

Interpretation

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- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 1 | <i>Kojima Hidenobu</i> | The Value of the Feudalistic Relationship in Edmund Burke's Political Economy |
| 21 | <i>Aaron Zubia</i> | The Centrality of Convention in Hume's Moral and Political Philosophy |
| 43 | <i>Anthony Vecchio & J. A. Colen</i> | Leo Strauss's Walgreen Lectures on Machiavelli
The "Modern Principle": The Second Walgreen Lectures by Leo Strauss (1954) |
| 119 | <i>Borys M. Kowalsky & Patrick Malcolmson</i> | Review Essays
<i>Unmasking the Administrative State: The Crisis of American Politics in the Twenty-First Century</i> by John Marini |
| 137 | <i>David Lewis Schaefer</i> | <i>The Habermas-Rawls Debate</i> by James Gordon Finlayson |
| 153 | <i>David Lewis Schaefer</i> | <i>The Rediscovery of America: Essays</i> by Harry V. Jaffa on the New Birth of Politics, edited by Edward J. Erler and Ken Masugi |
| 169 | <i>Christine J. Basil</i> | Book Reviews
<i>Aristotle's Art of Rhetoric: Translated and with an Interpretive Essay</i> by Robert Bartlett |
| 179 | <i>Matthew Berry</i> | <i>Augustine's Political Thought</i> , edited by Richard J. Dougherty |
| 185 | <i>Erin A. Dolgoy</i> | <i>Francis Bacon</i> by David C. Innes |
| 193 | <i>Steven H. Frankel</i> | <i>Curing Mad Truths: Medieval Wisdom for the Modern Age</i> by Rémi Brague |
| 199 | <i>Raymond Hain</i> | <i>The Postsecular Political Philosophy of Jürgen Habermas: Translating the Sacred</i> by Dafydd Huw Rees |
| 205 | <i>Samuel Mead</i> | <i>Plato's Tough Guys and Their Attachment to Justice</i> by Peter J. Hansen |
| 211 | <i>Charles U. Zug</i> | <i>The Lost Soul of the American Presidency</i> by Stephen F. Knott |

Interpretation

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The “Modern Principle”: The Second Walgreen Lectures by Leo Strauss (1954)

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INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1953, Leo Strauss delivered a second series of Charles R. Walgreen lectures at the University of Chicago. His first and more famous series of Walgreen lectures, presented five years earlier, shortly after his arrival at the university, had been published in the same year under the title *Natural Right and History*.

By comparison, the theme addressed in the second series of lectures seems to have a much more limited scope than the previous one. While the latter pursues the problem of natural right throughout millennia, the former addresses Machiavelli’s thought—or as Strauss articulated it, “the problem of Machiavelli.”¹ This second series of Walgreen lectures seems not just to have a more circumscribed theme, but also to be briefer: it consists of only four lectures—instead of the previous six—all of them shorter than those of the 1949 series.

Both *Natural Right and History* and the second series of Walgreen lectures begin, however, from the same fundamental concern. That fundamental concern is that the endeavor of political philosophy had become questionable: radical relativism or historicism “asserts that the fundamental alternatives themselves change from historical situation to historical situation, or that

¹ Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1958), 5.

there are no fundamental alternatives which can be said to be in principle coeval with human thought as such.”²

Strauss acknowledges that the “prima facie evidence in favor of historicism is very strong.” The fundamental alternatives are not wider than, but very different from, those that confronted the ancients. “The fundamental political alternative today is that between liberal democracy and totalitarianism of the right or of the left,” and the classics seemed to be unaware of these political phenomena (WL I, 5).³ But then Strauss adds that it is neither necessary nor possible to examine all the ideas of an alternative world view one by one. It is enough to examine the fundamental principles underlying these alternatives.

In 1958, a different version of the lectures, carefully edited and significantly longer, was printed under the title *Thoughts on Machiavelli*. This “expanded version,” however, omitted eight typed paragraphs, where Strauss establishes the relationship between his reflections on Machiavelli and his concern with radical relativism.

That Strauss chose to investigate the fundamental alternatives by studying the thought of Machiavelli should not come as a surprise. This is not the place to show how and why Machiavelli’s “break with the whole tradition of political philosophy,”⁴ presenting an amazing contraction of the horizon as an amazing enlargement, became increasingly important for Strauss, since many recent studies have explored these questions, some of them book-length studies.⁵ It suffices to recall perhaps that Strauss himself came to consider Machiavelli—and not Hobbes, as he had originally thought—the founder

² Leo Strauss, *Walgreen Lectures* (1954), Lecture I, 5. The 1954 series will henceforward be cited parenthetically as WL, followed by lecture number and page in the original typescript.

³ The fundamental alternative Strauss has in mind is the alternative to philosophy as Plato and Aristotle conceived it. The evidence against the existence of permanent philosophical problems is strong, given that “it is impossible to give an adequate analysis of these [problems]...in terms of Plato’s and Aristotle’s explicit teaching. Such notions as the rights of man, philosophy of history in general and the economic interpretation of history in particular, the world state, even the state (which means an association different from the association called society) were apparently wholly beyond the horizon of the classics” (WL I, 5).

⁴ Leo Strauss, *What Is Political Philosophy? and Other Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 40.

⁵ Kim A. Sorensen, *Discourses on Strauss: Revelation and Reason in Leo Strauss and His Critical Study of Machiavelli* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 2006); Gérald Sfez, *Leo Strauss, lecteur de Machiavel: La modernité du mal* (Paris: Éditions Ellipses, 2003); and Corine Pelluchon, *Leo Strauss and the Crisis of Rationalism: Another Reason, Another Enlightenment*, trans. Robert Howse (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014).

of modern political philosophy.⁶ We may also sidestep the question of the development of the role Machiavelli played in Strauss's thought, since Strauss himself, during a fierce controversy in the early 1960s, stated that his own evolution on the problem was an issue of "antiquarian" interest.⁷

It seems pertinent, however, to introduce the reader of these lectures to Strauss's characterization of the nature of the break, because that is also the reason why we keep coming back to Strauss's reading of Machiavelli. Most historians today strive to situate Machiavelli in his own time. Sometimes in doing so they dilute or trivialize his ideas, either by saying that he was but one of the exemplary thinkers of republicanism, or by showing that what most concerned Renaissance political theorists, Machiavelli among them, was shaping citizens, not creating a new regime, so that the Italian Renaissance was far from being the seedbed of modern republicanism.⁸ That is, these historians often, if not always, present Machiavelli as one among many rather similar thinkers who were tackling rather similar themes.

Strauss, by contrast, did not cease to underline Machiavelli's "novelty" as the founder of modernity. But as he wonders at the beginning of these Walgreen lectures, "can we speak of *the* modern principle?" If there is such a principle, from which all other and later modern ideas are derivative, this principle must "have emerged at some time in the past, and its emergence must have been accompanied by a feeling that all earlier thought is fundamentally insufficient, and consequently by a break with all earlier thought.... We find that break with all earlier thought primarily in the work of Machiavelli" (WL I, 1).

The magnitude of the change initiated by Machiavelli was such that philosophers and scholars never stopped writing about his ideas. Some attempted to ascertain these ideas as part of a genealogy whose roots can be found in the thought of antiquity and continue in his thought (as a humanist writer imbued with civic spirit), having a decisive influence over the republican

⁶ Strauss's book on Spinoza, published in 1928, did, however, already contain that insight on the importance of chapter XV of *The Prince*. See Leo Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 49, 224ff.

⁷ See Leo Strauss, "Natural Right," Autumn 1962, Lecture II (October 10, 1962), page 4 of the original transcript.

⁸ See P. Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975); Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 1, *The Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); and Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, vol. 2, *Renaissance Virtues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). For an opposing view, see James Hankins, *Virtue Politics: Soulcraft and Statecraft in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019).

framework of the American Constitution. J. G. A. Pocock claims that this tradition goes back to Aristotle. Other scholars minimize the ancient roots and see something new, something modern in Machiavelli's writings. Given such different interpretations of Machiavelli's work, we can surely say that it is ambiguous, because it allows for a plurality of incompatible readings.

The great number of interpretations sometimes leads scholars to speak of "Machiavelli's mystery," since his writings are not especially obscure so far as prose is concerned. As Isaiah Berlin noted, "*The Prince* is a short book: its style is usually described as being singularly lucid, succinct and pungent—a model of clear Renaissance prose. The *Discourses* is not, as treatises on politics go, of undue length, and it is equally clear and definite."⁹

But Machiavelli's writings are not systematic and often lack even any semblance of a clear plan.¹⁰ Neither the consequent ambiguities, nor the recent attempts at domesticating Machiavelli with a classical genealogy, should keep us from noting that his thought inaugurated a new age. All the great modern political thinkers that succeeded Machiavelli, Strauss asserts in the 1949 Walgreen lectures, were in fact building on the foundations that he had already laid.¹¹

Machiavelli's ideas presented in *The Prince* generated immediate controversy. Even during the sixteenth century, a number of writings came to print opposing his "outrageous" ideas. This is, of itself, hardly surprising; Machiavelli was no doubt aware of the scandalizing propensity of his claims. The surprise and curiosity begin when we find that, at some point, the debate turned more largely into one about the *interpretation* of the work. These interpretive debates have yet to be resolved. One author finds it fitting to describe Machiavelli as having written his book with "the devil's own fingers."¹² Other authors (e.g., Meinecke) find him praiseworthy for articulating, for the first

⁹ Isaiah Berlin, "The Originality of Machiavelli," in *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 33–34.

¹⁰ But see on this Catherine H. Zuckert, *Machiavelli's Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

¹¹ Leo Strauss, Walgreen Lectures (1949), Lecture V (October 26, 1949), 92. See also Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 177; Leo Strauss, "The Three Waves of Modernity," in *An Introduction to Political Philosophy: Ten Essays by Leo Strauss*, ed. Hilail Gildin (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 84–88.

¹² The accusation was made by Cardinal Reginald Pole in a 1539 book, *Apologia de Reginaldi Poli ad Carolum V*, and repeated throughout the centuries, even by authors whose political practices were indebted to Machiavelli, such as Frederick II of Prussia, who wrote *Anti-Machiavelli* (1739) just before becoming king.

time, the concept of *raison d'état*—that is, referring to the superior interests of the State.¹³

For many, Machiavelli's teachings are an instance of immorality, or at the very least amorality, and this amorality certainly might *appear* to contemporary social scientists to be scientific. Along these lines, an ongoing point of debate concerns Machiavelli's attitude towards the moral and religious standards of human conduct.¹⁴ So, in the twentieth century, those concerned that social science should avoid moral judgments were led to present Machiavelli as merely a pragmatic and realistic thinker who upheld the *suspension* of common ethical concerns in political matters¹⁵—a presentation most famously made by Benedetto Croce (1925). The working assumption is that morality has no proper role in decision making within the political realm. Ernst Cassirer (1946) went further in trying to paint Machiavelli as having merely adopted the viewpoint of the statesman. This statesman's viewpoint allowed Machiavelli to distinguish between the *facts* of political life and the *values* of moral judgment, so that Cassirer would call him a kind of "political Galileo."¹⁶

Thus, many interpreters of Machiavelli imagine that his doctrines are an incipient version of a new, value-free political science—which is not maleficent, but neutral, just because it is solely concerned about the efficiency of political means. For these interpreters, Machiavelli's originality would be his "scientific method," which is devoid of useless moral lecturing and informed by a consciousness of how political life effectively works. Now, Machiavelli mentions his "method" only once, in the Preface to the *Discourses*, and it is very difficult for an attentive reader to rightly say that his writings have no malicious content, but are simply neutral or value free.¹⁷ Nor can we find confirmation that Machiavelli was the first political thinker to articulate the modern concept of "the State" as an impersonal form of rule that has the

¹³ F. Meinecke, *Machiavellism: The Doctrine of Raison d'État and Its Place in Modern History*, trans. D. Scott (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957 [1924]). For recent contributions to the debate see M. G. Dietz, "Trapping the Prince: Machiavelli and the Politics of Deception," *American Political Science Review* 80, no. 3 (1986): 777–99; G. Mattingly, "Machiavelli's *Prince*: Political Science or Political Satire?," *American Scholar* 27, no. 4 (1958): 482–91.

¹⁴ For a recent attempt to address the question see A. J. Parel, *The Machiavellian Cosmos* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992).

¹⁵ Benedetto Croce, *Elementi di Politica* (Bari: Laterza, 1925).

¹⁶ Ernst Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1946), chap. 12.

¹⁷ See Skinner, *Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 1.

monopoly of violence within a territory—as Max Weber defines it. As Strauss says, “Machiavelli is not a political scientist of this kind.”¹⁸

Strauss, in a brief chapter devoted to Machiavelli in a 1963 work,¹⁹ begins precisely by emphasizing the extent of the break between our ethical horizon and that of the ancients. Our current moral and political language has undergone a surprising change: the notion of virtue, whose use today makes people frown or provokes a smile—so naive it now seems—had been the key notion for both personal ethics and public life for millennia. Strauss goes back to the beginning of moral philosophy with Socrates, reminding us that the questions Socrates asked his fellow citizens are articulated in the language of virtue: the nature of courage, wisdom, piety, and so on. Socrates may not have reached conclusive answers, but Plato continued the same type of inquiry, and Aristotle, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, surely gives unequivocal responses: the greatest virtue for an individual is magnanimity, and for the city, justice. The Socratic conception, which tended to characterize the virtues as aristocratic excellences, contrasts sharply with the biblical traditions, which identified humility as a deeply important human virtue (which virtue Aristotle considered a vice). Furthermore, scripture presented obedience to the Divine Will as the most the most fundamental good. The chasm between Athens and Jerusalem could seem unbridgeable, but with the recovery of the Aristotelian tradition by medieval Christian Scholasticism, it seemed possible to reconcile the classical Greek tradition and the Christian tradition through a critical appropriation of the notion of moral virtue. This tradition has long since vanished.²⁰ To paraphrase Strauss loosely, if nowadays someone “idealistic” said that what he most desires in life is to become virtuous, he would be looked at with amazement, and perhaps be the target of a harmless mockery—which, as Strauss quickly found out, could be far from harmless. For the notion of virtue has become alien to our moral and political vocabulary. In fact, in conversation between statesmen, diplomats, and so forth, the mention of a virtuous life would not only cause astonishment. It would raise suspicions, and perhaps suggest the existence of ulterior motives.

¹⁸ Strauss, *Walgreen Lectures* (1949), I, 7.

¹⁹ Leo Strauss, “Machiavelli,” in *History of Political Philosophy*, ed. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 296–97. See also J. A. Colen, *Porque pensamos como pensamos? Uma História das ideias Sociais e Políticas* (Porto: Aster, 2020).

²⁰ With the possible exception of American puritans and some Catholic circles.

So, the magnitude of the change in our moral thought is such that we are no longer surprised that we should anticipate the achievement of a peaceful and just society, not out of virtuous restraint, but by realistic selfishness.²¹

As Strauss avers near the center of this lecture series, it is difficult not to be moved when we understand Machiavelli's teaching, for we "are becoming the witnesses...of the emergence of that greatest of all youth movements" (WL III, 3); that is, we are observing the moment when the "modern principle" emerged, and with it modern political philosophy (WL I, 6). A return to the study of Machiavelli, as wrought by Strauss, comes fresh with inspiration among otherwise less than inspired scholarship on the topic.

There is, however, a different reason for interest in the oral version of this second series of Walgreen lectures. It was, of course, sent to press five years later, according to Strauss's own assertion in the Preface to *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, where he describes that book as "an expanded version of [the] four lectures."²² However, granted that these lectures were indeed the origin of the book, the reader will be surprised to find himself reading a quite different text, following a very different plan, not just a difference in tone owing to the nature of the oral delivery, but even in the articulation of the overall plan and its content. (As one might expect, the lectures are more colloquial, and lack the ample footnotes of the book.)

The plan, as revealed by the titles of the lectures in the typescript, is as follows: (I) Machiavelli's Intention: *The Prince*; (II) Machiavelli's Intention: *The Discourses*; (III) Machiavelli's Teaching; (IV) Machiavelli's Victory. Strauss kept to the overall plan, although the rhythm of the oral delivery did not allow for exactness.

The opening words of the lectures, provocative and famous (or infamous), found their corresponding place, almost literally, in the Introduction of the printed book in 1958. The main difference is perhaps that the book omitted eight paragraphs where Strauss establishes the relationship between his reflections on Machiavelli and his concern with radical relativism that even denies the possibility of philosophy. But he is also drawing attention to the practical and even urgent political problem of the opposing ideas at the base

²¹ But as Leo Strauss wonders in a text from 1946: "Is it not more utopian to expect social harmony from enlightened self-interest or either enlightened or unenlightened self-realization than from self-denial? Is it really true that man is so averse to virtue as the modern argument assumes?" See J. A. Colen and Svetozar Minkov, *Towards "Natural Right and History"* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

²² Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, 5.

of liberal democracy and totalitarianism (whether of the right or the left). Marx, “that famous Machiavellian,” shows up again in the last lecture as the end of the path paved by Machiavelli.²³ This practice of relating the thought of philosophers to present concerns accords with Strauss’s usual pedagogy.

The remainder of the first and second lectures roughly correspond to chapter 1 of *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (“The Twofold Character of Machiavelli’s Teaching”) and chapter 2 (first published in *APSR* in 1957 as “Machiavelli’s Intention: *The Prince*”)—but the phrasing is very different and the text was almost entirely rewritten for the book. Nonetheless, it is fairly easy to follow the parallel development of the same reasoning, concerning what Strauss calls “prefatory work,” which he deems unavoidable given Machiavelli’s peculiar writing style.

If we had to point to the main difference in brief, we could say that the rules of the method for reading the works of a philosopher, which were in the background in the lectures, were carefully crafted for the printed book.

But the second half of Lecture II, and the two final lectures, are altogether different from the book. The affirmations are more candid and assertive, but mostly the lectures pursue the plan set forth in the beginning: “We shall therefore try to establish as precisely as it is possible in a few public lectures, what the new principle is which Machiavelli claims to have discovered. We shall then have to examine whether Machiavelli’s principle is identical with the seemingly very different principle which later great thinkers of modernity have tried to establish. Above all, we shall have to examine whether this principle can legitimately claim to be a principle, i.e., a sound principle” (WL I, 5).

Thus, the final two lectures present clearly Machiavelli’s deliberate deconstruction of morality, as well as how he proceeds to the partial reconstruction of a kind of morality. His long-term “victory” carries forward the modern principle.

Michael and Catherine Zuckert provided us with this typescript, which was circulated for a long time among Leo Strauss’s students. It cannot be

²³ As he says at the end of Lecture IV, “Here we are really at the cradle of Marxism. Here we find the roots of the fantastic notion that a just order of society can be established by flagrantly unjust and cruel means, that a good end can be achieved by bad means, which would mean, as Hegel himself sometimes said, by means which really defeat the end. It seems to me that if we would succeed in tracing the typically modern approach to Machiavelli or in understanding the concealed Machiavellian character of the modern approach . . .” See the more nuanced reference in *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, 203.

found among the Leo Strauss papers kept at the Special Collection of the University of Chicago Library.

Using the transcriber's typescript of these four lectures, a transcript that contains handwritten corrections in pencil, we have inserted the handwritten corrections, standardized spelling and punctuation, indented paragraph beginnings, italicized titles and foreign words, corrected a few grammatical errors, and inserted a few words in brackets to complete sentences or to correct words, using *Thoughts on Machiavelli* as our guide. (The typescript occasionally contains a question mark within parentheses, when the typist/transcriber has doubts about a name or a word.) All of these changes are indicated in our footnotes, and all footnotes are our own. We have also used footnotes to provide relevant information where we deemed it helpful to the reader. We are responsible for any errors.²⁴

²⁴ We wish to thank the estate of Leo Strauss and its literary executor, Nathan Tarcov, for permission to publish this work. The copyright to the text of the lectures is retained by the estate of Leo Strauss.

