lavishly. He acts infrequently-only when the occasion requires the exercise of great and rare virtue.”²¹⁹

Aristotle’s description of the magnanimous man anticipates many of the characteristics of Machiavelli’s prince. Both possess great virtue that is independent of the city for its being but dependent upon the city for its honor. Both are also divine in essence.

On the Divine:

Machiavelli’s princely prototype is an explicit combination of beast and man. Aristotle’s conception of human nature is that man consists of a combination of beast and god. According to Aristotle, man is both beast and god; humanity is a hybrid combination of these two distinct and oppositional natures. Man is an ironic paradox. Machiavelli’s ideal prince is also a hybrid combination of two distinct and oppositional natures: man and beast. Machiavelli’s prince is also an ironic paradox. Aristotle asserts the divine component of mankind. Machiavelli is silent

²¹⁹ Winthrop, Delba. *Aristotle and Theories of Justice* in The American Political Science Review, Vol. 72, No. 4 (Dec. 1978), p. 1212.

on the divine component of his prince. According to Machiavelli, the ideal prince represents the pinnacle of humanity. In his exposition regarding the nature of this paragon of humanity, Machiavelli does not mention the divine. There are three opposing conclusions that we can reach in reference to Machiavelli's silence. One conclusion is that Machiavelli does not mention the divine because it is inconsequential to his enterprise. The second conclusion is that Machiavelli does not mention the divine because it is an impediment to his enterprise. The third conclusion is that Machiavelli does not mention the divine because of its significance to his enterprise. The two former conclusions are appraisals of religion. The latter conclusion is an appraisal of faith. Machiavelli's silence is deafening and important.

In studying Machiavelli it is apparent that he understands the political significance of religion. We have already examined Machiavelli's ideas regarding the utility of religion as it is outlined in Chapter XI of The Prince and Book I, Chapter 11 of the Discourses on Livy. Machiavelli maintains that religion is an essential component that sustains the stability of the state. He concludes that ecclesiastical principalities are the only states that are "secure and happy." People are more willing to obey the laws when those laws are based upon divine authority and executed with divine sanction. This willing obedience results in social stability and happiness. In Book, I, Chapter 11, Machiavelli discusses the Roman religion introduced by Numa and how this helped to maintain the strength and goodness of the Roman regime after Romulus' death. "Everything considered, thus, I conclude that the religion introduced by Numa was among the first causes of the happiness of that city. For it caused good orders; good orders make good fortune; and from good fortune arose the happy successes of enterprises. As the observance of the divine cult is the cause of the greatness of republics, so disdain for it is the

cause of their ruin.”²²⁰ Machiavelli not only recognizes the significance of religion to the political community, he demands it. Religion causes a chain of obligations that conclude in the “happy successes of enterprises.” The ideal prince, then, must embrace the god-like component of man in order to create an enduring set of modes and orders. It is obvious in studying the lives and histories of Machiavelli’s great heroes that religion is an essential facet of their success. Theseus was reputed to be the son of Neptune. Romulus was presumed to be the son of Mars. Cyrus is educated on the permanent wisdom of divinely established regimes. Moses is the voice of God. All of Machiavelli’s founders exhibit elements of the divine nature of humanity as articulated by Aristotle. To ignore the divine is to ignore an essential element of creating stable and good political societies. It is clear that Machiavelli values the intrinsic worth of religion and its reciprocal relationship with human nature and politics.

Although Machiavelli recognizes the importance of religion, that recognition does not automatically lead us to the conclusion that all religion is good and useful. That what is utilized for good is often very easily corrupted and becomes a tool for the wicked and the bad. Machiavelli believes that Christianity had rendered the world weak. He argues that it institutes a morality that celebrates passivity, modesty and humility and that these characteristics weaken humanity. These morals are not salutary in that they enable evil men to take advantage of those that are good. Machiavelli writes in his preface to the Discourses on Livy that he wishes to institute new modes and orders for the common benefit. It is for the sake of the common benefit that the dominant institutional religion must be transcended. Religion is

²²⁰ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield & Nathan Tarcov, translators. Discourses on Livy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. P. 35.