DR. LEO STRAUSS
WALGREEN LECTURES
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
1954

LECTURE I

[INTRODUCTION]¹

We shall not shock anyone, we shall merely lay ourselves open to good-natured, or in the worst case harmless, ridicule if we begin our exposition of Machiavelli's thought by professing our sympathy with the old-fashioned and simple-minded view that Machiavelli was a teacher of wickedness. Indeed, what other descriptions could fit a man who teaches lessons such as these: princes ought to exterminate the family of the ruler whose territory they wish to possess securely; princes ought to murder their opponents rather than to confiscate their property since those who have been robbed, but not those who have been murdered, can think of revenge; princes ought not to be fearful that the victim's children might avenge their father's murder, for men forget the murder of their father more quickly than the loss of their patrimony; a victorious general who is afraid that a prince may not reward him properly may punish his prince for his anticipated ingratitude by raising the flag of rebellion; one ought not to say to someone whom one wants to kill, "Give me your gun, I want to kill you with it," but merely, "Give me your

¹ The transcript of this first lecture is titled "Machiavelli's Intention / THE PRINCE / I." A significant part corresponds almost verbatim to the Introduction to Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1958). Henceforward *TOM*. The rest of the text of Lecture I takes up the issue of "the twofold character of Machiavelli's teaching," and therefore does treat *The Prince*, but both wording and content are very different from the book. We briefly point out in the footnotes some divergences between the two texts, until the point where they became the rule rather than the exception.

We have inserted, between square brackets, subtitles of our own devising that are intended to point to the parallels and divergences between the two texts. We have chosen not to include in our footnotes to the transcript the references that Strauss provides readers in *TOM*.

gun," for once you have the gun in your hand, you can satisfy your desire.² If it is true that only a wicked man will stoop to teach maxims of public and private gangsterism, we are forced to say that Machiavelli was a wicked man.³

However true this verdict may be, it certainly is not exhaustive. Its deficiency justifies partly the more sophisticated views about Machiavelli which are set forth by the learned of our age. Machiavelli, we are told, was so far from being a wicked teacher of wickedness that he was a passionate patriot or a scientific student of society, or both. But one may wonder if the up-to-date scholars do not err more greatly than the simple-minded and the old-fashioned: whether what escapes the up-to-date scholars is not much more important than what escapes the simple-minded and old-fashioned, although it may be true that the one thing needful, which is ignored by the sophisticated, is inadequately articulated and therefore misinterpreted by the men of noble simplicity. It would not be the only case in which "a little philosophy" generates prodigious error to which the unphilosophic multitude is immune.

It is misleading to describe the thinker Machiavelli as a patriot. The specific character of Machiavelli's patriotism consists in the fact that he loves his fatherland more than his soul. It therefore presupposes a comprehensive reflection regarding the status of the fatherland on the one hand, and of the soul on the other hand. These comprehensive reflections, and not his patriotism, established his fame and made him the leader of many men in all countries. The substance of Machiavelli's thought is not Florentine, or even Italian, but universal. It concerns, and is meant to concern, all thinking men regardless of place and time. It is at least equally misleading to speak of Machiavelli as a scientist. The scientific student of society is unable or unwilling to pass value judgments. But Machiavelli's work abounds with value judgments. His study is still a normative study.⁴

But even if we were forced to grant that Machiavelli was essentially a patriot, or a scientist, we would not be forced to deny that he was a teacher of wickedness. Rather the reverse. One may argue as follows. Patriotism

² Most lessons described are shocking examples narrated in *The Prince*. However, the text within quotation marks is not in Machiavelli.

³ The beginning of this lecture was kept in *TOM*, with the occasional rephrasing or change of expression, such as the substitution of "evil" for "wicked." Even the divisions between paragraphs usually corresponds to *TOM*, although some sections were present in the oral delivery and are no longer present in *TOM*, as we will indicate. Only the second paragraph (*TOM*, 10) and the last paragraph ("We may seem...", *TOM*, 14) of the Introduction are new additions.

⁴ End of page 1 of the transcript. This page is not numbered.

as Machiavelli understood it is collective selfishness: my country, right or wrong. The indifference to the distinction between right and wrong which springs from devotion to one's country is less repulsive than the indifference which springs from exclusive preoccupation with one's own comfort and cupidity. But precisely for this reason it is more seductive and therefore more dangerous. In the last analysis, collective selfishness is not more respectable than the selfishness of the individual. Patriotism is not enough because love is not necessarily accompanied by discernment. Patriotism is not enough for the same reason for which the most doting mother who feels "right or wrong my child"⁵ is happier if her child is good than if he is bad. Love of one's own is less satisfactory than love of what is both one's own and good. Love of one's own necessarily tends to be concerned with one's own being good or complying with the demands of right. If one justifies Machiavelli's terrible counsels by his patriotism, one sees the virtues of patriotism while one is blind to that which is higher than patriotism, to that which both legitimizes and limits patriotism. By referring to Machiavelli's patriotism, one does not dispose of a mere semblance of wickedness; one merely obscures the real wickedness.

As regards the scientific approach to politics which certain contemporary admirers trace to Machiavelli, it consists in study of such "facts," or of "behavior," as is incompatible with passing value judgments. It emerges through abstraction from the moral distinctions by which we take our bearing as citizens and as men. It makes moral obtuseness the indispensable condition of scientific analysis. This obtuseness is not identical with wickedness. But it is bound to strengthen the forces of wickedness in the world. In the case of lesser men, one can safely trace this obtuseness to weakness of certain intellectual qualities; this charitable explanation could not be applied to Machiavelli, who was too thoughtful not to know what⁶ he was doing and too generous not to admit it to his reasonable friends.

We do not hesitate to assert what many have asserted before us, and we shall later on try to prove it, that Machiavelli's teaching is immoral and irreligious. We are familiar with the evidence which scholars adduce in support of the contrary assertions. But we question their interpretation of the evidence. To say nothing of certain other considerations, it seems to us that the scholars in question are too easily satisfied. For instance, they are satisfied that Machiavelli was a friend of religion because he stressed the useful and

⁵ The example of motherly love was not retained in *TOM*.

⁶ We have deleted "that," which appears before "what" in the typescript.

even indispensable character of religion. They do not pay any attention to the fact that Machiavelli's praise of religion is only the reverse side of what one may call his complete indifference to the truth of religion. This is not surprising since they themselves are likely to understand by religion nothing other than a powerful bond⁷ of society, if not an attractive and innocuous piece of folklore. They misinterpret Machiavelli's attitude toward religion, and likewise his attitude toward morality, because they are pupils of Machiavelli. Their seemingly open-minded study of Machiavelli's thought is based on the dogmatic acceptance of Machiavelli's principles. They do not see the wickedness of Machiavelli's thought because they are the heirs of the Machiavellian tradition: because they, or their teachers, have been corrupted by Machiavelli.

One cannot see the true character of Machiavelli's thought unless one liberates oneself from his influence. For all practical purposes this means that one cannot see the true character of Machiavelli's thought unless one recovers for oneself and *in* oneself the premodern heritage of the Western world, be it biblical or classical. To do justice to Machiavelli, one must look *forward* from a premodern point of view toward Machiavelli, rather than look *backward* from a present-day point of view to Machiavelli. This procedure, which is demanded philosophically, is incidentally also the only proper procedure as regards historical understanding: as regards an understanding whose goal it is to understand Machiavelli's thought exactly as Machiavelli himself understood it. For Machiavelli knew the premodern point of view: [it was]⁸ in front of him. He could not know the point of view of the present time which emerged, as it were, behind his back.

As we have indicated, we regard the simple-minded view of Machiavelli as indeed decisively superior to the prevailing sophisticated view, but nevertheless as not sufficient. There is something important in Machiavelli which escapes (us) if we see nothing but the wickedness of his teaching. Even if and precisely if we were to grant that his teaching is diabolic, and Machiavelli himself a devil, we would be compelled to remind ourselves⁹ of the great theological truth that a devil is a fallen angel. To recognize the diabolical character of Machiavelli's thought would mean to recognize in it a perverted nobility of a very high order. That nobility was discerned by Marlowe insofar as he ascribed to Machiavelli the saying, "I hold there is no sin but

⁷ End of page 2.

⁸ We have corrected the typescript from "they were" to "it was."

⁹ Typescript reads: "ourself."

ignorance.”¹⁰ Or to quote Machiavelli himself, “I do not judge, nor shall I ever judge it to be a defect to defend any opinion with reason, without wishing to use either authority or force.”¹¹ We are in sympathy with the simple-minded view of Machiavelli, not only because of its wholesome character, but also because one’s failure to take the simple-minded view seriously prevents one from doing justice to what is truly admirable in Machiavelli: the freedom and intrepidity of his thought, the grandeur of his vision, and the subtlety of his speech. Not the disregard of, or contempt for, the simple-minded view, but the considered and considerate ascent from it leads to the core of Machiavelli’s thought. For there is no surer protection against the understanding of anything than glibly to take for granted the obvious and the surface: the problem inherent in the surface of things, and only in the surface of things, is the heart of things.

There are good reasons for dealing with Machiavelli and Machiavellianism in a series of Walgreen lectures. The United States of America may be¹² said to be the only country in the world which was founded in explicit opposition to Machiavelli’s principles. According to Machiavelli, the founder of the most renowned commonwealth in the world, of Rome, was a fratricide; the foundation of political greatness is necessarily laid in crime. If we can believe Thomas Paine, all the governments of the old world had an origin of this nature; their origin was conquest and tyranny. But “the independence of America was accompanied by a revolution in the principles and practice of government”: the foundation of the United states of America (was laid) in justice and freedom. “Government founded on a moral theory, on a system of universal peace, on the indefeasible hereditary Rights of Man, is now revolving from west to east by stronger impulse than the government of the sword revolves from east to west.”¹³ This diagnosis is far from being obsolete. While freedom is now no longer a preserve of the United States, the United States is now¹⁴ the bulwark of freedom. Without the support of the United States freedom would succumb to tyranny everywhere in the world. And contemporary tyranny, totalitarianism, has its roots in Machiavelli: in the Machiavellian

¹⁰ This quote is from the opening of Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta*, in which the character Machiavelli appears on stage. Prof. Timothy Burns has called our attention to the quote, which goes unidentified in *TOM*, 13.

¹¹ This is not found literally in Machiavelli. See, however, *The Prince*, chap. 12, and the *Discourses* II.13.

¹² End of page 3.

¹³ Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*, Second Part, Introduction. We have capitalized “Rights” and “Man.” See *TOM*, 13 with note 3.

¹⁴ Typescript reads: “are now. . .” This has been corrected in accordance with *TOM*, 13.

principle that the good end justifies every means. At least to the extent to which American reality is inseparable from the American dream, or the American aspiration, we cannot understand Americanism without understanding Machiavellianism, which is its contrary.

But we cannot conceal from ourselves the fact that the problem is somewhat more complex than it appears in the presentation of Thomas Paine and his followers. Machiavelli himself would probably argue that America owes her greatness not only to her habitual adherence to the principles of freedom and justice, but also to her occasional deviation from them. He would not hesitate to suggest a nasty interpretation of the Louisiana Purchase and of the fate of the red Indians. He would suggest that facts like these are an additional proof of his contention that there cannot be a great and glorious society without an equivalent of the murder of Remus by his brother Romulus. This complication makes it all the more necessary that we should try to reach an adequate understanding of the fundamental issue raised by Machiavelli.

The American principles, as understood by Paine among others, are threatened today not only from without. They are threatened within the United States especially by what is generally and loosely known as relativism. According to this view, the principles of liberal democracy are not intrinsically superior to the principles of totalitarianism. We are told that both sets of principles are "values" and that human reason is unable to establish the superiority of one set of values to others. It is precisely when we attempt to face the issues raised by relativism that we are forced into a study of Machiavelli. Permit me to explain this.¹⁵

* * *

Political philosophy was originally and is essentially the quest for the right political order. The fundamental question raised by¹⁶ political philosophy allows of a small number of possible answers. We may call these answers the fundamental alternatives. One type of relativism asserts that political philosophy is not capable of going beyond articulating the fundamental alternatives or that political philosophy is not capable of rationally deciding between the fundamental alternatives. But another type of relativism questions the very idea of political philosophy by denying the assumption that

¹⁵ The following seven paragraphs of the typescript are omitted in the book. We have demarcated the dropped section with asterisks.

¹⁶ End of page 4.

there is *the* fundamental problem and therefore that we can reasonably seek¹⁷ the fundamental alternative. Radical relativism asserts that the fundamental alternatives themselves change from historical situation to historical situation, or that there are no fundamental alternatives which can be said to be in principle coeval with human thought as such.

To understand the strength of radical relativism or of historicism, and at the same time in order to find a way toward a practicable discussion of the issue raised by it, one does well to proceed as follows. Political philosophy emerged with Socrates; in its original form it is accessible to us especially in the writings of Plato and of Aristotle. Are the fundamental alternatives visualized and discussed by Plato and Aristotle *the* fundamental alternatives? If they are not, if the later development brought about the realization of fundamental possibilities which were unknown in the classics, there is a strong presumption that what happened at least once, will happen again and again in the future. In other words, if the fundamental alternatives discussed by the classics are not *the* fundamental alternatives, the *prima facie* evidence in favor of historicism is very strong. Now it seems to be obvious that the horizon of the classics is, if not narrower than the horizon of modern man, at any rate different from the latter. The fundamental political alternative today is that between liberal democracy and totalitarianism of the right or of the left. It is impossible to give an adequate analysis of these phenomena in terms of Plato's and Aristotle's explicit teaching. Such notions as the rights of man, philosophy of history in general and the economic interpretation of history in particular, the world state, even the state (which means an association different from the association called society), were apparently wholly beyond the horizon of the classics.

However, these things and others of the same kind are not by themselves decisive. In the first place, the possibilities or notions unknown to the classics may be derivative; that is to say, they may be the consequences of the adoption of one or the other fundamental alternative; they need not transcend the framework of the fundamental alternatives visualized by the classics. And besides, some of these notions may be spurious, that is to say, they may prove to be baseless or impossible.

In order to pass judgment on the status of the ideas unknown to classics, it would seem to be necessary to examine each of these ideas itself. Still there may be the possibility of a comprehensive examination. Let us assume that all

¹⁷ The typescript reads: "seek (of). . ."

notions unknown to the classics¹⁸ are akin to each other—that they are based on a common principle which distinguishes them from the classical notion. In that case it would be sufficient to examine that common principle in order to answer the question as to whether the classical principle has, or has not, been rendered obsolete by more recent insights.

It does not require great courage to assert that there exists such a principle. We all have learned in school that there is a modern age beginning with the Renaissance and the Reformation and that this modern age is characterized by a number of ideas which are alien to earlier thought. But can we speak of *the* modern principle?

Let us assume that there is an X which significantly distinguishes modern thought from all earlier thought. If there is such a thing, it must have emerged at some time in the past, and its emergence must have been accompanied by a feeling that all earlier thought is fundamentally insufficient, and consequently by a break with all earlier thought. Is there any evidence of such a break having occurred? We shall not find it in the Reformation; for the Reformation was so far from being, i.e., *intending* to be, a break with antiquity, that it was return to biblical antiquity. Nor shall we find that break in the Renaissance; for the Renaissance was meant to be a rebirth of something old and forgotten. We do find that break within political philosophy most obviously in the work of Hobbes. But closer analysis shows that Hobbes built on a foundation laid by Machiavelli. We find that break with all earlier thought primarily in the work of Machiavelli.

We shall therefore try to establish as precisely as it is possible in a few public lectures, what the new principle is which Machiavelli claims to have discovered. We shall then have to examine whether Machiavelli's principle is identical with the seemingly very different principle which later great thinkers of modernity have tried to establish. Above all, we shall have to examine whether this principle can legitimately claim to be a principle, i.e., a sound principle. Unfortunately, we have to do a considerable amount of prefatory work before we can turn to these important issues. This prefatory work is necessary because of the peculiar difficulty (caused) by Machiavelli's presentation of his teaching. We are bound to misunderstand Machiavelli's teaching if we misunderstand his intention. And what his intention is, is far from being obvious. In embarking upon this somewhat arid work, we may derive some comfort from the thought that by

¹⁸ End of page 5.

understanding Machiavelli's intention, we understand the fundamental part of his teaching: the beginning is half of the whole.

* * *

[THE TWOFOLD CHARACTER OF MACHIAVELLI'S TEACHING]¹⁹

The difficulty created by Machiavelli's presentation of his teaching shows itself, to begin with, in this form: Machiavelli presented his teaching in two different works, *The Prince* and the *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Livy*, and the relation of the two books is obscure. Plato too devoted two chief works to the presentation of his political teaching,²⁰ *The Republic* and *The Laws*. But he made it perfectly clear that the theme of *The Laws* is of lower rank than the theme of *The Republic*, or that *The Laws* are subordinate to *The Republic*. Hobbes presented his political philosophy even in three books, but it is quite clear that these three books represent three subsequent efforts to expound identically the same political teaching; they deal with the same subject matter and they are addressed to the same audience. The case of Machiavelli's books is different. Let us start from the most obvious. *The Prince* is a short book, culminating in, or at any rate ending with, a passionate call to action: Machiavelli exhorts an Italian prince, Lorenzo de' Medici, to liberate Italy from the barbarians who have subjugated her. The *Discourses*²¹ are more than four times as large as *The Prince* and do not end in a call to action: the end of the *Discourses* is singularly dispassionate; the argument seems to peter out. At the beginning of *The Prince*, Machiavelli divides all states into two kinds, republics and principalities, and the *Discorsi* deal with republics. We understand from here why *The Prince* culminates in a call to action, whereas the *Discourses* do not. When Machiavelli wrote his two books, republics were not timely: in Florence, or in Italy, or in the modern world in general, monarchies were in the ascendancy; republics were rather a matter of the future or of the past. The future being unknown the past takes precedence, especially

¹⁹ The parallel between the lectures and *TOM* resumes at this point, with Strauss addressing Machiavelli's presentation of his teaching in two different works, *The Prince* and the *Discourses*, which Strauss addresses in chap. 1.

We have inserted here in square brackets the title of the corresponding chapter in *TOM* or a title based on Leo Strauss's own description. From this point on, and as opposed to the Introduction to *TOM*, the differences between the lectures and the book become increasingly significant, both in phrasing and content.

²⁰ End of page 6.

²¹ The title of the *Discourses* is typed inconsistently throughout the typescript as "Discourses," "Discourses" (without underlining), "Discorsi," and "DISCOURSES." We have simplified the formatting but keep the Italian title where it occurs. We do the same for *The Prince* (*Principe*).

since there was a glorious republican past. Machiavelli could find models of princely politics in his own time (e.g., Cesare Borgia and Ferdinand of Aragon); but *the* model of republican politics was supplied by ancient Rome. It is for this reason that Machiavelli's treatise on republics took on the form of a discussion on the first ten books of Livy or, which is the same thing since the second decade of Livy is lost, on the first two decades: i.e., on Rome prior to the Second Punic War—on Rome as an Italian republic, as a republic which united most of Italy and had not yet embarked on the conquest of foreign lands. To summarize, it makes sense to describe,²² to begin with, the relation of *The Prince* and the *Discourses* in terms of a difference of subject matter.²³

But only to begin with. We notice very soon that certainly the *Discourses* deal with both republics and principalities. Thus it might seem that Machiavelli presents in the *Discourses* the whole of his political teaching, whereas in *The Prince* he presents only a part, or perhaps discusses only a special case. If I am not mistaken, this view is today the one which is most generally accepted. It is open to an objection which I regard as decisive. In the epistle dedicatory to *The Prince* Machiavelli says²⁴ that the book contains everything he has learned and understood. He makes substantially the same remark about the *Discourses* in the epistle dedicatory to that work. Hence, we cannot describe the relation of the two books in terms of a clear-cut difference of subject matter. *The Prince* is as comprehensive as the *Discourses*: each work contains everything of importance Machiavelli knows. We have no right to assume that Machiavelli's knowledge is limited to political matters. In the epistle dedicatory to the *Discourses* Machiavelli says that the book contains everything he knows and everything he has learned of "the things of the world." "The things of the world" comprise more than the political things in the strict sense. It is wise to assume that Machiavelli excludes from his treatment only such important subjects as he explicitly excludes. There is only one subject which he explicitly excludes: "How dangerous a thing it is to make oneself the head of the new thing which concerns many people, and how difficult to manage it and to bring about its consummation and after that to maintain it, would be too long and too exalted a subject to discuss; I reserve it therefore for a more convenient place." All other important subjects, and especially religion, must be presumed to have been dealt with, if only cursorily

²² We have omitted the word "this."

²³ This paragraph was kept in modified form in *TOM*, 15–16. The comparison between *The Prince* and the *Discourses* takes up the whole of *TOM*, chap. 1, while the topic is addressed solely in the following pages of Lecture I.

²⁴ End of page 7.

or allusively, in each of the two books. This is perfectly compatible with the fact that the bulk of the two works is devoted to political subjects proper: we know from Socrates that the political things, or the human things, are the key to the understanding of all things.²⁵

If the relation of the two books cannot be understood in terms of the difference of subject matter, we have to consider whether it cannot be understood in terms of a difference of their addressees. Both works are prefaced with epistle dedicatories which inform us about their addressees, about the qualities of those men “to whom above all others the two books are addressed.” Epistle dedicatories were a matter of common practice in the past, but if not everyone, certainly a superior man was free to invest the common practice with an uncommon meaning. *The Prince* is addressed to a prince; the *Discourses* are addressed to two young men, one of whom is known to have been a staunch republican. We are therefore tempted to suggest that *The Prince* deals with everything Machiavelli knew, from the point of view of a prince, whereas the *Discourses* deal with everything Machiavelli knew, from a republican point of view. This suggestion reminds one of that interpretation of Machiavelli according to which he was a supreme technician of politics: without any predilections, without any convictions, he advises princes as to how they can acquire, preserve, and increase princely power, and he advises republicans as to how they can establish, maintain, and promote republican government. His dedicating *The Prince* to a prince and the *Discourses* to private citizens would seem to foreshadow the political scientist of the imminent future who will dedicate his book on liberal democracy to President Eisenhower and his book on totalitarianism to Malenkov.²⁶ But Machiavelli is not a political scientist of this kind. He does²⁷ not attempt to be neutral in regard to subjects whose understanding is incompatible with neutrality. As a matter of principle, he prefers republics to principalities. One argument suffices to establish this point beyond dispute. We find in the *Discourses* many statements

²⁵ At the end of a three-page-long paragraph in *TOM*, ending with “understanding all things” (17–19), a brief paragraph addresses the same subject. However, large sections of the oral delivery are absent from the book, namely, the discussions of liberal democracy and totalitarianism.

²⁶ Eisenhower (1890–1969) was president of the United States when these lectures were delivered, serving from 1953 to 1961. In World War II, as a five-star general he commanded the Allied Expeditionary Force in Europe. Malenkov (1902–1988) was briefly the successor to Stalin, after the latter’s death on March 5, 1953. After nine days as chairman of the Council of Ministers and head of the Communist Party, the Politburo forced him to resign as party leader, though he continued as premier. After infighting with Nikita Khrushchev, he was removed from all roles in government in 1955, and resumed a private life. Malenkov was no longer the leader of the Soviet Union when *TOM* was sent to press.

²⁷ End of page 8.

to the effect that republics are superior to principalities. We do not find in *The Prince* a single statement to the effect that principalities are superior to republics. There is a further reason why we have to abandon this suggestion that *The Prince* is addressed to princes, and the *Discourses* are addressed to republicans or republics. In the epistle dedicatory to the *Discourses* the addressees are described, not as republicans, but as potential princes: as men [who], while not being princes, deserve to be princes. We shall try to understand the relation of the two books on the assumption that *The Prince* is that presentation of Machiavelli's teaching which is addressed to an actual prince, whereas the *Discourses* are that presentation of the same teaching which is addressed to potential princes. Machiavelli gives us to understand that the natural addressees of his teaching are rulers, and that the most relevant division of his audience is that into actual and potential princes.

[MACHIAVELLI'S INTENTION: *THE PRINCE*]

The actual prince can be only one man: *The Prince* is addressed to one man. But there may be a number of potential princes: the *Discourses* are addressed to two men. An actual prince must be supposed to be very busy: *The Prince* is a short book, a manual whose content could be absorbed within a very short time. Potential princes have leisure: the *Discourses* are a very long book which might even be continued. Accordingly, in *The Prince* extensive discussion is limited to subjects of the greatest urgency for the prince, just as in the epistle dedicatory to that work Machiavelli stresses already specific subjects, whereas the *Discourses* contain extensive discussion of a much greater variety of subjects and the epistle dedicatory to that work does not specify any subjects. Since *The Prince* is addressed to an actual prince, it reasonably issues a call to action here and now: in Italy in 1513. But the *Discourses*, being addressed to potential princes only, do not issue in a call to action: one cannot know whether and in what circumstances the potential princes may become actual princes; hence the *Discourses* rather delineate a long-range program.

The actual prince to whom *The Prince* is addressed is Machiavelli's master. Machiavelli approaches him in the attitude and posture of a suppliant—of a humble and indigent being, crawling in some dark corner towards which the illustrious prince is not likely to turn his gaze unless he is induced to do so by some audible or extraordinary action of that poor little man. Machiavelli draws his master's attention to himself by humbly submitting to him an unusual gift, namely, his *Prince*. The gift is unsolicited: the initiative for

writing *The Prince* is entirely Machiavelli's. The writing of *The Prince* is however not an act of perfect freedom, since Machiavelli is under the pressure of his poor condition. The *Discourses* are²⁸ addressed to Machiavelli's friends. These friends forced him to write the work: Machiavelli did not write the work on his own initiative. Whereas through *The Prince* Machiavelli solicits a favor, he expresses through the *Discourses* his gratitude for favors received. Machiavelli knows that his friends have done him favors, whereas he does not know whether his master will grant him some favor. In the same way he knows in advance that the *Discourses* will be interesting to, and taken seriously by, their addressees, whereas he does not know whether *The Prince* will be interesting to, and taken seriously by, its addressee: Machiavelli leaves us guessing as to whether the addressee of *The Prince* is likely to be interested in his work, or for that matter in any serious reflection, or whether Lorenzo would not have been more pleased by receiving a horse. After all, whereas the addressees of the *Discourses* deserve to be princes while not being princes, it is an open question whether the actual prince to whom *The Prince* is addressed deserves to be a prince.

Are these differences of the addressees of any significance regarding Machiavelli's presentation of his teaching in the two books? Machiavelli himself tells us that considerable reserve and reticence is called for when one speaks to princes. Especially, we may add, when one speaks to a prince who is one's dreaded master. On the other hand it goes without saying that speaking to friends means speaking frankly. Machiavelli is then likely to be reserved in *The Prince* and straightforward in the *Discourses*. Reservedness goes well together with brevity. Machiavelli's treatment of "everything he knows" in *The Prince* is laconic. Since to be reserved means to follow convention or tradition, *The Prince* is definitely more conventional or traditional than the *Discourses*. *The Prince* continues a conventional or traditional genre: the mirror of princes. *The Prince* opens like a rather dull academic treatise. Perhaps its title, certainly its chapter headings, are written in Latin, the language of the church and the schools. This is seemingly contradicted by the end of *The Prince*: the appeal to Italian patriotism ending in a quotation from Petrarca. But Italian patriotism and Italian poetry had a solid traditional support: *The Prince* moves between Scholastic treatise and patriotic poetry—between two traditional genres. The first word of *The Prince* is *sogliono*.²⁹ But the first word of the *Discourses* is *Io*: the individual cause Machiavelli sets forth. In the very

²⁸ End of page 9.

²⁹ In the typescript the translation follows in brackets: ["it is customary"].

epistle dedicatory to the *Discourses*, Machiavelli disparages the custom of dedicating books to princes—a custom with which he has complied in *The Prince*. The body of the *Discourses* opens with a challenge to tradition: with a declaration asserting the novelty of Machiavelli's enterprise. Its parallel in *The Prince* is well buried somewhere near the middle of the book. Needless to say that both the title and the chapter headings of the *Discourses* are written in the vulgar tongue. Its form, a mixture of a treatise and of a commentary on a Latin historian, was certainly not conventional, although it became conventional thanks to Machiavelli's success.

We arrive then at the provisional conclusion that *The Prince* is more reserved than the *Discourses*. It would be easy to confirm this³⁰ conclusion by enumeration of cases in which Machiavelli fails to mention in *The Prince* most important facts, most relevant to the very argument of *The Prince*, which he does mention in the *Discourses*. This fact supplies the strongest support for the view, held by men of the competence of Spinoza and of Rousseau, that *The Prince* is a satire on monarchy. It also supports the view, more commonly held in our age, according to which we find the full and adequate presentation of Machiavelli's teaching in the *Discourses*, so much so that we must read *The Prince* from the outset in the light of the *Discourses*, and never by itself. I do not believe that these ways of interpretation are practicable.

In describing the character of the addressees of the two books, we cannot leave it at saying that *The Prince* is addressed to Machiavelli's masters, whereas the *Discourses* are addressed to his friends, and therefore that Machiavelli speaks reservedly in *The Prince* and frankly in the *Discourses*. The addressee of *The Prince* is a prince. What kind of a being is a prince, according to Machiavelli? If he is a real prince, he must be able to take on the nature of a beast: of a fox and a lion; he must not be altogether human and humane; he cannot afford to be a perfect gentleman. An actual prince who is not completely stupid will be aware of these requirements. Now Machiavelli wants to be taken seriously or listened to by a man of this kind. He wants to advise him as regards his most important concern. He would ruin completely every prospect of establishing his character as a competent adviser by speaking like a saint, or like a professor of moral philosophy. Let us not forget the fact that one type of prince whom Machiavelli presumes to advise are those princes who came to power by downright crime, like Agathocles. It would appear in such cases that adviser has to adopt the attitude characteristic of a

³⁰ End of page 10.

lawyer in charge of the Capone syndicate. Now let us consider for one moment the possibility that according to Machiavelli there is an element of truth in the princely understanding of things; or, the moral judgment of gentlemen is not altogether correct. In that case, his speech³¹ addressed to a prince, to an actual prince, to a man who is already corrupted by princely practice can be more frank than his speech addressed to young gentlemen who still have to be broken in to the secrets of government. We cannot be certain, then, that Machiavelli is altogether frank in the *Discourses*. It is possible that while in one respect, the *Discourses* are more straightforward than *The Prince*, in another respect *The Prince* may be more straightforward than the *Discourses*.

At any rate, Machiavelli presents in each of his two books substantially the same teaching from two different points of view. We are therefore forced to raise the question: Which is Machiavelli's point of view? That of *The Prince*? Or that of the *Discourses*? Or is it different from that of both books?

That it is necessary to raise this question will appear from the following consideration. One of the most striking differences between³² the two books is this: In the *Discourses* Machiavelli speaks very frequently of the common good; in *The Prince* he never mentions the common good. In the *Discourses* Machiavelli speaks occasionally of the conscience. In *The Prince* he never mentions the conscience. In the *Discourses* he almost constantly distinguishes between princes and tyrants. In *The Prince* he never uses the term "tyrants": individuals whom he calls tyrants in the *Discourses* are called princes in *The Prince*. We shall say that he tacitly abandons in *The Prince* the distinction between princes and tyrants, because he tacitly disregards the common good, to say nothing of this conscience. It becomes therefore necessary to raise this question: Does Machiavelli regard the distinction between princes and tyrants as ultimately valid or not? Does he hold the view that consideration of the common good belongs to the final or scientific consideration or merely to a provisional or popular consideration? Or does he think that these questions do not permit of a simple answer, but require a distinction?³³

³¹ We deleted "is." Other readings are possible, but see *TOM*, 28.

³² End of page 11.

³³ End of page 12. We may say that despite a significant number of differences, the end of the first lecture corresponds roughly to the end of *TOM*, 26, with the concluding references to "conscience."

LECTURE II

[THE TWOFOLD CHARACTER OF MACHIAVELLI'S TEACHING:
THE *DISCOURSES*]⁵⁸

I must remind you of a few points I made last time. Machiavelli presents his whole political teaching in each of his two great books, the *Principe* and the *Discorsi*. The relation of the two books cannot be described therefore in terms of the difference between the subject matter. Their difference corresponds rather to the difference of their audiences. The *Principe* contains that version of Machiavelli's whole teaching which is addressed to an actual prince. The *Discorsi* contains that version of Machiavelli's whole teaching which is addressed to potential princes. This difference of perspective leads to the consequence that the teaching of the *Principe* contradicts the teaching of the *Discorsi* in the decisive respect: the *Principe* disregards the common good and the *Discorsi* seems to present the common good as the guiding consideration. We must therefore raise the following question: Which of the two books presents Machiavelli's own point of view, the *Principe* or the *Discorsi*, or neither?³⁴

The question is identical for all practical purposes with the question concerning Machiavelli's technique of writing. To find out how we have to read Machiavelli we shall first consider an example of how he himself read his chief author, Livy.³⁵ In a chapter of the *Discorsi* Machiavelli tries to prove that money is not the sinews of war as it is thought to be by common opinion. Towards the end of the chapter Machiavelli says: "On this point Livy is a truer witness than anybody else. I refer to the passage in which he discusses whether if Alexander the Great had come to Italy he would have beaten the Romans. In it he shows that three things are necessary for war: plenty of good soldiers, wise generals, and good luck. And then, after having inquired whether the Romans or Alexander were superior regarding these three things, he draws his conclusion without mentioning money." Livy does not mention money in a context in which he would have mentioned it if he had regarded it as important.³⁶

³⁴ End of page 2 of the typescript. Page 1 is a title page.

³⁵ Livy (59 BC – AD 17) was a Roman rhetor and historian, author of *Ab urbe condita*, the most famous account of the foundation of Rome. The first decade encompasses the period of the kings, and the early republic until its decay. Machiavelli's *Discourses* are presented as a commentary on the work, but as Strauss emphasizes in this lecture, Machiavelli not only comments on the totality of Livy's work, but often departs from it entirely. The plan of the *Discourses* had long puzzled readers.

³⁶ Machiavelli, *Discourses* I.10. The quotation appears also in *TOM* but Strauss does not provide a

[This fact by itself] establishes³⁷ not only a vague presumption as to Livy's having had Machiavelli's view on this matter, but makes Livy the truest witness, the most important authority for this view. Livy's silence is more impressive than his explicit statement would have been. Livy reveals an important truth by his silence.

Let us generalize from this: if a wise man is silent about a subject which is believed to be important as regards the theme which he discusses, he gives to understand that that subject is not important. (The silence of a good writer or a wise man is always meaningful. It cannot be explained by forgetfulness.) The view of which Livy disapproves is the common view, the popular view. One can express one's disagreement with a popularly held view by simply failing to take notice of it. This is in fact the most effective way of showing one's disapproval. Now let³⁸ us apply this to Machiavelli's own craft.³⁹ He fails to mention the conscience, the common good, as a distinction between kings and tyrants in the *Principe*. This does not mean that he forgot to mention these things, because their importance is a matter of course, but that he regarded them as unimportant in the context of the *Principe*. That is to say, they are not simply unimportant. There are, however, certain subjects which Machiavelli fails to mention in both the *Principe* and the *Discorsi*. He does not mention the distinction between this world and the next, and while he speaks very frequently of heaven he never speaks of hell. Above all, as far as I can remember, he never mentions the soul. He suggests by this silence that these subjects are irrelevant for politics. More than that, since both books contain everything Machiavelli had known, he suggests by his silence about these things that they are altogether unimportant.

Now this very contention about subjects of this nature is obviously of immense importance. Machiavelli's silence about subjects which are generally regarded as important shows that he regards the problem of the truth about these subjects, or the problem of the status of these subjects, as very important. One of the chapters of the *Discorsi* opens with a reference to the great⁴⁰ issue of the eternity of the world, to the issue of whether the visible

citation. See *TOM*, 303 with note 33.

³⁷ Words are omitted in the typescript, which we have provided from *TOM*, 30, in brackets.

³⁸ End of page 3.

³⁹ "craft." is followed by "(?)" in the typescript. The typescript contains a question mark within parentheses. These are common when the typist/transcriber has doubts about the name, and will be noted whenever they occur.

⁴⁰ The parallel passage in *TOM*, 31, replaces "great" with "grave."

universe—the sun, the moon, earth, birds, and sun—exists from eternity to eternity or whether the world has a beginning in time, to an issue which occupied the center of medieval discussions. Machiavelli refers to an argument in favor of the beginning in time, that is to say, the generally held view, and then adds that this argument has no force. He leaves it at that—at four lines. The reader is compelled to wonder: What about the other arguments in favor of the orthodox view? [W]hat⁴¹ about the orthodox view itself? Is it sound? Machiavelli does not answer these questions. He does not even raise these questions—in so many words. But he raises them by his silence. He draws our attention to them by his silence. The reader must keep these questions in mind: namely, the possibility that Machiavelli may have⁴² accepted the eternity of the visible universe—the Aristotelian view. By being open to this possibility, the reader may be able to understand passages which otherwise he would not understand or appreciate.⁴³ Machiavelli's silence is then ambiguous insofar as it does not point to definite answers, but merely to questions. It is unambiguous insofar as it makes us see that certain things were questionable or problematic to him, which were not questionable to the prevailing opinion in his time.

Why did he proceed in this strange manner? The most important classical writer from Machiavelli's point of view, apart from Livy, was Xenophon. To say nothing of other things, Xenophon is his major authority for the important *propositio[n]*: that men rise from a low to a great position by fraud, rather than by force. According to Machiavelli, Xenophon shows the *tr[u]th* of this proposition by his account of Cyrus. A recent commentator notes that Xenophon never says that Cyrus⁴⁴ uses fraud of this kind. Here again Machiavelli uses a great writer as an authority for a view which that writer never expresses. Here again he treats the silence of a great writer as equivalent to a speech. But he obviously treats Xenophon's silence very differently from the way in which he treats Livy's silence. Xenophon's silence does not mean that Xenophon regarded the fraud perpetrated by Cyrus as unimportant. On the contrary, it means that Xenophon regarded Cyrus's fraud as very important, but at the same time as something not to be spoken of for reasons of

⁴¹ We have corrected "That" to "What."

⁴² End of page 3b.

⁴³ At this point, *TOM* diverges significantly from the lectures and includes several new paragraphs on the rules of interpretation of a philosopher. See esp. *TOM*, 32–37. By contrast, the subsequent four paragraphs seem to be absent from the book.

⁴⁴ The typescript reads: "Xenophon (Cyrus?)"

propriety. Could⁴⁵ Machiavelli's reserved handling of certain matters be due to his sense of propriety? Needless to say, Machiavelli does not lack a sense of propriety. One merely has to observe how tactfully he treats the subject of assassination of princes in the *Principe*, or any other subject which might be unpleasant to think of.⁴⁶ He behaves like a perfect courtier. One only has to compare the treatment of rulers like Nabis⁴⁷ of Sparta or King David in the *Principe* with that in the *Discorsi* to become receptive to the suggestion that the *Principe* has a quality reminding of the novels of Jane Austen. I'm then prepared to make full allowance⁴⁸ for Machiavelli's delicacy. Still we cannot obscure the fact, which is anything but obscure, that Machiavelli is one of the most shocking writers of all time. His sense of propriety is, as it were, subordinated to a different concern. We must have recourse to that different concern in order to understand Machiavelli's reticence.⁴⁹ In brief, Machiavelli was prompted less by considerations of propriety than by caution.

Machiavelli called the period of the good Roman emperors, from Nerva⁵⁰ to Marcus Aurelius, "the golden age where everyone could hold and defend every opinion he pleased." Usually people do not call an age of the past the golden age when they regard their own age as a golden age. However this may be, Machiavelli draws our attention by this statement to two facts: first, to the importance which he attaches to the freedom of discussion, and, secondly, to the possibility that his own age might lack such freedom—or, more generally, to the fact that freedom of discussion is not always available.⁵¹ That is the consequence of restrictions on freedom of speech regarding speech.⁵² As long as the Roman emperors ruled, Machiavelli says—incidentally contradicting the statement which I have just quoted—as long as the Roman emperors ruled, writers could not speak freely about Caesar. If we desire to know what the free writers—meaning the writers whose minds were free—thought about Caesar, we must look at what they say about Catiline.⁵³ One must also look at

⁴⁵ We have replaced "should" with "could."

⁴⁶ The typescript contains what appears to be a question mark within parentheses.

⁴⁷ A question mark within parentheses occurs in the text.

⁴⁸ End of page 4, breaking "allowance" at "allow-."