an impediment to Machiavelli's enterprise because that which was once good has been turned into something bad. In Book, Chapter 12 of the Discourses on Livy Machiavelli writes of the internal corruption of the Church. "If such religion had been maintained by the princes of the Christian republic as was ordered by its giver, the Christian states and republics would be more united, much happier than they are. Nor can one make any better conjecture as to the decline than to see that those people who are closest to the Roman church, the head of our religion, have less religion. Whoever might consider its foundations and see how much present usage is different from them might judge, without doubt, that either its ruin or scourging is near."²²¹

Machiavelli makes three important points that help to give us an insight in to his perception of the divine. The first point to consider is the phrase "the head of our religion." Machiavelli uses the possessive term "our" to indicate his membership in the Church. Whether or not this was an admission of religion or a fox-like sleight of hand is beside the point. Machiavelli indicates that he is a member of the Church for a reason. Whereas he is silent on the god-like component of his ideal prince in The Prince, here he overtly admits his connection to the Church in the Discourses on Livy. This leads to the second point of this passage; Machiavelli's church has been corrupted internally by religious leaders who are irreligious. Their trappings of religiosity gives them the ability to act without religion. Machiavelli writes that people judge by sight and not touch. The leaders of the church appear to be religious and this enables them to act without religion since people cannot touch what these hypocritical leaders truly are.

Machiavelli states his prediction that the divide between Christian foundations and Christian institutions will lead to the Church's ultimate ruin.

²²¹ Ibid, p. 37-38.

We have discussed Machiavelli's thesis that enduring institutions must be maintained by returning to its origins. When modes and orders become corrupt, as is inevitable, they must be returned to their foundations as these foundations must contain an element of goodness and virtue or else they would not have become accepted and legitimized initially. The concept of renewal is related to another important point of this passage. Machiavelli argues that if the Christian states had adhered to the message ordered by "its giver" they would be more united and happy. The giver of the Christian modes and orders is Jesus Christ. Machiavelli asserts his frank opinion that Christian states would be stronger and happier if they had remained true to the orders established by Jesus Christ. Through this, Machiavelli tacitly refers to Jesus Christ as a founder. To follow his argument declared in The Prince, all founders are armed prophets; it is a necessary and sufficient condition. Conversely, all unarmed prophets fail. If Jesus Christ is a founder then he is also an armed prophet. Furthermore, in the Discourses on Livy, Machiavelli argues that the men who are most esteemed are those who are orderers of religion. Jesus Christ is the orderer of the Christian faith and he is honored above all other men as a God. Jesus Christ is a man of the first order. He is a self-sufficient legislator whose virtue needs no part of the city. Jesus Christ, the supreme legislator, is not a balance of beast and man but instead a balance of man and God.

We argued that there are three possible reasons why Machiavelli is silent on the divine in addressing the nature of his ideal prince. It is obvious that Machiavelli believes religion is significant. It is not as obvious whether or not Machiavelli believes religion is an impediment. This is more complex; religion is a tool and can be used well and used poorly. Religion well used can result in strength and happiness. Religion poorly used will result in degradation and

corruption. Machiavelli believes that the dominant religion of his day, what he refers to as “our religion,” is an impediment that must be transcended for the sake of humanity. Religion has purpose and meaning; it lends faith and gives consequence to the contingency of circumstance. The significance of religion necessitates that religion be wielded as an arm of the successful prince. This relates to the third reason why Machiavelli may be silent on the god-like component of the prince. Machiavelli is silent because he appreciates the sobering significance of religion to the founding enterprise. Aristotle argues that a good legislator is godlike. Aristotle also states that a man whose virtue is self-sufficient and independent of the city is not a man but a god. In fact, according to Aristotle, outstanding individual virtue does not merely grant the ability to legislate the law; it also gives the outstanding individual the natural right to transcend the law. “If there is one person so outstanding by his excess of virtue-or a number of persons, though not enough to provide a full complement for the city-that the virtue of all the others and their political capacity is not commensurable with their own (if there are a number) or his alone (if there is one), such persons can no longer be regarded as part of the city. For they will be done an injustice if it is claimed they merit equal things in spite of being unequal in virtue and political capacity; for such a person would likely be like a god among human beings. From this it is clear that legislation must necessarily have to do with those who are equal both in stock and capacity, and that for the other sort of person there is no law-they themselves are law. It would be ridiculous, then, if one attempted to legislate for them”²²² Machiavelli reflects this Aristotelian notion of individual virtue. Machiavelli’s heroes exhibited ferocious virtue despite living in corrupt or incomplete cities. These men are self-sufficient and their virtues are