⁴⁹ The typescript appears to read "Machiavelli's writings," but "writings" is crossed out by hand, and "RETICENCE" is written immediately above. Just after occurs a question mark within parentheses.

⁵⁰ A question mark within parentheses occurs in the text.

⁵¹ A question mark within parentheses occurs in the text.

⁵² A question mark within parentheses occurs in the text.

⁵³ A question mark within parentheses occurs in the text.

how they praise Brutus: being prevented from blaming Caesar they celebrated Caesar's enemy. Restriction of freedom of speech forced⁵⁴ the writers who have a free mind to present their views indirectly or by making appropriate substitutions. Obviously, they cannot attack the protected opinion openly. To a certain extent they are even forced to make the protected opinions their own. But to adopt opinions of which one is certain that they are false means to make oneself more stupid than one is. It means, in Machiavelli's words, to play the fool: "And you play the fool sufficiently if you praise, speak, see, and do things against your opinion in order to please the ruler."⁵⁵

Now⁵⁶ are these rules of conduct applicable to Machiavelli's circumstances? Was it possible in the early sixteenth century in Italy to hold and defend every opinion one pleased? The story of Pompanazzi's⁵⁷ book on the mortality of the soul, 1516, would by itself be sufficient to justify an emp[h]atic "no." If Machiavelli deviated in any significant point from the orthodox teaching, he did not have the freedom which he prized so highly. His rules of conduct would then force him, or at least permit him, to substitute, for example, for a criticism of certain aspects of the biblical religion a praise of the pagan religion: his praise of the pagan religion in a Christian world would correspond to a praise of Brutus in a world ruled by Caesar. But we do not have to rely on outside information—meaning on information which is not available between the covers of Machiavelli's two books—in order to establish the fact that Machiavelli regarded his whole enterprise as dangerous and therefore in need of precautionary measures or protective coloring.⁵⁸ In the very beginning of the *Discorsi* he says that to found⁵⁹ new modes and orders—that is to say, a new order of society—is as dangerous as it is to seek unknown seas and lands, and that he is going to enter a path not yet trodden by anyone—a path leading to new modes and orders. His enterprise, he says a little later⁶⁰ on, being difficult, he will nevertheless carry it out in such a

⁵⁴ A question mark within parentheses occurs in the text.

⁵⁵ End of page 5. Strauss seems to be paraphrasing rather than quoting Machiavelli. See *TOM*, 303 with note 37, with *Discourses* III.2. Cf. *The Prince*, chap. 13.

⁵⁶ A question mark within parentheses occurs in the text. The passage from here until "In the very beginning," several lines below, has no corresponding text in *TOM*.

⁵⁷ The typescript reads: "Pompanachi's (?)" Pietro Pompanazzi (1462–1525) was an Aristotelian philosopher at the Universities of Padua and Bologna.

⁵⁸ At this point, the text of *TOM* becomes parallel to the lecture again, although the phrasing is different. See *TOM*, 36.

⁵⁹ We have replaced "find" with "found."

⁶⁰ In the typescript, "LATER" is written by hand after "he says a little."

manner that there shall remain to the reader but a short road to travel toward the destination. Machiavelli does not go to the end. A part of the road, if only a short part, must be discovered by the reader who understands what is omitted—what Machiavelli does not say.

In this context we may again remind ourselves of the fact to which I have referred last time, that Machiavelli excludes one, and only one, subject from his discussion as too exalted for discussion—not only for discussion in this or that book but for discussion in any book, and that subject is the difficult character of the attempt to make oneself the head of a new thing which concerns the many: that is to say, the difficulty of proposing new modes and orders. What Machiavelli⁶¹ says explicitly about the dangerous character of his enterprise reveals only a very small part of that danger.

[MACHIABELLI'S INTENTION: *THE PRINCE*]

I turn now to the question which I promised to treat last time: the intention of the *Principe*. To establish what the intention of the *Principe* is we naturally start from the epistle dedicatory.⁶² We learn from it that Machiavelli proposes to discuss and to give rules for princely government. He proposes to discuss and to give rules for princely government. He proposes to discuss⁶³ the various kinds of principalities and the manner in which they are acquired and preserved. It appears likewise from the epistle dedicatory⁶⁴ that the discussion of these subjects is based on Machiavelli's knowledge of the actions of great men, both modern and ancient—that is to say, on historical knowledge, and on his knowledge of the nature of princes—that is to say, on philosophical knowledge. Machiavelli obviously does not intend to teach history. The historical facts are merely materials. On the [other] hand,⁶⁵ the philosophic subject, the nature of princes, is a theme—perhaps the theme—of the *Principe*.

At any rate, the *Principe* presents itself to begin with as a treatise, as a work conveying a general teaching. That general teaching is both theoretical—the nature of princes—and practical—how to rule as a prince. In accordance with

⁶¹ End of page 6.

⁶² In the typescript, "EPISTLE DEDICATORY" is written by hand after "start from the." See parallel text in *TOM*, 54.

⁶³ In the typescript, "AND TO GIVE RULES FOR PRINCELY GOVERNMENT. HE PROPOSES TO DISCUSS" is written by hand after the initial "proposes to discuss."

⁶⁴ In the typescript, "EPISTLE DEDICATORY" is written by hand after "likewise from the."

⁶⁵ The word "other" is absent from the typescript.

this, almost all chapter headings of the work specify genera or species.⁶⁶ Only in three chapter headings out of twenty-six do we find proper names. This description of the character of the *Principe* is confirmed by the references to the *Principe* in the *Discorsi* and also by the famous letter of Machiavelli to Vettori.⁶⁷ Yet the *Principe* ends with a call to action and culminates in a call to action which is addressed to a particular prince living in a particular country at a particular time. The end of the *Principe* is paradoxical in light of the beginning and of the body of the work. The connection between the general and the particular is supplied by the epistle dedicatory⁶⁸ of the *Principe*, if it is read in conjunction with the epistle dedicatory to the *Discorsi*.⁶⁹ The *Principe* is dedicated to a particular prince who happens to be an actual prince in Italy in 1513. Therefore, the instruction⁷⁰ given to him quite naturally culminated in advice⁷¹ regarding the most noble princely action which is possibly in Italy in 1513, here and now. The *Principe* is therefore quite naturally not simply a treatise, but both a scholarly treatise and a political pamphlet. The general doctrine and the particular counsel cannot be identical, but the general doctrine must at least be compatible with the particular policy recommended there. There may even be a closer unity: the general doctrine may necessitate the particular policy, given these and these circumstances, and the particular policy may require this general doctrine and be incompatible with any other. It is certain that in studying the general doctrine of the *Principe* we must never lose sight of the particular. We must read the general or universal in the light of the particular. We must translate every general counsel addressed to princes in general into particular counsels addressed to Lorenzo de' Medici.

Quite a few things do not come to light except through such translation. Furthermore, the application of the general rule to the particular case may force us in the end to reconsider or to reinterpret the general rule. We may discover a very important general teaching only by working our way upward from the particular counsel. Let us consider from this point of view the case in which Machiavelli draws our attention most forcefully to particulars by using proper names in the headings of chapters. There is no need to explain

⁶⁶ A question mark within parentheses occurs in the text.

⁶⁷ In the typescript, "VETTORI" is written by hand after "letter of Machiavelli to." On the correspondence between Machiavelli and Vettori, see the account in Maurizio Viroli, *Machiavelli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁶⁸ The words "EPISTLE DEDICATORY" are written by hand.

⁶⁹ The words "EPISTLE DEDICATORY TO" are written by hand, and "to" is a correction of "of."

⁷⁰ End of page 7.

⁷¹ The word "ADVICE" is written by hand in a space.

the references to Italy in the headings of chapters. There is no need to explain the references to Italy in the headings of chapter 26 and chapter 24. The difficulty is limited to chapter 4, whose heading is “Why the Kingdom of Darius, Which Alexander the Great Seized, Did Not Rebel against Alexander’s Successor after Alexander’s Death.” That chapter continues the argument of the previous one, which dealt with conquest. In that chapter Machiavelli discussed the attempt of the French to conquer Italy. It appeared that but for a certain gross mistake of the French king the conquest of Italy would have been easy. Machiavelli discusses the conquest of Darius’s kingdom, that is to say, of Persia, by Alexander the Great because the case of Persia, or for that matter of modern Turkey, is the opposite of that of [France],⁷² or for that matter of Italy.⁷³

To understand the problem connected with the conquest of Italy one must understand the problem connected with the conquest of Persia: namely, the type of state represented by Persia. The upshot of the discussion in chapter 4 is this: while it is difficult to conquer Persia, it is easy to keep Persia after having conquered her;⁷⁴ on the contrary, while it is easy to conquer Italy, it is difficult to keep her. Persia is a manifest subject; Italy is a real subject. It is easy to conquer Italy because of the fact that she consists of many states. There will always be one ruler who will be glad to let in a foreign conqueror. It is difficult to keep Italy because the old loyalties are strong and will⁷⁵ always reassert themselves. If one wants to destroy the power of these loyalties, one must exterminate the families of the Italian princes and destroy the republican cities and scatter⁷⁶ their inhabitants. Originally Machiavelli seemed to discuss the question of how a prince can make conquests in foreign lands. Eventually the question concerned the conquest of Italy, regardless of whether or not the conqueror is a foreign prince or an Italian prince. At this point the connection between chapter 4 and the whole section of which it forms the center with the last chapter, the call to action, becomes apparent. The liberation of Italy from the barbarians requires the unification of Italy. That unification requires the conquest of Italy by an Italian prince, say, Lorenzo de’ Medici. That unification in its turn requires the policy of blood and iron in the fullest meaning of the term: the extermination of all other Italian dynasties and the destruction

⁷² The word “France” is missing in the typescript. See *TOM*, 66.

⁷³ End of page 8.

⁷⁴ The word “HER” is written by hand, replacing “it.”

⁷⁵ “WILL” is written by hand.

⁷⁶ “SCATTERS” is written by hand. See *TOM*, 67.

of the republic of Venice—if not of the city of Venice. That is to say: only if we read the rhetorical, poetic call to action at the end of the *Principe* in the light of these three chapters do we understand the realistic meaning of that call. The last chapter is silent about the resistance to the liberation of Italy which must be expected from the traditional Italian faith. The liberation of Italy, as Machiavelli sees it, means the conquest of Italy and the conquest of Italy means complete revolution, for the greatest obstacle to the liberation of Italy—as Machiavelli conceives of it—is the temporal power of the church.⁷⁷

In the last chapter of the *Principe*, Machiavelli seems to expect that Lorenzo will be assisted greatly in his patriotic work by the same pope, Leo X, who happened to be a kinsman of Lorenzo. The relation of Lorenzo to Leo X reminds us of the relation of Cesare Borgia to Alexander VI, and Cesare Borgia is presented by Machiavelli as a model to Lorenzo. For a realistic appraisal of Machiavelli’s final counsel, it is therefore very necessary that we draw the correct lesson from Cesare Borgia’s successes and failures and that these lessons be fully understood. The crucial lesson is this: Cesare’s successes ultimately benefited only the church and thus increased the difficulties for Italy. Cesare was in fact merely a tool for Pope Alexander VI and hence of the papacy. Machiavelli’s final counsel requires accordingly the secularization of the papal states. It requires even more: according to Machiavelli the court of Rome has contributed decisively to the moral corruption of Italy and to the ensuing loss⁷⁸ of political vitality. Furthermore, he was very much in fear of the Swiss, whose military superiority he traced partly to their sturdy religious sense.⁷⁹ He says if the papal court were removed to Switzerland one would soon observe the deterioration of Swiss morality and hence of Swiss power. He seems to have visualized not only the secularization of the papal states, but also the removal of the Holy See to Switzerland. By effecting the latter change, the unifier of Italy would, as it were, kill two birds with one stone. We must draw a further conclusion. The temporal power of the pope was based, politically speaking, on the pope’s spiritual power.⁸⁰

The practical proposals of Machiavelli, as he adumbrates them, could hardly have been made by a man who sincerely believed in the spiritual authority of the church. That is to say, the practical, particular, or concrete

⁷⁷ End of page 9.

⁷⁸ A question mark within parentheses occurs in the text. “LOSS” is written by hand.

⁷⁹ A question mark within parentheses occurs in the text.

⁸⁰ See *TOM*, 62–63.

measures recommended in the *Principe* imply and presuppose a radical change regarding the general doctrine. This general doctrine is conveyed in the *Principe* chiefly through its particular or concrete consequences and not by itself. In this connection we may note the fact that whereas in the *Discorsi*, the first person plural of the personal pronoun “we” frequently means “we Christians,” it never has this meaning in the *Principe*.⁸¹

The prince to whom the *Principe* is dedicated happens to be a new prince. If he will follow Machiavelli’s advice and if he will be favored by fortune, he will become the ruler of Italy and therefore a new prince in a much more exalted sense. Accordingly, the subject of the *Principe* is not so much “principalities” in general as “new principalities.”⁸² But what at first glance seems to be no more than the result of Machiavelli’s adaptation to the mood of his prospective pupil, proves to be at the same time a necessity of a general or theoretic character, for all principalities, even if they are now hereditary or elective, were⁸³ originally new principalities. Even all republics, at least the greatest republics, were founded by outstanding individuals like Lycurgus or Romulus, i.e., by princes. To raise the question of new princes means for Machiavelli to raise the question of the origins or the foundations of all states or of all social orders. In Machiavelli’s perspective the question of the founders of society is identical with the question of the nature of society. At any rate the problem of the foundation of society is the highest theme of the *Principe*. It is the specific theme of the *Principe*, as distinguished from the *Discorsi*—which does not mean that it is not also dealt with in the *Discorsi*. The fact that the theme “new prince” is most appropriately the highest theme in a book addressed to a prince who happens to be a new prince, conceals, and is meant to conceal, the eminent theoretical significance of that theme.

[T]he term “new prince” is ambiguous. It may designate merely the founder of a dynasty in a state already existing, i.e., a new prince in an old state. But it may also designate a new prince in a new state, or as Machiavelli sometimes says, a wholly new prince in a wholly new state.⁸⁴ The new prince in a new state in his turn⁸⁵ may either be an imitator, i.e., adopt modes and orders invented by another new prince, i.e., follow the beaten track, or he

⁸¹ See *TOM*, 69. End of page 10.

⁸² Quotation marks are written by hand, then crossed out, then rewritten.

⁸³ “WERE” written by hand.

⁸⁴ End of page 11.

⁸⁵ The typescript reads “term” here. We have changed it to “turn.”

may be an originator of new modes and orders, that is to say, a founder of a new type of society, possibly the originator of a new religion. Machiavelli is chiefly interested in the highest type of new princes, the originators of wholly new types of society. The central chapter of the section devoted to the various kinds of principalities, chapter 6, deals with these greatest of men: Romulus, Theseus, Cyrus, and Moses. Sometimes Machiavelli calls these men "*prophets*."⁸⁶ This term would seem to fit Moses rather than the three others. Moses is indeed the most important figure: Christianity is created on the foundation laid by Moses.

At the beginning of the sixth chapter Machiavelli makes it perfectly clear that he does not expect Lorenzo to become an originator: Lorenzo is advised to become an imitator. This is not surprising: *an originator would not need Machiavelli's instruction*.⁸⁷ To put it harshly, Lorenzo is not expected to be more than a first-class second-rater. Machiavelli seems to picture himself in the role of *Antonio da Venafrò*,⁸⁸ the minister of Pandolfo Petrucci, prince of Sienna, vis à vis *another Pandolfo Petrucci*.⁸⁹ Machiavelli's book would be out of place with a *mere*⁹⁰ *man*⁹¹ of the stature of Cesare Borgia. Still, Lorenzo is expected to imitate as much as he can Cyrus, Theseus, Romulus, or Moses. This is the explicit reason why Machiavelli is compelled to speak of those great men. The notion of imitation of prophets of old was familiar to Machiavelli's countrymen. Savonarola⁹² appeared as a new Amos or as a new Moses, i.e., as a man who did the same things which the biblical prophets had done in new circumstances. But obviously there is a world of difference between the imitation of Moses as understood by Savonarola and the imitation of *Moses as understood*⁹³ by Machiavelli.⁹⁴

Since the addressee of the *Principe* is an Italian, special importance would seem to attach to the imitation of Romulus. To imitate Romulus means to found Rome again. That Rome exists. Or should the imitation of Romulus

⁸⁶ The word "prophets" is underlined by hand.

⁸⁷ The words "an originator...instruction" are underlined by hand.

⁸⁸ The words "Antonio da Venafrò" are underlined by hand.

⁸⁹ The words "another Pandolfo Petrucci" are underlined by hand.

⁹⁰ A question mark within parentheses occurs in the text.

⁹¹ The words "mere man" are underlined by hand.

⁹² "Savonarola" is probably underlined by hand.

⁹³ The words "Moses...understood" are underlined by hand.

⁹⁴ End of page 12.

mean to found again a pagan Rome, a Rome destined to become again the most glorious republic and the seat of the most glorious empire? Machiavelli does not answer this question in so many words. When he mentions the venerable models which Lorenzo ought to imitate, for the second time, in the last chapter of the *Principe*, he fails to mention Romulus. He mentions only Theseus, Lycurgus, and Moses. The emphasis is now obviously on Moses. In order to encourage Lorenzo to liberate Italy Machiavelli reminds him of the miracles which God had performed before their eyes. "The sea has been opened. A cloud has guided you on your way. The rock has given forth water. Manna has fallen." The miracles of Lorenzo's epoch, which indeed are attested by Machiavelli only, repeat or imitate the miracles of the Mosaic epoch. More precisely, they repeat the miracles which happened not in Egypt, the house of bondage, but on the way from Egypt to the promise land—to a land to be conquered. What may be imminent, Machiavelli suggests, is a conquest of another promised land, namely, of a land which he, Machiavelli, has promised to Lorenzo. By what methods Lorenzo will have to conquer the land promised to him, Machiavelli had told him before *sub rosa*. But alas, the imitation of Moses would be a bad thing for Lorenzo, for Moses did not conquer the promised land: he died at its borders. In this dark way, Machiavelli, this new sibyl, prophesies that Lorenzo will not conquer and liberate Italy. He did not regard the practical proposal of the *Principe* as practical. He had measured the forces of the Italy of his time too well to have any delusions. Unfortunately, I am not the first to say this. I have read more than once that the last chapter of the *Principe*⁹⁵ is a rhetorical flourish. This statement is manifestly insufficient, but it is acceptable as a very crude expression of the fact that that chapter must not be taken literally. We cannot establish its true meaning before we have considered certain aspects of Machiavelli's own position, character, or claim as it appears from the *Principe*.

We have noted that the meaning of "new prince"⁹⁶ is ambiguous. We must note now a corresponding ambiguity regarding Machiavelli himself. He appears first as an adviser of princes, of princes of all kinds—as a man who supplies princes with information which they cannot possess. It is true, he describes this kind of information in a way which is surprising not only to those who are compelled by unfortunate disposition or training to think of statistics. He says that he is going to inform princes about the nature of princes; for just as one must be a prince in order to know the nature of people,

⁹⁵ End of page 13.

⁹⁶ Quotation marks added by hand in the typescript.

one must be a man of the people in order to know the nature of princes: one sees mountains best from the valley⁹⁷ just as one sees the valleys best from the mountains. But it is hard to see how Machiavelli can advise princes if he does not know the nature of peoples as well. And, in fact, he gives plenty of evidence of his possessing such knowledge. He knows, then, everything which the prince knows, and he knows much more than the prince. He is not just an adviser of princes, but a teacher of princes. He indicates his dual capacity as adviser to Lorenzo as teacher of princes in general by the way in which he uses the second person of the personal pronoun: he uses "thou" when advising the individual prince and he uses "you" when addressing a group of pupils. This group is not specified; it may well comprise men who are not actually or potentially Italian princes. Machiavelli mentioned only one teacher of princes: Chiron the centaur who taught Achilles and many other ancient princes. Machiavelli's own model is a mythical figure: he returns to the beginnings not only by⁹⁸ making the foundation of society his chief theme, but likewise in the understanding of his own doing. His model is half man, half beast. Just as his pupils, the princes, and especially the new⁹⁹ prince, are urged by him to imitate the beast, he himself imitates the half beast. The imitation of the beast—Machiavelli's own expression—takes the place of the imitation of God.