²²² Aristotle. Carnes Lord, translator. The Politics. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984. P. 106, 1284a5-15.

natural and independent of the city and its laws. It is the instinctual virtue of these men that founded new modes and orders and subsequently manufactured virtuous citizens through legislation. These men are Machiavelli's heroes because they are gods in the Aristotelian sense. Machiavelli is a student of their virtues and wishes to create his own "untrodden path" to share the same immortality with his noble heroes.

We have examined Machiavelli in light of Aristotle's prism. Through Aristotle, Machiavelli is illuminated and better understood. An Aristotelian re-packaging of Machiavelli's re-packaging of Aristotle, civilizes and tames the brutality of Machiavelli's thought. It is apparent that there is a correlation between Aristotle and Machiavelli. Machiavelli incorporates much of Aristotle's political philosophy. This influence is confirmed by the study of Machiavelli's heroes. The context and motivation for their excellence is provided by Aristotle's fundamental political philosophy. Our hypothesis is affirmed. It is apparent that Machiavelli can not only be understood in contrast to Aristotle but also in correlation with him. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, the threads that are shared by the disparate philosophies and histories may point to fundamental universals regarding human nature and its relationship with the political community. What Machiavelli shares with Aristotle and which both share with the histories of Theseus, Romulus, Cyrus, and Moses may not only be fundamental but universal.

Conclusion:

Aristotle writes in The Nicomachean Ethics that, "he who thinks himself worthy of great things, being unworthy of them, is vain; though not every one who thinks himself worthy of

more than he really is worthy of is vain.”²²³ With this thought in mind, it is important to quickly address the fundamental differences between the Aristotelian and Machiavellian conceptions of virtue. We noted at the outset, that Strauss declares that Machiavelli “re-writes Aristotle’s *Ethics*.” We have seen that Machiavelli transcribes Aristotle’s fundamental premises. However, Strauss is correct in that Machiavelli re-writes Aristotle’s virtues as presented in The Nicomachean Ethics. Machiavelli re-packages general Aristotelian principles under a different guise and transmits a unique vocabulary of virtue.

Aristotle famously asserts in The Nicomachean Ethics, that moderation between two extremes constitutes virtue; virtue consists of moderation. “Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it. Now it is a mean between two vices, that which depends on excess and that which depends on defect; and again it is a mean because the vices respectively fall short of or exceed what is right in both passions and actions, while virtue both finds and chooses that which is intermediate. Hence in respect of what it is, i.e. the definition which states its essence, virtue is a mean, with regard to what is best and right an extreme.”²²⁴ Modest restraint constitutes Aristotelian virtue. That which is good in human conduct is a mean between two extremes, which are, in turn, bad. Gods and civilized man act with virtuous temperance and this is the path to happiness; happiness constitutes Aristotelian human fulfillment.

²²³ Aristotle. The Nicomachean Ethics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. P. 89-90 NE IV.3.

²²⁴ Ibid, p. 39. NE, II.6.

Machiavelli rejects the middle way as virtue. In reading of the virtues of Machiavelli's heroes it is obvious that they are not moderate in any way. Their virtues are ferociously noble and extreme in every way. They are bold and confident where the moderate may falter in their cautious contemplation. Moderation implies cautiousness and reserve; these are not the characteristics of Machiavelli's ideal prince. Machiavellian virtue is the acceptance of responsibility of the consequences of extreme actions. This is not to imply that the ideal prince is wild and thoughtless. A prince's extreme virtue must be regulated and administered with prudence. To act extreme in the extreme is to destroy the foundation of political stability. To destroy political stability is to destroy the political community. To destroy the political community is to destroy the basis of a founder's nobility and honor. To destroy nobility and honor is to destroy success and that which does not lead to success cannot be called virtue.