Machiavelli, being a teacher of princes, appears to us as a new Chiron, as an imitator of Chiron. Can we leave it at that? One might say that he who imitates a creature of the imagination is not an imitator strictly speaking. Still, such a man might properly be said to follow the ancient writers who invented the figure of Chiron. Yet, as Machiavelli knows, these writers taught their lesson which they conveyed by means of the figure of Chiron in a covert manner. Machiavelli however teaches the same lesson openly. Certainly, to that extent he does not follow the beaten path. Moreover, by publishing¹⁰⁰ a lesson which was meant to be a secret, one alters not merely an accidental or an extrinsic character of a teaching, its social status so to speak. One necessarily alters also its substance. In fact, Machiavelli's teaching regarding princes is not ancient at all: it is wholly new. The *Principe*, we may say, conveys a wholly new teaching regarding wholly new princes in wholly new states. This wholly new teaching does not become fully visible immediately: Machiavelli's open

⁹⁷ A question mark within parentheses occurs in the text.

⁹⁸ End of page 14.

⁹⁹ "NEW" is written by hand.

¹⁰⁰ "PUBLISHING" is written by hand.

break with the whole tradition appears only near the center of the book, in that famous fifteenth chapter, in which Machiavelli explicitly opposes to the traditional orientation by how men ought to live, that is to say by man's perfection or virtue, his new orientation by how men do live. By this statement he does not mean that he plans to replace the normative political science of Plato or Aristotle by a merely descriptive or analytical political science, but rather that he intends to replace the wrong type of normative political science by the right type of normative political science. The expression¹⁰¹ "the prince ought to" occurs in the *Principe* as frequently as in any traditional mirror of princes. However this may be, the reader is confronted with Machiavelli's open break with the tradition only at the center of the book. The reader, as it were, ascends slowly from a conventional-traditional atmosphere up¹⁰² to a conventional-traditional world: the very subject "the new prince" fades into the background after he has started on the descent. The *Principe* conveys, then, a radically new teaching in the guise of a somewhat unconventional combination of the conventional academic treatise on princes with a conventional appeal to Italian patriotism.

Previously, I have indicated why we cannot take literally the call to action in the last chapter of the *Principe*. What then is the serious meaning of that grand finale? I suggest the answer. The new teaching of the *Principe* is a teaching of universal import, having no more nor less connection with a particular situation of Italy in Machiavelli's time than with any other particular situation. Being radically novel, this teaching is bound to be most distasteful to men brought up on the contrary teaching. Therefore, Machiavelli conceals the novel general teaching by a practical proposal which, as explicitly stated, is defensible, and even praiseworthy, also on traditional grounds. It is only when one reflects on the practical proposal in light of the general teaching, when one subjects that¹⁰³ practical proposal to merciless political analysis along the lines suggested in the body of the *Principe*, that one realizes that one must have broken completely with traditional morality and traditional belief in order even to consider that proposal seriously. In other words, the novel general teaching—the novel teaching of the foundations of society—is shocking because it contradicts the ordinary notions of morality. And Machiavelli does not hesitate to shock the reader by a number of specific pieces of advice.

¹⁰¹ End of page 15.

¹⁰² "UP" is written by hand.

¹⁰³ "THAT" is written by hand, replacing "the."

The last¹⁰⁴ chapter serves the purpose of justifying the im[m]oral counsels given in the body of the book by an appeal to patriotism. The last chapter suggests a tolerable interpretation of the immoral teaching of the *Principe*. The judicious reader will therefore not stop at raising the question as to whether the concrete proposal made at the end of the book is practicable.¹⁰⁵ He must raise the further and more decisive question: Would Machiavelli condemn immoral policies recommended in the book if they did not serve a patriotic purpose? Or are these immoral policies merely and barely compatible with a patriotic view? Is it not possible to understand the patriotic conclusion of the *Principe* as a respectable coloring of the designs of [the]¹⁰⁶ self-seeking Italian prince? There can be no doubt regarding the answer: the immoral policies recommended in the *Principe* are not justified in the body of the book on grounds of the common good but exclusively in terms of the self-interest of the prince, of the selfish concern of the prince with his own well-being, power, and glory. The final appeal to patriotism supplies Machiavelli with a kind of alibi for having recommended immoral policies. In the light of this fact Machiavelli's character may well¹⁰⁷ appear to be still blacker than it has frequently been thought to be. At the same time, however, we are not forced to leave it at saying that he ended the *Principe* with a rhetorical flourish, i.e., that he was not capable of thinking straight and writing excellently.

I am far from denying that Machiavelli was an Italian patriot. Of course, he loathed the barbarians who devastated his fair country and humiliated his fellow countrymen. I only say that his patriotism *was not the core of his thought*.¹⁰⁸ *The core of his thought is his thinking about human affairs*.¹⁰⁹ By raising the fundamental questions he transcended the limits and limitations of Italy and thus became enabled to use the patriotic feelings of his readers and his own patriotic feelings for an¹¹⁰ ulterior purpose, for a higher purpose. Besides, there exists a direct connection between his love of Italy and the revolution of thought¹¹¹ which he meant to affect. Italy is for him the soil out of which grow[s] the glory that was ancient Rome: the Rome of Camillus, to

¹⁰⁴ End of page 16.

¹⁰⁵ Typescript reads "practical," which is then corrected by hand to "practicable."

¹⁰⁶ Text is crossed out here, but the spacing suggests "the" rather than "a."

¹⁰⁷ Typescript reads "may might well," with "might" crossed out.

¹⁰⁸ The words "was...thought" are underlined by hand.

¹⁰⁹ The words "core...affairs" are underlined by hand.

¹¹⁰ "AN" is written by hand.

¹¹¹ End of page 17.

mention only the greatest name. Machiavelli was satisfied that the men who are born in a country keep through all time *quasi*¹¹² the same nature. If the greatest political achievement which the world had ever seen was the product of the Italian soil, there is ground for hope that the political rejuvenation of the world will make itself felt first in Italy: the sons of Italy are¹¹³ the most gifted individuals. But since that political rejuvenation is bound up, according to him, with a radical change of thought, the hope from Italy and for Italy is not primarily political in the narrow sense of the term. The liberation of Italy which Machiavelli has primarily in mind was not the political liberation from the barbarians but the intellectual liberation of an Italian elite from what he regarded as an obsolete, oppressive tradition.

To repeat, in the last analysis, it is the sole purpose of the *Principe* to convey the wholly new teaching regarding the foundations of society. As we have seen, this result implies that Machiavelli is even less innocent than he is thought to be even by those who condemn him most severely. But it also implies that he is not in every respect as black as he easily appears at first sight. Somewhere in the *Discorsi* he remarks that he cannot give princes any precepts regarding the subject which he is discussing, other than that which they know by themselves. He goes on to give precepts to subjects of princes, precepts as to how the subjects in question can protect themselves against princes. The precept in question is altogether immoral. We may draw a certain generalization from this. Princes who are able and willing to act along the lines suggested in the *Principe*, men like Cesare Borgia, are not in need of Machiavelli's immoral precepts,¹¹⁴ but other people are. The true addressees of the *Principe* are not princes, but those who try to understand the nature of society and the nature of political things.¹¹⁵ Paradoxical as it may seem, Machiavelli's practical political work is the *Discorsi* rather than the *Principe*. The *Principe* is so shocking because Machiavelli desires to educate his true addressees to a new approach to political things. These addressees have to undergo a basic training. They have to be toughened up. Just as one learns bayoneting by using weapons which are much heavier than those used in actual combat, one learns statecraft by seriously playing with certain extreme courses which are hardly if ever appropriate in actual politics. Not only some

¹¹² The word "quasi" is underlined by hand.

¹¹³ "ARE" is written by hand.

¹¹⁴ "PROCESS" is written by hand, replacing "precepts," but we kept the text of the typescript and ignored the handwritten correction.

¹¹⁵ End of page 18.

of the most comforting but precisely some of the most outrageous statements of the *Principe* are deliberately unrealistic. They are amusing *and meant to amuse*. *They admit, nay, they require a tolerable*¹¹⁶ *interpretation*.¹¹⁷

To make another step forward in our analysis of the intention of the *Principe*, and to prepare its final step, we must first return to, and reconsider, our first impression according to which Machiavelli is an adviser of¹¹⁸ princes. As you may recall, he describes his relation to the prince whom he desires to advise by saying that *one must be a man of the people in order to know the nature of princes*,¹¹⁹ just as one must be a prince in order to know the nature of the people. This statement is so obviously absurd *that it cannot but be ironic*.¹²⁰ For since prince and people are correlatives, it is impossible to know the nature of one without knowing the nature of the other. In other words, it is impossible to advise princes as to how they should rule, i.e., rule the people, without knowing the nature of the people. Or to put it still differently: the *Principe*, to say nothing of the *Discorsi*, *abounds with statements about the nature of the people—without these statements the book would be entirely meaningless*.¹²¹ What Machiavelli means by his ironical statement is then this: if a man who knows the nature of the people is a prince, Machiavelli himself is a prince. This contention will not be a surprising one to anyone who has had the benefit of some readings in Xenophon and¹²² Plato: he who knows the art of ruling is more truly a ruler than individuals who are kings through inheritance or through [force or fraud or election by people who know nothing of the art of ruling].¹²³

¹¹⁶ A question mark within parentheses occurs in the text.

¹¹⁷ The words “and...interpretation” are underlined by hand.

¹¹⁸ “OF” is written by hand.

¹¹⁹ The words “one...princes” are underlined by hand.

¹²⁰ The words “that...ironic” are underlined by hand.

¹²¹ The words “abounds...meaningless” are underlined by hand.

¹²² “OR IN” is written by hand, replacing “and.”

¹²³ The text ends abruptly at “through.” We have reconstructed the rest of the sentence using the text from *TOM*, 83, which marks the end of Lecture II. The remaining paragraphs of chapter 2 of *TOM* appear in the third lecture.

LECTURE III¹²⁴[MACHIAVELLI'S INTENTION: THE *DISCOURSES*]

We are led eventually to this final difficulty. Machiavelli appeared to us at the end as the new prince in the highest sense of the term, as the bringer of new modes and orders, a new code, a new decalogue. Therefore, as a new Moses, a new prophet. But Moses was an armed prophet, whereas Machiavelli is an unarmed prophet. An unarmed prophet, he says, necessarily fails. The problem is fundamentally the same as that of the victory of Christianity, of a code of faith and manners which was established without the use of arms. Machiavelli's remarks on unarmed prophets apply to both Christianity and his own undertaking. The *Prince* confronts us with this problem, but it does not supply us with the solution. For the solution we have to turn to the *Discourses*. At the beginning of the *Discourses* Machiavelli presents himself as another Columbus, as a discoverer of a hitherto unknown moral continent, of new modes and orders. He seems to proclaim the daring character of his enterprise without any reserve, but he almost immediately afterward retracts everything which he has suggested in the first few lines of the book. As soon as he proceeds to specify the content of his discovery, the new modes and order which he had promised to his readers prove to be the modes and orders of ancient Rome, that is to say, very old modes and orders. We see immediately that the *Discourses* are not less paradoxical than *The Prince*. There seems to be a contradiction between the wholly new teaching of *The Prince* and the return to antiquity in the *Discourses*. The difficulty permits of a simple solution, which is indeed too simple to be adequate, but which is nevertheless an important steppingstone on the way toward the final solution. Machiavelli's admiration for ancient practice is perfectly compatible with his rejection of ancient philosophy or ancient thought. His occasionally appearing disdain for the ancient writers is only the reverse side of his admiration for the ancient captains and statesmen. It is precisely by articulating the ancient practice that he breaks with ancient thought. He interprets the practice of ancient Rome in the light of his wholly new teaching regarding wholly new princes in wholly new states. Still, when we read the *Discourses* by themselves, as we must, we are struck first by Machiavelli's antiquarianism, or as the fashionable expression is, by his humanism. We are expected to lose sight of

¹²⁴ The transcript of this third lecture is titled "MACHIAVELLI'S TEACHING." As above, to emphasize the parallels with *TOM* we have inserted the titles of the book chapters in square brackets.

modernity and to lose ourselves in antiquity, in the admiration for¹²⁵ antiquity, in the imitation of antiquity. This imitation of antiquity was in itself, as Machiavelli does not fail to point out, far from being a bold innovation. The civil law of Machiavelli's times was the civil law of the Romans; the medicine of Machiavelli's times was the medicine of the ancients; to say nothing of the fact that people were digging out ancient sculptures and trying to imitate them. What Machiavelli proposes is merely to extend the imitation of antiquity into a field hitherto untouched by the spirit of antiquity. The imitation shall be extended to the imitation of ancient statecraft and ancient strategy and tactics. If Machiavelli is now quite conventional and traditional, he is [so]¹²⁶ merely by being more consistently¹²⁷ traditional than his contemporaries. And we shall be provided with an ancient guide to the ancient record—Livy, the Roman historian who has revealed the glory of Rome in the most comprehensive and the most appealing manner. Not only shall we complete the return to antiquity, that last stop of the return will be guided by an ancient authority—Livy. The return to antiquity represents itself first as a return to antiquity as such. Antiquity as such is venerable; the good is the old. If this is so, the best must be the oldest. In accordance with this, Machiavelli bestows the highest praise at the beginning of the *Discourses* on the oldest kingdom—Egypt. The kings of ancient Egypt, he says, are much more admirable than Alexander the Great and the rest; but, unfortunately, we know so little about the oldest antiquity [and] therefore we are forced to leave it at the admiration of ancient Rome. And in the understanding of ancient Rome we must follow Livy. We shall go so far in our discussion of things Roman that we shall cling as much as possible to the sequence of events as recorded by Livy. We shall defer to the text of Livy; we shall cherish it; we shall listen to it until it has revealed its full message. In an attitude of docility—nay, of pious reverence—in pious prudence, we shall turn our eyes away from Livy's own reference[s] to the untrustworthy character of the tradition which he incorporated into his history. We shall not even allude to these disconcerting references. The deeds and¹²⁸ institutions which Livy records are not always of such a nature as to command instant approval and admiration. In the light of the philosophic¹²⁹ tradition, Sparta would deserve the

¹²⁵ End of page 1.

¹²⁶ The typescript reads: "he is it."

¹²⁷ We have deleted "and."

¹²⁸ The typescript reads: "deeds am institutions."

¹²⁹ End of page 2.

crown, not Rome. Sparta owed her polity to the wisdom of Lycurgus, whereas Rome owed her polity to chance or good luck. Sparta preserved her liberty for eleven hundred years; Rome only for eight hundred. Sparta was free from party strife, whereas Rome was constantly shaken by the conflict between the patricians and the plebeians.¹³⁰ Sparta was organized for just defense, whereas Rome was organized for unjust expansion. We are therefore forced to prove the superiority of the Romans or to defend the Roman polity. Since the only political philosophy known to Machiavelli, the philosophy of Plato, Aristotle, and their medieval successors, must prefer Sparta to Rome, in order to be consistent we are forced to attack the philosopher in the name of our authority. In brief, Machiavelli's use of Livy and his attitudes toward Livy, reminds us of the [use of the] Bible by theologians and of theological apologetics. In fact, we find in the *Discourses* a whole chapter in which Machiavelli, in defending the Roman polity, uses the method of the scholastic *quaestio disputata*. Machiavelli is not then simply a commentator on Livy. He has to perform a task which Livy has not performed for him. He has to prove that ancient Rome can be imitated by modern man. He must combat the prejudice, according to which such imitation is impossible. He must do more: the ancient way of life is not imitated by modern man, not so much because people believe that the model cannot be imitated, as because they believe that the model ought not to be imitated. For the pagan concern with worldly glory, the very soul of ancient Rome, is rejected in the name of the biblical demand for humility and charity. Machiavelli must go beyond Livy by subjecting biblical morality to a radical critique. Machiavelli's intention is then not identical with Livy's intention. Accordingly, the plan of the *Discourses* is not identical with the plan of Livy's history. When Machiavelli says from time to time that he will discuss a certain subject *in its place*, he means that he will discuss it in what is its proper place within Machiavelli's scheme or plan, but not when he comes to a passage in Livy in which the subject will be mentioned. Once we have taken as seriously as we must Machiavelli's return to antiquity and his acceptance of Livy's authority, we are surprised by the relative rarity of reference to Livy and quotations from Livy. We gradually begin to wonder whether Livy is after all the greatest authority for Machiavelli, whether certain other¹³¹ ancient writers are not much more important to him than Livy. In this connection we may note that Livy is never mentioned in *The Prince*. In the *Discourses* we observe in the first place

¹³⁰ The typescript reads: "and the plebeians."

¹³¹ End of page 3.

a certain implicit criticism of Livy. Machiavelli substitutes tacitly his own explanation of events for Livy’s explanation. He sometimes goes so far as to make changes in Livy’s stories themselves. Very slowly, very circumspectly, very rarely, but all the more decisively does he attack Livy explicitly. Modern critics note from time to time that Machiavelli completely distorts the meaning of Livy, or falsifies the spirit of Livy’s history. The criticism is justified provided it is understood that Machiavelli knew what he was doing, that he knew that a great gulf was separating him from Livy. Machiavelli uses Livy for his own purposes. Livy is wax in his hands. This is partly explained by the fact that Machiavelli criticizes¹³² very slowly, very circumspectly, very rarely, even the ancient Romans themselves. The purpose of his study of Roman statecraft is not only to learn from the Roman achievements but also to learn from their mistakes. Machiavelli is then perfectly prepared to seek and to discover new modes and orders—modes and orders for which there is no precedent whatever. He does not stop at questioning the authority of ancient Rome, which initially was the highest authority for him. He questions eventually the very principle of authority—only reason, not authority, can command his assent. To reject the principle of authority amounts to rejecting the equation of the good with the old, and hence of the best with the oldest. The first book of the *Discourses*, which opens with the praise of the most ancient of all kingdoms—Egypt—ends with the statement that some of the greatest Romans celebrated their triumphs in their earliest youths. And the second book begins with the criticism of the irrational inclination of men to praise the olden times. Reason and youth and modernity oppose themselves to authority, old age, and antiquity. In studying the *Discourses*, we are becoming the witnesses, the moved witnesses, of the emergence of that greatest of all youth movements—modern philosophy. Of a phenomenon which we know through direct observation only in its decay and dotage. Far be it from me to deny the obvious fact that Machiavelli regarded ancient Rome as the greatest of all commonwealths which had ever been. But it is a very long way from this to asserting that Machiavelli regarded ancient Rome as the peak¹³³ of all possible achievements. To mention here only the decisive point, the ancient Roman polity was a work of chance, if of chance prudently used. Machiavelli, however, wants to teach his readers how such a polity—and even a better polity—can be consciously constructed. Which means: what hitherto has been a lucky accident can now become, in the era ushered in by

¹³² The typescript reads (with British spelling): “that M criticises.”

¹³³ End of page 4.

Machiavelli, the goal of conscious striving and planning. It is for this reason that the modes and orders proposed by Machiavelli, and even those modes and orders which he bodily takes over from the Romans, are fundamentally new modes and orders. Even if their content remains the same, their status or their mode is radically altered. The *Discourses* present, then, really, as Machiavelli promises at the beginning, new modes and orders. Just as *The Prince*, the *Discourses* present a fundamentally and radically new teaching, in the guise of the conventional and traditional. Whereas *The Prince* conveys a wholly new teaching regarding wholly new princes—that is to say, regarding the foundations of society—the *Discourses* convey a wholly new teaching regarding the structure of society—of course, of the best society. We may derive from this observation a general rule for the understanding of Machiavelli's use of Livy. Machiavelli follows Livy's history, he follows the sequence of events as recorded by Livy, to the extent¹³⁴ to which he does not wish to disclose his own plan. He selects particular events in Livy, not only with a view to their being interesting from the point of view of his political doctrine, but also with a view to their fitting into the hidden plan of his work. To take only the most difficult case, the last fifteen chapters of the *Discourses* seem to have no other bond whatever than that they follow the sequence of events recorded by Livy. Some of the lessons drawn in these fifteen chapters from Livy's stories have been stated in earlier parts of the work with sufficient clarity, and all the lessons would fit perfectly into different groupings of chapters in earlier parts of the *Discourses*. The last fifteen chapters become meaningful and clear only when one observes that they are devoted to the only subject of which Machiavelli ever says that it is too exalted for discussion. This remark incidentally occurs exactly at the beginning of the fifteen chapters in question. That subject too exalted for discussion is the dangerous character of radical innovations—meaning, Machiavelli's own enterprise. This subject is indeed not¹³⁵ dealt with in a discussion strictly speaking, but it is a secret bond which gives unity and meaning to Machiavelli's seemingly arbitrary selection of stories from Livy, and his seemingly unintelligent clinging to the sequence of the stories in Livy. Machiavelli did not follow Livy, but he picked from Livy such passages as, rightly understood, would throw light on the most exalted subject, and he scattered the elements of that topic by following not the intrinsic order of these elements, but the accidental order of their equivalents in Livy. Machiavelli proceeds in this perplexing

¹³⁴ The typescript reads: "to the extend."