Strauss argues that Machiavellian virtue is moderation in that it varies between two extremes.²²⁵ It does not rest upon the mean but alternates back and forth between extremes and that this alternation produces fear and awe among the citizens. Fear and awe is the sentiment that is reserved for the gods. The gods compel obedience and honor through fear and awe. Fear and awe can only be achieved through this alternation between extremes. Fear and awe is not produced by a stable reliance upon what exists in the middle. The middle is safe and knowable and this in turn produces lethargy. Virtue is not lethargic but active. Aristotle's virtue is safe but dormant. Machiavelli's virtue is dangerous but energetic. Aristotle's virtue is leisurely and contemplative. Machiavelli's virtue is vigorous and athletic. Machiavelli's heroes are founders of cities. Aristotle's heroes are founders of ideas. Machiavelli's heroes are

²²⁵ Strauss, Leo. Thoughts on Machiavelli. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958. P. 240-244.

ferociously just. Aristotle's heroes are gracefully just. According to Mansfield, Aristotle's virtues are exercised within the political arena, while Machiavelli's virtues are defined within the political arena.²²⁶ The choice then becomes one of lifestyle. Is the human ideal the vicious virtue of Romulus or is it the rational virtue of Socrates?

"Thinking then whence it can arise that in those ancient times peoples were more lovers of freedom than in these, I believe it arises from the same cause that makes men less strong now, which I believe is the difference between our education and the ancient, founded on the difference between our religion and the ancient. For our religion, having shown the truth and the true way makes us esteem less the honor of the world, whereas the Gentiles, esteeming it very much and having placed the highest good in it, were more ferocious in their actions."²²⁷

Machiavelli believes that man has been degraded by a long-standing tradition of feeble laws and weak religion. Humans have been tamed ad nauseam and the instinctual strength and nobility of the beasts has been lost. Therefore, the Machiavellian project represents a return to an earlier tradition of wisdom. The princely education that Machiavelli advocates is in essence an initiation to the nature of the beasts. Machiavelli takes upon himself the role of the educator of princes and thus carries on the traditional function fulfilled by Chiron the centaur. However, in doing so he arrogantly ignores what Aristotle holds as the most eternal, the most noble, and therefore, the most important, in human nature. Aristotle states unequivocally in The Nicomachean Ethics, that politics in its highest sense is spiritual. "The student of politics,

²²⁶ Mansfield, Harvey C. Machiavelli's Virtue. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. P.22.

²²⁷ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield & Nathan Tarcov, translators. Discourses on Livy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. P. 131.

then must study the soul.”²²⁸ Nowhere in either The Prince or the Discourses on Livy, does Machiavelli address the soul. We have shown that Machiavelli’s silence is significant. There are three conclusions we can reach from this: First, the soul is of no consequence to politics because the soul is apolitical. Second, the soul is of no consequence to politics because politics has no soul. Third, the soul is of no consequence to politics because there is no such thing as the soul. Perhaps we can solve this problem by interpreting this passage written by Machiavelli with an Aristotelian prism. “For whoever has appeared good for a time and wishes for his purposes to become wicked ought to do it by due degrees and to conduct himself with opportunities, so that before your different nature takes away old favor from you, it has given you so much new that you do not come to diminish your authority; otherwise, finding yourself uncovered and without friends, you are ruined.”²²⁹ This passage comes from a chapter in the Discourses on Livy, titled “To Leap from Humility to Pride, from Mercy to Cruelty, and without Due Degrees Is Something Imprudent and Useless.” The title actively alternates between extremes and concludes with the useless vice of imprudence. Prudence is a virtue for both Machiavelli and Aristotle. However, prudence is neither cunning nor wisdom. Beasts are cunning, humans are prudent, and only the Gods are truly wise.

²²⁸ Aristotle. The Nicomachean Ethics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. P. 25 NE I.13.

²²⁹ Machiavelli, Niccolo. Harvey C. Mansfield & Nathan Tarcov, translators. Discourses on Livy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. P. 90.

*"-But man, proud man,
Drest in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assured,
His glassy essence, like an angry ape
Plays such fantastic tricks before high Heaven
As makes the angels weep; who, with our spleens,
Would all themselves laugh mortal."*

Isabella in William Shakespeare's

Measure for Measure

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