¹³⁵ End of page 5.

manner because he does not wish to reveal the full extent of his break with the ordinary notions of morality and with the biblical tradition. There are hardly more than two pages in the whole *Discourses* in which Machiavelli unambiguously reveals his rejection of the biblical tradition. These passages can easily be overlooked, and if they are not overlooked, their bearing can easily be minimized because they are, as it were, snowed under by an infinite number of passages which are either neutral in regard to the issue of belief and unbelief, or else tolerable from the point of view of believers of either great charity or else little perspicacity. Only by considering and reconsidering the power of biblical belief, and especially of the Christian faith in Machiavelli's time, can one understand Machiavelli's whole procedure in the *Discourses*. The admiration for ancient Rome was the only publicly defensible basis on which Machiavelli could attack the religious tradition. As he himself says, other religions have destroyed the monuments of earlier religions by fire and sword in order to secure themselves against their predecessors. But Christianity, while desirous of doing the same thing, could not succeed because it was forced to accept the language of the Roman Empire and therefore to preserve a good deal of pagan literature. Christianity was therefore forced to preserve its own enemy. It was compelled to permit and even to encourage the study of pagan literature. The study of that literature, and the admiration fostered by it for the way of life which that literature reflected, became thus the entering wedge for Machiavelli's criticism. His praise of ancient Rome is no doubt an integral element of the new teaching about man and society. But it is also, and perhaps primarily, an engine of subversion and of what one might call immanent criticism. To use Machiavelli's own expression, not being able to blame Caesar, he praises Brutus. One of¹³⁶ the two passages in which Machiavelli unambiguously reveals his rejection of the biblical tradition is [in] part 2, chapter 5, the sixty-fifth chapter of the work. The chapter presents itself as a kind of appendix to the preceding chapters, or as a sort of occasional afterthought. As you see, Machiavelli does not stress the importance of the chapter. It opens with a refutation of a certain argument against the eternity of the world. The subject of the chapter is "The Changes of Religion and of Languages, Together with the Occurrence of Deluges and Pestilences, Destroy the Record of Things." Great changes in human affairs, Machiavelli says, originate either in man or in heaven. As for religions, they originate in man, which amounts to saying, they have no heavenly or divine origin. One of the religions mentioned in the immediate

¹³⁶ End of page 6.

sequence for illustrating the assertion mentioned is the Christian religion. After having spoken of the change effected by the Christian religion or by the Christian sect, Machiavelli says “that these sects changed two or three times in five thousand or six thousand years.” The life span of any religion is between 1666 and three thousand years. This means that, according to Machiavelli, Christianity may come to an end about a century after his death, or it may last for another millennium and a half. Machiavelli thought and wrote in this historical perspective—that he himself might be preparing a radical change of modes and orders, a change which would be consummated in the not-too-distant a future, but that it is equally possible that his enterprise would fail completely. There is independent evidence in support of the assertion that Machiavelli reckoned with the possibility that the ruin or destruction of the Christian church was imminent. As for the way in which Christianity might be superseded by a new social order, he saw these alternatives: One is eruption of barbarian hordes from the East, from what is now Russia. It was this region which he regarded as the pool from which the human race rejuvenates itself periodically. The other alternative is a radical change within the civilized world. It is of course only the latter kind of change for which Machiavelli was anxious and which he did everything in his power to prepare. He conceived of that preparation in terms of a war, a spiritual war. He desired to bring about a change of opinion, which in due time would precipitate a change in the¹³⁷ seat of political power. He did not expect more than the conversion of a very few, but he counted on influencing many. These many were those who in the case of conflict between their fatherlands and their souls—the salvation of their souls—would prefer their fatherlands. He expected these many to be sympathetic to his enterprise. They would not be able to understand the full meaning of his undertaking, but they could be counted upon to guarantee that his books would get some hearing. They would make his books publicly defensible. However, they would not be reliable allies in his war to the finish. His long-range success depended upon the full conversion of a very few. They would provide the vital center which would gradually inspire, in favorable circumstances, the formation of a new ruling class, of a new kind of princes, comparable to the patriciate of ancient Rome. Machiavelli’s warfare has the character of propaganda. No earlier philosopher had thought of guaranteeing the posthumous success of his teaching by developing a specific strategy and tactics. The earlier philosophers of all persuasions were resigned to the fact that their teaching—the true

¹³⁷ End of page 7.

teaching—would never supersede what they regarded as the false teaching. They offered their teaching to their contemporaries, and above all to posterity, without even dreaming of controlling the future fate of human thought. And if they were political philosophers, and had arrived at definite conclusions regarding the right political order, they would have been vicious, and hence not philosophers, if they had not been willing to help their fellow men in ordering their common affairs in the best possible way. But they did not for one moment believe that the true political teaching is per se the political teaching of the future. Machiavelli is the first philosopher who attempted to control the future by embarking on a campaign—a campaign of propaganda. This propaganda is at the opposite pole of what is now called propaganda, of high-pressure salesmanship, and of the hold-up of captive audiences. Machiavelli desires to convince, not merely to persuade or to bully. But nothing forces us to understand the term “propaganda” in accordance with the low practices of our age. It is his propaganda which is a weapon he needs in order not to fail. It is his propaganda which transforms him from an unarmed prophet who as such is doomed to failure, into an armed prophet who as such has every prospect of succeeding.¹³⁸ The victory of Christianity, as Machiavelli was forced to see it, was due to propaganda. The only element of Christianity which Machiavelli took over was the idea of propaganda. This idea, I repeat, is the *only* link between his thought and Christianity. He thus attempts to destroy Christianity, which means the power of Christianity over the minds of a potential republican elite, by the same means which, according to him, Christianity was originally established. We are therefore compelled to say that Machiavelli desired to imitate, not Moses—the armed prophet in the literal sense—but Jesus. It goes without saying that this imitation of Jesus is limited to the single point I have mentioned—peaceful propaganda as distinguished from armed subversion.

[MACHIABELLI'S TEACHING:
MORALITY AS A DERIVATIVE PHENOMENON]

It seems then that Machiavelli was the first in a long series of modern thinkers who hoped to bring about the establishment of new modes and orders by means of enlightenment. The Enlightenment begins with Machiavelli. We shall have to investigate now, whether its name is justified, or whether it did not bring about instead of enlightenment an obfuscation from whose consequences we still suffer.

¹³⁸ End of page 8.

By Machiavellianism we understand in common parlance the habit of unscrupulous and especially cunning proceedings in politics, and derivatively also in private affairs. Machiavellianism thus understood antedates Machiavelli by millennia. It is as old as political life. Why are then the habits in question called Machiavellian? Machiavelli is a classic exponent, the first of superior intelligence and not himself guided by low motives, who tried to justify unscrupulous proceedings in politics by a coherent argument. When we speak of Machiavellianism, we mean more specifically that justification, that coherent argument. How does it run? We read in Machiavelli's *Florentine History* the following story. Cosimo de' Medici used to say that one cannot preserve states with *pater nosters* in one hand. This gave occasion to Cosimo's enemies to slander him, as a man who loved himself more than his fatherland, and loved more this world than the next. In brief, Cosimo was said to be, first, somewhat immoral, and to be somewhat irreligious. The justification of unscrupulous proceedings in politics consists indeed, first, of a critique of religion in general and of Christianity in particular, and then of a critique of morality. The critique of Christianity in Machiavelli presents itself at first glance, and to the superficial¹³⁹ reader throughout, as a critique of certain abuses of Christianity by the higher clergy. But it is not very difficult to discern that Machiavelli's critique goes to the roots. Christianity, he suggests, weakens political virtue. It replaces active heroism and concern with martial glory and worldly glory in general, by humility and patience. Being founded by an unarmed prophet, its success led to the consequence that heaven itself has become disarmed. Single-minded devotion to the fatherland was enervated by the very notion of a heavenly fatherland which as such is meant to be far superior in dignity to the earthly fatherland. Accordingly, unqualified subordination of the priesthood to the civil government gave way to the supremacy of the power spiritual. The moral principle of Christianity—do not resist evil—is a principle which, if acted upon, would secure forever the undisturbed rule of the wicked and of tyrants. The Christian principle is incompatible with the principle of civic justice, which is: do resist evil.¹⁴⁰

Machiavelli cannot leave it at questioning Christian morality and its political implications. That morality is important for the Christian faith, the Christian dogma. If Machiavelli had believed in the importance of the Christian dogma, he could not reasonably question Christian morality. He denies especially the immortality of the soul. For him, immortality is nothing but

¹³⁹ End of page 9.

¹⁴⁰ This paragraph break is indicated with a handwritten “/” in the typescript.

immortal glory or immortal infamy in this life. Miracles are strange accidents reported by uneducated men or women which at best are no more than chance events. As for creation, Machiavelli leaves it at questioning one argument in favor of creation and refuting that argument. He states explicitly that all religion, including Christianity, originates in man and not in heaven and that they all have a limited lifespan and therefore will be succeeded by other religions.

Machiavelli prefers the martial religion of the pagan Romans to Christianity. This does not mean that he believed in the existence of Jupiter or Mars. There are no gods which are concerned with the justice of men. Machiavelli denies divine providence in every form. The gods of polytheism, or the one god of monotheism, are identical with or replaced by *fortuna*—unmitigated chance. Religion of the Roman type—civic religion—is eminently useful, but only if kept in its place, in a subordinate place. Religion of the Roman type is necessary for inspiring the populace in civic virtue or for making them amenable to control by an enlightened patriciate, by men who prudently manage the salutary popular superstition. The shocking brashness of Machiavelli's criticism of religion must not deceive us [as] regards its originality. Machiavelli's view of religion is not original. It is not more than a restatement of the view of certain pagan philosophers—of Aristotle, for example. But Machiavelli did not have to go back to Aristotle himself. The Aristotelian teaching was transmitted to Machiavelli's age in Padua and other places, through that school which we are in the habit of¹⁴¹ calling Averroism. The original part of Machiavelli's argument is his criticism of morality. In this part of his argument Machiavelli attacks not only the biblical tradition but the philosophic tradition as well. It is this part of his argument which constitutes the way not yet trodden by anyone, of which he speaks, and which culminates in the discovery of the new moral continent, or the new modes and orders, or the wholly new teaching regarding the wholly new prince in a wholly new state. It almost goes without saying that Machiavelli's new teaching regarding morality contains numerous traditional elements, and that an infinite number of scholars are spending their lives in ferreting out these elements. But we must not be blind to the fact that Machiavelli puts those elements together or organizes them in a novel manner, in a manner which can in no way be traced to a tradition. Someone might say that Machiavelli merely brings things to the fore which previously had been kept in the background—in other words, that Machiavelli merely published a hitherto unpublished teaching.

¹⁴¹ End of page 10.

Somewhere he speaks explicitly of the need for fraud in a new prince, whereas his ancient source had merely alluded to that need. But this would mean nothing less than that Machiavelli radically deviated from his teachers by separating the substantive teaching, or wisdom or understanding, from moderation or social responsibility. By this very fact, the substantive teaching itself would necessarily undergo a radical change. Even if it were true that Machiavelli deviated from his predecessors only by his audacity, we would be forced to realize that this audacity, in order to make sense, would require a complete change of outlook of the understanding of nature and of chance, which means a radical change in the substantive teaching. It is not difficult to discern the substantive principle by virtue of which Machiavelli breaks away from the whole tradition of political philosophy. The philosophic tradition had attempted to establish the character of the good society, or of the right order of society, by reference to virtue, or human excellence, or the perfection of man, or by how men ought to live. It therefore culminated necessarily in the description of a social order which, while being emphatically possible, is not likely to become actual. The actualization of the right order was thought to depend upon fortunate coincidence—for example, the¹⁴² coincidence of philosophy and political power—or on chance. The best social order exists as such in speech rather than in deed, in Aristotle as well as in Plato. It is a utopia, or, as Machiavelli says, an imagined republic. Machiavelli attacked this whole approach. He was not the first to be dissatisfied with it. We may assume that most practitioners of the political art always were opposed to it, or at least not interested in it, from the very beginning. Furthermore, the pressure of practice, and above all the depreciation of the temporal power in favor of the power spiritual, had led within the philosophic tradition itself to what one may call a trivialization of the teachings of Plato and Aristotle. But Machiavelli was neither a mere practitioner of the political art, nor was he in any way interested in a depreciation of the temporal power. His attack on classical political philosophy is the first philosophic attack on it. We can state his argument as follows: There is something fundamentally wrong with an approach which culminates in¹⁴³ utopias. It cannot be mere accident that the best regime, which is said to be according to nature, is admittedly very improbable. What is in accordance with nature should be more than an extremely rare exception. Let us then cease to take our bearing by how men ought to live. Let us begin to take our bearing by how men do live. Let us

¹⁴² End of page 11.

¹⁴³ The typescript reads: "which culminates un utopias."

cease to take our bearing by the highest objectives which societies might pursue; let us begin to take our bearing by the objectives which are actually pursued by all societies of which we have any knowledge. Which means Machiavelli consciously lowers the standards of social action. This lowering of standards leads and is meant to lead to a higher probability of actualization of that social scheme which is constructed in accordance with a lower standard. The dependence on chance is considerably reduced. In the words of Machiavelli, chance is a woman who can be forced by the right kind of man. Or to use the language of our own day, Machiavelli opposes, with amazing clarity and force, a realistic approach to the utopian approach of the classics. By this very fact, he became the originator of modern political philosophy as such. Let us not be deceived by the fact that modern political philosophy developed a utopianism or idealism of its own. These modern utopias are based on a fundamental realism in Machiavelli's sense. Think only of the most popular form of modern utopianism, according to¹⁴⁴ which the best society will come into being through the proper solution of the economic problem. The emphasis on the economic problem as distinguished from the moral problem stems from that particular realism which was originated by Machiavelli. Or to state the connection between "idealism" and "realism" in specifically modern thought in a more general way, lowering the standards means to increase man's power, and this can easily be thought to mean, to increase man's stature, or man's dignity. The concern with man's dignity thus understood can render invisible the presupposed lower[ing] of the standards. Thus, modern thought may appear to be much more idealist than premodern political thought. To justify his radical departure from the tradition, Machiavelli must do more than to reject the traditional approach as impractical. He has to show its intrinsic absurdity. The traditional approach was based on the assumption that morality as we all understand it is something substantial—that it is a force in the soul of man, however ineffective it may frequently be, especially in the affairs of states and kingdoms. Machiavelli has to embark on a destruction of morality. This destruction takes on in the first place the character of an immanent criticism of morality. Virtue can be practiced only within society. Men have to be habituated to virtue by laws, customs, examples, and exhortations. They must be educated to virtue by human beings. This was of course always admitted. But Machiavelli argues, to quote that famous Machiavellian Karl Marx, the educators themselves must be educated. The original educators, the founders of society, cannot yet have been

¹⁴⁴ End of page 12.

educated to virtue. Morality is possible only within a context which cannot be created by morality, for morality cannot create itself. The context within which morality is possible is created by immorality. Morality rests on immorality, just as all legitimacy ultimately rests on revolutionary foundations. Why is this? Virtue can be practiced only within society; virtue presupposes society. But the requirements of virtue may conflict with the requirements of society, of the preservation of society. What shall be done in such cases? If we sacrifice society to virtue, we destroy the very condition of virtue; we contradict ourselves. The only tenable verdict is that in case of conflict between virtue and the preservation of society, the preservation of society must have the right of way. The common¹⁴⁵ good, the good of society, cannot be defined therefore in terms of virtue, but virtue must be defined in terms of the common good. And this is the principle on which all societies always have acted and always will act. What then do these societies understand by the common good? Freedom from foreign domination, rule of law, prosperity, glory or empire. The very Spartans who were so highly admired by Plato and Aristotle admittedly did not pursue any other objectives. Virtue in the tenable sense of the word is the sum of habits which are required for or conducive to this end—the common good thus understood. It is this end and this end alone which makes our actions virtuous. Everything done for the sake of this end is good. This end justifies every means. Virtue is nothing but civil virtue, political virtue, patriotism, or devotion to collective selfishness. The traditional objection to this view sometimes was that civil society thus understood cannot be distinguished from a gang of robbers. Machiavelli is not deterred by this argument. He himself knows that a certain pirate behaved exactly like the most excellent Roman. Gangs of robbers are indeed defects of society, but not because they lack justice—there is justice among robbers—but because they are so weak and lack a principle of perpetuity. Virtue is derivative from the common good. But within the community we find the difference, nay, the conflict, between the good of the few and the good of the many. The good of the many is preferable to the good of the few on grounds of justice, for the many do not want more than not to be oppressed, whereas the few desire to oppress the many. What is the good of the many? What do the many want? Very little. Life, personal liberty, honor of their women. This good can be preserved by tyrants as well as by republican or constitutional rulers. In some situations, it can be preserved better by a tyrant than by republican rulers. Hence political liberty and rule of law are not absolutely sacred. They may go

¹⁴⁵ End of page 13.

overboard. After having reached this point, we look at the situation from the point of view of the tyrant. If the tyrant is shrewd, he will be concerned with the good of the many. He cannot afford having the many for his enemy. This does not mean that the tyrant must be concerned with the good of the many for its own sake. It is perfectly sufficient that he be concerned with the preservation of his own power, or that he be guided by shrewd calculation alone.¹⁴⁶ Moral intentions of any kind are now wholly irrelevant. A virtuous republican ruler and an absolutely unscrupulous selfish tyrant are hedged in and directed by the same objective necessity. If they want to succeed, they are forced to take care of the good of the many. They are forced to observe the only demand of justice, which is paramount because it is self-enforcing. Our corruption has now advanced to the point where we are forced to admit a selfish tyrant cannot be blamed on moral grounds, provided he is shrew and energetic. We are now requested to consider whether a shrewd and energetic tyrant is really forced to take care of the good of the many. The answer is: not in all circumstances. He may arm a part of his subjects or he may bring in a strong bodyguard from foreign places. If he treats his armed subjects with consideration, he can do with the people at large as he and his gangsters see fit. What is absolutely necessary is only that he be shrew and tough. He must combine the nature of the fox with that of the lion. He does not need humanity.

We can summarize Machiavelli's argument up to this point as follows: either you question the principles on which societies act in extreme situations, in critical situations—then you arrive at utopianism; or you accept these principles—then you will ultimately arrive at the denial of morality proper.

The argument as hitherto sketched suffices for clarifying a well-known ambiguity in Machiavelli's speech—his ambiguous use of the term "virtue." Virtue has in Machiavelli three different meanings. First, moral virtue—the common meaning. Moral virtue is for Machiavelli a delusion, but a necessary and salutary delusion. Moral virtue arises from the oblivion of the end of virtue, that end being the common good. This end is necessarily and rightly forgotten by the ordinary men because they need hard and fast rules of conduct, like the second half of the decalogue, without ifs and buts, exceptions and qualifications. But these rules are delusions because the end which they serve requires in critical situations deviations from these rules. The second meaning of "virtue" is public-spiritedness or patriotism, both of the ordinary men and of the rulers. The third meaning of the word "virtue" is virtue in the

¹⁴⁶ End of page 14.

sense of Callicles in Plato's *Gorgias*—manliness and worldly prudence combined, especially on the highest level. Only virtue in the latter sense is truly natural, according to Machiavelli. Machiavelli cannot¹⁴⁷ leave it at attacking morality by exhibiting its dialectics. He has to show the real character of morality directly by an analysis of human nature. The traditional view was based on the premise that man, being a rational and social animal, has the natural inclination, the natural tendency toward the perfection of his nature, towards goodness and justice. Machiavelli denies the existence of such an inclination. For instance, on the basis of the traditional notion one might expect that people would resent more the murder of their father than the loss of their property, but in fact, Machiavelli finds, the opposite is true. Or one should expect that high-minded gentlemen would be more concerned with honor than with wealth, but in fact we see that the Roman patriciate gave in much more easily to the demands of the plebeians¹⁴⁸ for a share in public office than to their demands for agrarian reform. Or it was said that a bad conscience is a greater evil than anything else; but Machiavelli finds that the pangs of ingratitude suffered are at least as painful as the pangs of ingratitude inflicted. In brief, men do not have a natural inclination toward virtue. Men are bad. But they can become good. Men are by nature bad, meaning men are by nature selfish, concerned with nothing but a satisfaction of their primary wants, pleasure, convenience, wealth, honor, and glory. Concern for the well-being of others is not rooted in man's natural constitution. Man is not by nature a social animal. Not only that, there exists also no natural limit to the desires of the individual. By nature, men always desire more than they have. Man's desire is by nature infinite. But while men thus are by nature not only asocial, but antisocial, they can become social, public-spirited, good. Yet this transformation requires compulsion because it goes against man's grain. It requires that some violence be done to man's natural inclination. The success of this compulsion is due to the fact that men are amazingly malleable, much more so than hitherto thought. Machiavelli says, with Aristotle, that there are nations fit for absolute government and nations fit for freedom by nature, but Machiavelli holds—deviating from Aristotle—these nations can be changed by men in a few generations. It is a hard job, but it can be done. The power of men is much greater, and the power of nature and chance is correspondingly much smaller, than the ancients had thought. Machiavelli

¹⁴⁷ End of page 15.

¹⁴⁸ The typescript reads: "demands of the plebians."

limits the malleability of man still to men in the mass,¹⁴⁹ to people. As regards the individual, he is satisfied that there is a great variety of natures or temperaments, humors,¹⁵⁰ of natural characters, which cannot be influenced decisively by human agencies. For example, some men are by nature harsh and bitter, others are by nature gentle and kind. The men who are by nature bitter are by nature repulsive, whereas the others are by nature amiable; for the former hold out the promise to hurt us, whereas the latter hold out the promise to help us. The fact that there are men who are by nature kind and gentle, which Machiavelli admits, does not induce him to qualify his view that men are by nature bad. For gentleness can be as harmful as savagery can be good. The gentle Scipio was prevented by his gentleness from being a strict disciplinarian, and thus brought his fatherland into great danger. And there are many occasions, Machiavelli holds, on which cruel natures can be eminently serviceable.

After having destroyed morality proper and after having shown that morality in every form is a derivative phenomenon since men are bad, Machiavelli tries to reconstruct morality—morality of a kind—within the context of a political teaching. To this subject I will return next time.

LECTURE IV¹⁵¹

[MACHIAVELLI’S TEACHING: RECONSTRUCTING MORALITY]

I only repeat the sentence with which I concluded the last lecture in order to be in the midst of my problem. After having destroyed morality proper, and after having shown that morality in every form is a derivative phenomenon¹⁵² because men are bad, Machiavelli proceeds to reconstruct morality—morality of a kind—within the context of a political teaching. Let us state the problem as it presented itself to him. Men are bad, but they must be compelled to be good. Why? The answer is simple. Men can’t live securely except in society, but in order to live in society they must be concerned with society, with the common good. This does not mean that man must cease to be selfish. He can never cease to be that. How then can he become concerned with the common good? Answer: the need for security is indeed a selfish

¹⁴⁹ End of page 16.

¹⁵⁰ The typescript reads (with British spelling): “or temperaments, humours.”

¹⁵¹ The transcript of this third lecture is titled “MACHIAVELLI’S SUCCESS.” As above, to indicate the parallels with *TOM* we have inserted in square brackets the titles of the book chapters.

¹⁵² The typescript reads: “derivative phenomena.”

desire, but its object¹⁵³ is such a selfish good, as must be shared in order to be enjoyed. Yet men want more than mere security. Accordingly, society will have to serve still other purposes than security. At least under certain conditions, society, founded by individuals for selfish reasons, develops objectives of its own. Objectives which can no longer be understood directly as objectives of individuals. Political [s]cience, in our language, cannot be reduced to psychology. Selfishness will prompt the individuals to exploit for their selfish use such institutions as were created for the common good. No doubt; but these institutions themselves can never be understood in reference to these selfish uses. Before they can be exploited, the institutions must exist. They must have been created. And they were not created in order to be exploited. If the common good must be understood eventually in terms of selfishness, a much more subtle deduction is needed than is suggested today by some scholars.¹⁵⁴ Men need more than mere security. In the moment security is taken for granted, the passions and humors, especially avarice and ambition, make themselves felt, sometimes with[out] regards even for the security of those swayed by these passions. These passions are disruptive of society. Yet they cannot be eradicated or even generally subdued. There is only one solution. They must be channelized, in such a way as to contribute to the preservation and the well-being of society. Yet, this solution, as already the first social union, must be the work of passion, of selfish passion. Which passion will meet this condition? In other words, which passion will induce a bad man to be passionately concerned with compelling other people to be good and to remain good? Which passion will educate the educator of men? The passion we seek, Machiavelli says, is the desire for glory. The desire for glory in its highest form is the desire to be a new prince in the fullest sense of the term—a molder of men, of many generations of men.

The founder of society has a selfish interest in the preservation of society, of its work. He has therefore a selfish interest in the members of society being and remaining sociable and hence good. The desire for glory is the link between badness and goodness. It makes possible the transformation of badness into goodness. It is the highest human desire. It animated the most different men. It cannot be satisfied except by serving others. Glory is a reward for service. This would seem to be the nerve of the wholly new teaching regarding wholly new princes. The wholly new prince of the highest kind

¹⁵³ The typescript reads: "object, which is such . . ." We have dropped the comma and "which."

¹⁵⁴ End of page 1.

is animated by nothing but a selfish ambition.¹⁵⁵ The great public tasks which he undertakes are for him merely opportunities for honoring his desire. He is distinguished from criminals like Agathocles merely by the fact that Agathocles lacked the opportunity—the moral motivation is the same. The founder of society is concerned in the highest case—that is to say, in the vastest ambition, for the sake of his glory, his immortal glory, not merely for the preservation of the stability of his society, but in its being as powerful and prosperous as possible. He would therefore establish a society which could become a new kind of free society—a republic rather than a principality. For freedom increases the initiative of the citizen. Republican institutions like the Roman Senate guarantee the continuity of a foreign policy, a continuity necessarily endangered by monarchic succession. In a republican ruling group all kinds of natures or temperaments are present, and can be used in different circumstances—the bold and cautious[,] the harsh and the gentle, etc.—whereas the individual who rules in a monarchy is fixed to his nature or temperament. Republics cannot be preserved if they do not make full allowance for the irrepressible power of the passions. The most able and energetic men must be given an opportunity to satisfy their desire for honor and glory. At the same time a judicious¹⁵⁶ system of mutual control exercised by ambitious competitors must condemn to failure any monarchist or tyrannical aspirations, without stifling the initiative of the outstanding men. The system must be so constructed that only republican behavior pays, or is rewarded, preferably by badges rather than by money. For it is essential¹⁵⁷ for republican society that the individuals be kept poor while the state must be rich. Virtue not being the perfection of human nature, it must be produced by artificial means alone, but these means are perfectly sufficient. Virtue as devotion to the common good is the nerve of republican life. Since men are by nature selfish, republican or free society is most unnatural. All the greater is the glory of its achievement. The common people must have some share in public offices, lest they become servile and hence useless to the state. The inevitable clash between the ambitions of the great and the ambition of a virile plebs must be solved by finding a common outlet for the ambition of both parts: an aggressive, expansionist foreign policy. Since the commons can never have as great a share of honor or glory as the great, they must be kept loyal to the republican order, by an impressive state religion. The locus of religion is the

¹⁵⁵ End of page 2.

¹⁵⁶ The typescript reads: "a judicial system," but "judicious" is inserted to correct "judicial."

¹⁵⁷ End of page 3.

plebs. The people¹⁵⁸ must be religious. Law must be strictly enforced without any respect for rank or wealth, illegal procedures being reserved only for extreme situations in which the very survival of freedom requires the suspension of laws and even of freedom. A republic requires for its being and growth much more morality than a monarchy. It must therefore do everything in its power to preserve that morality—such¹⁵⁹ republican austerity and sternness—and practice it, in all normal situations. But it must not allow itself to be fettered by it, if the going gets rough. As for foreign policy in particular, its principles are bound to be of such a character that, to quote Macaulay,¹⁶⁰ “the most depraved criminal, working with his most intimate friends, in the darkest corner of a cave,¹⁶¹ would blush even to allude to them.”

In brief, Machiavelli’s reconstruction of morality, such as it is, culminates in and is exhausted by “hard-headed republicanism.” Machiavelli frequently tries to prove that republics are morally superior to monarchies. This teaching must be understood in light of his principles. It does not mean that republics are to be preferred because they are more conducive to morality. It rather means that the moral superiority of republics is an accidental consequence of their political superiority. For example, republics are more honest, faithful, and truthful than princes, because of the cumbersome character of republican proceedings, as contrasted with monarchic dispatch. It is harder for republics than for monarchies to make sudden shifts like the Ribbentrop-Molotov deal,¹⁶² or a sudden shift in wartime alliance to a hot or cold hostility. Or, republics are more grateful to their generals than are princes, because they can afford it better. It is very easy to give Machiavelli’s teaching an air of great respectability. He¹⁶³ can be presented as arguing as follows.¹⁶⁴

You want justice and freedom? I am going to show you how you can get it. You won’t get it by preaching, by hortatory speeches. You will only get it by

¹⁵⁸ We have deleted “and religion.”

¹⁵⁹ The typescript contains a “?” in the margin just after the word “such.” The context suggests an omission.

¹⁶⁰ The typescript reads: “to quote Macaulary.”

¹⁶¹ End of page 4.

¹⁶² The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was a nonaggression pact signed in Moscow on August 23, 1939, between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union concerning the peaceful partition of Poland between them. Deemed impossible given the different ideologies of the two countries, it caused stupor and outrage among supporters of both regimes in the West.

¹⁶³ The typescript reads “It can be. . .,” with “He?” written above the word “It.”

¹⁶⁴ There is no punctuation here in the typescript. The line is followed by what appears to be a handwritten “?”

making injustice and tyranny utterly unprofitable. In other words, what we need is not so much formation of character or moral appeals, as the devising of the right kind of institutions: institutions with teeth in them, spectacular punishments, and even a spot or two of terror. The problematic nature of the shift from formation of character to trust in institutions is perhaps sufficiently illustrated by Machiavelli's corollary. He continues his hard-headed advice as follows:¹⁶⁵ You will get justice and freedom within your society only by acting unjustly and tyrannically against other societies. The price of freedom is eternal vigilance plus imperialism. Imperialism in the grand Roman style, the imperialism which crushes the great, the proud, and spares the vanquished. This imperialism will inevitably lead, it is true, to Caesarism, or to the destruction of political freedom. But, in the first place, every society is bound to perish sooner or later, and above all, Caesarism is not without its consolations. Caesarism means the end of a free society, reveals its origin by giving birth to a new kind of freedom. The rule of the good [C]aesars was the golden age when it was possible for anyone to hold and defend every opinion he liked. Freedom of thought or of expression of thought is the Caesaristic substitute for political freedom, which is participation in political power. For a republic stands or falls by virtue of liberty. In other words, it requires agreement regarding substantive¹⁶⁶ fundamentals. Therefore, it cannot tolerate the questioning of the fundamentals by which it stands or falls. Cato, republican virtue incarnate, when he say[s] that the Roman youth began to listen to some philosophers with admiration, wisely provided that no philosophers should be received in Rome. But the fear of God, for which there is no substitute within a republic, can be replaced by the fear of a strong prince. From the point of view of political practice perhaps the gravest implication of Machiavelli's teaching is his legitimation of expansionism, or imperialism. He restates what Polybius had said about the essential difference between the Spartan regime and the Roman regime. Sparta was best¹⁶⁷ organized for the purposes of defense. Rome was best organized for expansion and empire. Polybius had left it open which of those two incompatible goals is the right one. But it is more than likely that he preferred the Spartan scheme. This, at any rate, was the view of the classical philosophers. Taking away from others what belongs to them is unjust for both individuals and states. Cicero, who was somehow compelled to defend the justice of the Roman conquests,

¹⁶⁵ End of page 5.

¹⁶⁶ The typescript reads: "substantative."

¹⁶⁷ End of page 6.

defended them on the ground that Rome was obliged to defend its¹⁶⁸ power. In other words, imperialism is defensible only if it is the accidental consequence of a fundamentally defensive policy. Or, if you please, an empire is justly acquired if it is acquired in a fit of absentmindedness. Machiavelli, on the other hand, declares that expansion, or taking away from others what belongs to them, is a natural necessity for individuals as well as for states. For one cannot secure what one has unless one enlarged one's possessions. Yet Machiavelli is compelled to admit that another defensive policy, for example through the formation of leagues of cities, is possible.¹⁶⁹ To justify imperialism, he has recourse eventually not to natural necessity but to glory. Empire is more glorious than preservation of one's independence. The principle underlying the older view was that fundamentally the same rules of conduct apply to states as well as to individuals. The primary task of individuals is to order his own life properly. Only on this basis can one have the proper kind of relation to others. Accordingly domestic policy, minding one's own business, is in itself more important, although not always more urgent, than foreign policy. On Machiavelli's principles, on the other hand, we are¹⁷⁰ led to the unqualified primacy of foreign policy. The principle which leads to this consequence is the supremacy of glory. But since according to Machiavelli the home of morality is the republic, as distinguished from the monarchy, the question of how to effect the reconstruction of morality is equivalent to the question of why we prefer republics to principalities in general, and to tyrannies in particular. To realize the gravity of the question, we must pay due attention to a peculiar detachment which Machiavelli apparently observed throughout his work.

To mention a striking example, when discussing the Roman decemvirs, Machiavelli notes with perfect impartiality the mistakes which the Roman people committed, in trying to preserve its liberty, and the mistakes which Appius Claudius committed, in trying to establish tyranny. Or, in discussing conspiracy, Machiavelli gives recipes to both those who wish to conspire against the prince and to those who wish to conspire against their fatherland, i.e., against republican order. Machiavelli is the teacher of both tyrants and republics. As such, he is the benefactor of both tyrants and republics. He is therefore bound to gain immortal glory with both lovers of tyranny and

¹⁶⁸ "Its" corrects the word "their" in the typescript. Both words appear in the typescript.

¹⁶⁹ The typescript reads: "Yet Machiavelli is compelled to admit that ? defends its policy, for example through the formation of leagues of cities is possible." The sentence is of course missing a subject at the typist's question mark, but it is not clear how to balance the sentence grammatically. See *TOM*, 293.

¹⁷⁰ End of page 7.

lovers of freedom, i.e., with all men. But can we regard as our¹⁷¹ benefactor a man who helps also our worst enemy? Machiavelli unden[i]ably prefers republics to tyranny, and thus he accidentally and incidentally prefers the social order which cannot exist without a great deal of decency. How can he do this? How can he abandon his detachment and impartiality? The reason is the same which inspired his very detachment. The motivation was the desire for immortal glory. Now, the highest glory is that of the founder of society, or¹⁷² that of the teacher of founders. Machiavelli succeeds in reconstructing morality by looking at society in the perspective of the founder of society, who as such is concerned with establishing the most stable, the most prosperous, and the most glorious society. A society of this kind is necessarily republican and therefore in need of morality. The perspective of the founder is *the*¹⁷³ perspective, the highest or the most comprehensive perspective. Nothing else is of any consequence. [For]¹⁷⁴ [i]t transcends the perspective of both the tyrant and the republican. By teaching how republics can be established and preserved, by thus defending the cause of freedom, and the common good, and even of morality, although thus incidentally teaching how republics can be destroyed, Machiavelli becomes enviable¹⁷⁵ in the eyes of all future generations. He is beloved and admired as the true and beneficent teacher¹⁷⁶ regarding human affairs, as the bringer of sound new modes and orders, which are in accordance with the nature of things, and [as] the bringer of the true code or decalogue, [which] is¹⁷⁷ the highest good to which men as men, selfish men, can aspire.

[MACHIAVELLI AND ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY]

It is of some interest to observe that the manner in which Machiavelli achieved the shift from badness to good, from tyranny to self-government, from

¹⁷¹ The typescript reads: "regard as a benefactor," but "our" is written in the typescript to replace "a," which is not crossed out.

¹⁷² End of page 8.

¹⁷³ The typescript here reads "THE perspective. . ."

¹⁷⁴ In the typescript, "for" is in lowercase and a blank space suggests a missing word. The next paragraph begins with "It" in uppercase.

¹⁷⁵ The typescript reads: "M becomes ? enviable. . ."

¹⁷⁶ We have corrected "teaching" to "teacher."

¹⁷⁷ The typescript reads: "code or decalogue, is. . ." with a comma after "decalogue." Strauss may be stating different things in this sentence: our reading implies that Machiavelli is loved and admired by future generations as "the true and beneficent teacher of human affairs," because he is "the bringer of sound new modes and orders," and "the bringer of the true code or decalogue" to which "selfish men can aspire."

servitude to devotion to others, has been anticipated by Plato in the *Republic*. In the first book of the *Republic* Thrasymachus questions justice, that is, he questions whether justice is good. Glaucon and Adeimantus are perplexed by the argument, so much so that they are thoroughly [displeased]¹⁷⁸ by Socrates's sophistical refutation of Thrasymachus's contention. After Glaucon and Adeimantus have restated Thrasymachus's¹⁷⁹ argument, Socrates does not immediately turn to refuting that argument directly.¹⁸⁰ Instead he begins to found a city in speech, or rather to help Glaucon and Adeimantus in founding a city in speech. In that conversation he takes for granted from the very beginning what had heretofore become questionable, namely, the goodness of justice. He begs the question. What does this imply? The assertion that injustice is good means that the life of the tyrant is the best life, because the blessings deriving from honor and authority is the highest blessing. By suggesting to his young friends that they should found a city in speech Socrates appeals from the petty objectives of the tyrant to the grand objective of the founder. How petty is the glory attending a tyrant who merely [uses]¹⁸¹ a city already existing as contrasted with the glory attending the founder? The founder, however, has to devote himself entirely to the good of the city. He is forced to be just. Desire for glory appears to be the force in the human soul which transforms a man from a lover of tyranny into a lover of justice. In Plato's *Republic* this transformation proves to be only a preparation for the true conversion from badness to goodness, the true conversion being philosophy, which presupposes the insight into the essential deficiency of the whole political sphere. In Machiavelli, however, the transformation through desire for glory is the only conversion. Philosophy is somehow forgotten. Machiavelli's understanding of his own doing and of all human activity may be described as a modified hedonism. He opposes all earlier philosophic hedonism chiefly by identifying the highest pleasure with the pleasure deriving from honor or glory. However important this difference between Machiavelli and hedonism proper may be, his teaching is vitiated by

¹⁷⁸ In the typescript, "thoroughly" is followed by a "?" and a line break. The word "displeased" is added by us and not in the typescript here. See *TOM*, 289.

¹⁷⁹ The typescript reads: "have restated T's argument." The names of Thrasymachus, Glaucon, and Adeimantus are abbreviated in the typescript but are spelled out in full here.

¹⁸⁰ End of page 9.

¹⁸¹ In the typescript, "merely" is followed by a tab break, and the context clearly suggests a missing word. See *TOM*, 289.

the typical hedonist¹⁸² fallacy, by the disregard of the fact that¹⁸³ pleasure as pleasure can never be the fundamental fact. Which things can be possibly pleasant to man depends on a more fundamental fact, on the constitution of man. To apply this criticism to Machiavelli, even if one were to grant that men are always naturally inspired by selfish motivations, and therefore in the highest case for immortal glory, one would still have to understand why man can earn immortal glory by doing the kind of things Machiavelli is doing, and not by tightrope dancing, for example, and how this selection of avenues toward immortal glory follows from man's natural constitution; and whether reflection on that constitution will not compel them to abandon the attempt to understand human life along the lines of hedonism, traditional or modified.

Yet Machiavelli disagrees profoundly with all earlier philosophic teaching. It is therefore not sufficient to say that he approaches the human problem in the perspective of the founder. To look at the human problem in the perspective of the founder means, for Machiavelli, to perpetuate intellectually the situation of the founder. He understands the founding action not in terms of its ultimate end, say, a free and glorious society. He rather understands the end in terms of the founding action. He interprets normal political life, the life within an established and healthy society, in terms of the abnormal extreme actions which were needed in order to bring about that normal life. The founding situation is repeated to a certain extent in all extreme situations. Machiavelli takes his bearings by the extreme situation rather than by the normal situation. This precisely is the¹⁸⁴ specific meaning of Machiavelli's "realism": the orientation by the extreme situation. The inevitable consequences of this orientation is the extremeness of many of his political actions. It is very revealing that he uses the term "middle way" chiefly in order to designate¹⁸⁵ half measures, and not as the right mean between two faulty extremes. The shift from the perspective of the founder to the intellectual situation of the founder, i.e., the shift from the direct apprehension of the end to the reflection on the efficient cause, implies an estrangement from the primary issue, and therewith an estrangement from the human situation, from the situation of acting man. This estrangement is connected with the assumption that chance can be conquered and therefore that the founder of society has not merely to accept the materials of his art, just like the smith

¹⁸² In the typescript, "hedonist" replaces "hedonistic," which is crossed out.

¹⁸³ End of page 10.

¹⁸⁴ End of page 11.

¹⁸⁵ In the typescript, "define" is corrected to "designate" (both typed).

and the carpenter, but that his material is almost infinitely malleable. The assumption that chance can be conquered leads to an enormous increase in the responsibility of the founder, and this in turn to a dehumanization of the task of the founder and therewith of the statesman. Earlier political philosophers admitted that the complete cessation of war and of other disturbances of the same kind may lead to decay and effeminacy, but this did not induce them to make the preservation of war a concern of the founder. Nature would take care of that. They could therefore demand the limitation and mitigation of warfare. Machiavelli, however, tends to make the founder responsible for the preservation of war as such, and is apprehensive about the consequences [o]f the mitigation of warfare.

Machiavelli believed that he had discovered a new model continent. The new dimension which he is trying to disclose to us is indicated by the theme “the wholly new prince in the wholly new state,” the foundation of society and the structure of society as viewed in light of its foundation. It appeared to him that this immense and immensely important subject had been glossed over by traditional political philosophy, which looked up to the end visible in the sky—the model laid out in heaven—rather than down, to the roots¹⁸⁶ in the earth. The examination of Machiavelli’s claim and of his achievement would lead to the result that what presented itself to him as an enormous enlargement of the horizon was in fact an enormous narrowing of the horizon. Not a single point which Machiavelli has really seen was not already seen by Plato, Aristotle, or Cicero. But are there no fundamental defects in the classical teaching, to justify at least Machiavelli’s desire to strike out an entirely new path, or his revolt against the tradition?

The only chapter in the *Discorsi* which Machiavelli devoted entirely to an open attack on his authority, Livy, and on all other earlier writers serves the purpose of defending the multitude against the structure of the aristocratic tradition. There are other signs pointing to a democratic tendency in Machiavelli’s teaching—a tendency which contrasts sharply with the traditional way of looking at political things. Looking at the conflict between the few and the many in the city, Machiavelli sides with the many, without hesitation and without qualification. The most Machiavellian statement, occurring in his *Florentine History*, is entrusted to the leader of the revolt of the lowest class in Florence.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ A double tab break follows “roots,” but there is no indication of a missing word.

¹⁸⁷ End of page 12b. In the typescript, this page is marked as “12a,” whereas the previous is simply marked “12.”

One reason why Machiavelli¹⁸⁸ preferred the Roman scheme to the Spartan scheme was that Rome was somewhat more democratic than Sparta. Machiavelli might well regard himself as a new Tarquinius Priscus, a Tuscan, who became the most democratic of Roman kings. The traditional concept of the gentleman, or the patrician, appeared to him as a hypocritical myth. In brief, one is tempted to say that the undeniably nondemocratic character of classical political philosophy offers a partial justification for Machiavelli's revolt, a revolt which is linked, through men like Spinoza and Rousseau, to modern democracy. Politics makes strange bedfellows, and quite legitimately so. But from time to time we must pause to cast a glance at our political bedfellows, or to consider the principles on which a reasonable choice of democracy is based. We cannot leave it, then, at applauding Machiavelli as a forerunner of modern democracy, but must consider the reason why the tradition which Machiavelli attacked was not democratic. Plato and Aristotle did not lack social justice or a sense of it. They knew as well as we can know them the true principles of justice, the beautiful principles of justice. They saw therefore, as well as we do, that a society ruled by a privileged group is of questionable justice, since social superiority and natural superiority do not necessarily coincide. But it is not hard to see that only men who are truly educated, who are experienced in things noble and beautiful, ought to rule, that average men cannot fulfill this condition, if they are not well-bred from the moment they are born, that such good breeding requires leisure on the part of both the parents and the children, that such leisure requires a reasonable degree of wealth, and that having or lacking wealth is not necessarily proportionate to deserts. The¹⁸⁹ classics accepted this element of arbitrariness, and therefore of injustice, because there was only one alternative to the social scheme they espoused, that alternative being perpetual revolution, which means perpetual chaos. They did not consider another alternative, namely, that all members of society should receive the same good breeding. They did not consider this alternative because they took for granted an economy of scarcity. Not a different understanding of justice, but a different notion of whether an economy could or should be replaced by an economy of plenty, separated modern man from the classical thinkers. The problem of scarcity or plenty is however connected with the problem of [whether] the mechanical and other arts should be emancipated from moral and political control, and whether or not theoretical science should lend its supports to the increase of

¹⁸⁸ The transcript reads, from page 12b: "One reason why / One reason that Mach velli. . ."

¹⁸⁹ The typescript reads: "They classics."

productivity. But increase of productivity means necessarily also increase of destructivity. What separates modern man from the classics is not a different notion of justice, but a different attitude toward technology. We are no longer so certain as we were a short while ago that we have made a decisive progress beyond the classics by taking here a different stand, or that we have chosen wisely. But can we speak here of a choice? Must we not speak rather of a fateful dispensation? As I see it, there was only one fundamental difficulty in the political philosophy which Machiavelli attacked. The classics were what is now called conservative, which means fearful of change, distrustful of change. But they knew that one cannot oppose social change without also opposing what is now called technological change as well. Therefore, they did not favor the encouraging of invention, except half ironically in tyranny. Still, they were forced to make one crucial¹⁹⁰ exception: they had to admit the necessity of encouraging technological invention as regards the art of war. They bowed to the inescapable requirements of defense. By accepting this principle, they might seem to be driven eventually to the acceptance of the hydrogen bomb. This is the only difficulty which could be thought to be an entering wedge for the modern criticism of classical political philosophy, and therefore indirectly also for Machiavelli's criticism. This difficulty might be thought to imply the admission of the primacy of foreign policy. It seems to me, however, that the real difficulty arises, not from the admission of the necessity of military invention, but from the use of science for this purpose.¹⁹¹ Therefore the fundamental issue concerns the character and the function of science. If we were to consider this fundamental issue, I believe we would realize that the classical position is not only thoroughly consistent, but as irrefutable as it has always been. We cannot go here into this question and we do not have to go into it, since it is not directly relevant to our immediate subject, namely, a decision of the question concerning the signific[a]nce of Machiavelli's criticism of classical political philosophy. Machiavelli still thought that the new military inventions of his age, the firearms and especially artillery, had not rendered obsolete, and would never render obsolete, the policies¹⁹² as well as the art of war of the ancients. I repeat then my assertion that Machiavelli had not seen anything which was not seen by the classics as well. How then can we explain the fact that an amazing contraction of horizon presented itself to this very superior mind as an amazing

¹⁹⁰ End of page 13.

¹⁹¹ In the typescript, "science...purpose" is circled by hand.

¹⁹² The typescript reads: "the policies."

enlargement of horizon? By this time the classical tradition had undergone profound changes. The contemplative life had found its home in monasteries.¹⁹³ Moral virtue had been elevated or transfigured into biblical charity. Through this, man's responsibility to his fellow men and fellow creatures had been enormously increased. Concern with the salvation of his immortal soul seemed to permit, nay, to require courses of action which would have appeared to the classics, and which did appear to Machiavelli, as cruel. He speaks of the pious cruelty of Ferdinand of Spain, and by implication of the Inquisition, in expelling the Maranos from Spain. As far as I can see, Machiavelli would not blame him for that. It would appear that Machiavelli diagno[s]ed the great evils of religious persecution as a necessary consequence of the biblical principle.¹⁹⁴ He tended to believe that a considerable increase in man's inhumanity to man was caused by man's aiming too high. Let us lower our goals, he as it were says, so that we shall not be forced to commit any brutality which is not evidently required for the preservation of society or for freedom. Let us replace charity by calculation, and calculating generosity. Let us revise all traditional goals from this point of view. I would then suggest that the narrowing of horizons which Machiavelli effected was *caused by an antitheological ire*,¹⁹⁵ a passion which has produced and is still producing a stronger blindness in otherwise free minds than any other passion of which I know. By making this observation, we are perhaps enabled to excuse Machiavelli's prodigious error, but this excuse would not transform the error into truth. I would now like to describe the character of Machiavelli's teaching, or of his so-called thought, by contrasting it more succinctly with the traditional teaching.¹⁹⁶ It is easy to see, for example, that large sections of Machiavelli's work reproduce what Aristotle says in the fifth¹⁹⁷ book of the *Politics* about how to preserve tyranny. But the same propositions have, of course, and entirely different meaning in Machiavelli than they have in Aristotle because the context is entirely different. Aristotle analyzes tyranny as a monstrosity. Machiavelli deals with tyranny as an integral part of the foundation of society. In this respect Machiavelli is closer to Plato than to Aristotle, for Plato does not hesitate to make his founder of a good society, the wise legislator,

¹⁹³ In the typescript, "The contemplative...monasteries" is in handwritten brackets.

¹⁹⁴ In the typescript, "It would...principle" is in handwritten brackets.

¹⁹⁵ In the typescript, "caused...ire" is underlined by hand.

¹⁹⁶ In the typescript, the aside "or of his so-called thought" comes at the end of the sentence.

¹⁹⁷ End of page 14.

demand support by a tyrant.¹⁹⁸ But in the first place Plato does not make this demand in his own name, but in the name of a legislator, who in addition is not even present when the demand is made. Besides, Plato does not amplify that cryptic remark. Above all, in Plato the emphasis rests on the wise and virtuous legislator, and not on the tyrant, who is merely a tool. But let us abandon the somewhat foolish attempt to know better than Machiavelli what his thought has been. Let us listen to what he himself says about his thought and indicates. The situation is particularly clear in the *Principe*. Only *two prose works*¹⁹⁹ are *specifically referred to*, the²⁰⁰ Old Testament and Xenophon's *Education of Cyrus*. As for the Old Testament—I note Machiavelli does not refer to the New Testament, *only to the Old*²⁰¹—and from the Old Testament he utilizes only the story about David, which in Machiavelli's allegoric interpretation means that one ought not to rely on another man's army, but on one's own army. So you see how Machiavelli utilizes from the Bible only the military aspects of the Old Testament. As regards profane prose, Machiavelli does not even mention Plato, Aristotle, or Cicero, to say nothing of the Scholastics. But he does mention Xenophon. Xenophon is mentioned as the authority on mirrors of princes[,] that is to say, as the originator of the tradition that Machiavelli attacks in the *Principe*. But Xenophon is also the link between Machiavelli and the tradition. Machiavelli's attitude to the tradition is fundamentally the same in the *Discorsi*. In the *Discorsi* he does quote once the New Testament, the Magnificat, but in a context²⁰² which makes the question nothing short of blasphemy. He refers much more frequently to the Old Testament, from the point of view of a man who reads the Bible "reasonably," which means unbelievably. As regards profane writers, the references to Xenophon are much more frequent than those to Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero combined. No reference whatever to the Scholastics. Plato is, incidentally, referred to not as a writer, but as a friend of some conspirators. Since Machiavelli points to Xenophon more emphatically than to any other writer, it is sufficient to contrast Machiavelli with Xenophon. The thought and work of Xenophon has two foci, Cyrus the founder of the Persian Empire, and Socrates. Only one of these two foci is interesting to Machiavelli, Cyrus. He forgets about Socrates and what Socrates stands for. This would seem to be

¹⁹⁸ In the typescript, "In this respect...tyrant" is in handwritten brackets.

¹⁹⁹ In the typescript, "two prose works" is underlined by hand.

²⁰⁰ In the typescript, "specifically...the" is underlined by hand.

²⁰¹ In the typescript, "only... old" is underlined by hand.

²⁰² In the typescript, "contest" is corrected to "context." We have corrected the typo "Old Testament" to "New Testament."

the simplest and shortest expression of what I call the narrowing of the horizon. The forgetting of Socrates makes Machiavelli appear in [an] entirely new light, as the discover[er] of a new moral continent. But the discovery is nothing other but the reverse side of an oblivion. In more precise language we may perhaps say that according to the classics there are two supports of morality.²⁰³ Morality is a requirement of society and is a requirement of philosophy. Machiavelli abandons one of²⁰⁴ these roots, philosophy, or the contemplative life, and therefore he is forced to reinterpret, that is to say, *misinterpret the other*.²⁰⁵ In particular, he is thus incapacitated from giving an *intelligible*²⁰⁶ account of his own doing. What is greatest in Machiavelli, what we shall not see in his admir[er]s, *his fearless raising of every question of importance, his inner freedom from all human authority*,²⁰⁷ cannot be appreciated on the basis of his own narrow view of the nature of man.²⁰⁸ We may also say that Machiavelli wrote some comedy, but no tragedy. Half of humanity is missing in his work. He is *un bel esprit*, a fine wit, of the highest order. I would not know of any other modern writer who could be said to surpass him in this respect, and very few who could be said to equal him. But he is certainly not *une belle âme*. His silence about the soul is more meaningful and more revealing than he himself knew.²⁰⁹ For a more complete understanding of Machiavelli's teaching and the problem, one would also have to contrast him with the allegedly existing non-Socratic tradition of political philosophy, namely, the Sophists, Thucydides, Epicurus, and Carneades. I can do this only with a few words. There is a gulf separating Machiavelli from Epicurus. Characteristic of the Epicurean teaching is the depreciation of honor and glory, and therefore the Epicurean teaching is nonpolitical, because honor and glory are inseparable from political life and vice versa. Machiavelli deviates from the Epicurean teaching by suggesting that the pleasure deriving from honor and glory is the highest pleasure. Machiavelli is a political philosopher. As for the Sophists, that is a very loose term. People usually understand by the Sophistic

²⁰³ In the typescript, "In more precise...morality" is in handwritten brackets.

²⁰⁴ End of page 15.

²⁰⁵ In the typescript, "misinterpret the other" is underlined by hand.

²⁰⁶ In the typescript, "intelligible" is underlined by hand.

²⁰⁷ In the typescript, "his fearless...human authority" is underlined by hand.

²⁰⁸ In the typescript, "In particular, he is thus...of the nature of man" is in handwritten brackets.

²⁰⁹ In the typescript, "His...himself knew" is in handwritten brackets. It is accompanied by marginalia in Strauss's hand which appear to read, "The meaning of the irony," which is explained in *TOM*, 294: "Through an irony beyond Machiavelli's irony, his silence about the soul is a perfect expression of the soulless character of his teaching: he is silent about the soul because he has forgotten the soul, just as he has forgotten tragedy and Socrates."

teaching teachings like that of Callicles in Plato's *Gorgias* and of Thrasymachus in Plato's *Republic*. These men say or suggest that the highest good is the highest pleasure and that the highest pleasure is that deriving from honor and glory. But Callicles completely lacks any interest in theoretical questions. Thrasymachus does show a theoretical interest, but only in the art of speaking, not in political things as such. Aristotle tells us that the Sophists regarded politics as identical with rhetoric, or part of it. Machiavelli, on the other hand, has a passionate theoretical²¹⁰ interest in political things as such.²¹¹ Just as Plato is concerned with knowledge of the Ideas, Machiavelli is concerned with knowledge of the necessities which by the statesman must take his bearings. These necessities take the place of the Platonic ideas. These necessities, in contradistinction to the Platonic ideas, are wholly neutral in regard to moral motivation.²¹² They are as accessible to the view of the most unjust tyrant as to that of the most just republican ruler, whereas the opposite is true of the Platonic Ideas, but this does not do away with the fact that Machiavelli is motivated by a theoretical interest in political things, even by a theoretical fascination with them. *In this decisive respect*²¹³ Machiavelli is completely different from the Sophists. For Machiavelli, the higher is simply derivative from the lower. But for Thucydides these are genuine opposites. Not only peace and war, Greeks and barbarians, Sparta and Athens, but above all, the noble and the base, or the noble and the useful. *The noble cannot be understood as a modification of the nonnoble. It has a being of its own in Thucydides.*²¹⁴ Thucydides is moved by the disproportion between nobility and power. The highest in man is not more akin to the highest in the whole than the lowest in man is. This explains the peculiar sadness²¹⁵ with which we are affected when reading Thucydides. No such sadness is produced by the reading of Machiavelli. In Machiavelli, we find comedy, satire, parody, but nothing of the manner of tragedy. Why is this so? And here I think the consideration of the two traditions links itself. Machiavelli is the first superior mind that we know of who did not have a feeling of awe before what is higher and greater than

²¹⁰ In the typescript, "theoretical" is underlined by hand.

²¹¹ In the typescript, "Machiavelli...things as such" is in handwritten brackets. It is accompanied by illegible marginalia.

²¹² In the typescript, "These necessities...moral motivation" is in handwritten brackets. It is accompanied by illegible marginalia.

²¹³ In the typescript, "In this decisive respect" is underlined by hand.

²¹⁴ In the typescript, "The noble cannot...in Thucydides" is underlined by hand.

²¹⁵ End of page 16.

man, be it God or nature.²¹⁶ In Machiavelli, m[an] appears perfectly emancipated from any *suprahuman [b]onds*.²¹⁷ Fortune, his substitute for God, can be conquered. Man is the master.²¹⁸

[MACHIAVELLI'S SUCCESS]

I promised to add a fourth lecture on Machiavelli's success. The time is by no means sufficient for that, but permit me only a brief remark. For an understanding of Machiavelli's success, one must start from a clear understanding of the Machiavellian principle. The principle is this: the standards must be lowered in order to make probable, if not certain, the actualization of the desirable social order, an order to be defined in terms of the lowest standard. Lowering of standards and conquering of chance are inseparable. This Machiavellian effort was accepted directly and without fundamental change in a certain tradition of realistic republicanism. I mention such names as Spinoza, Rousseau, and the less known, upper-class republicanism in France prior to the French Revolution. I mean the republicanism of the French Navy and Foreign Office on Machiavellian grounds. Much more important from the theoretical point of view is the mitigation of Machiavelli, and the modification of his teaching, which was effected by Hobbes and which determines the basis then of the teachings of Locke and Rousseau in particular. In this, the notion of the enlightened self-interest, as it became basic in the seventeenth and eighteenth²¹⁹ centuries, was a prudential, and very Machiavellian, mitigation of the Machiavellian principle. "Private vice, public benefit,"²²⁰ a famous formula, is a formula conceived in the Machiavellian spirit. The²²¹ time is completely missing for that, I would like to say only a few words about the really difficult problem. The difficulty is this: that a lowering of the moral standards had taken place in the victory of the moral philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is, I think, generally admitted. It is generally understood that a great change in the moral climate was effected by Rousseau and later on by the great German philosophers, especially Kant and Hegel, restoring the true and high moral standard which had been denied or pushed into the background by the half-Machiavellian

²¹⁶ In the typescript, "Machiavelli is the first...or nature" is in handwritten brackets.

²¹⁷ In the typescript, "supra-human onds" is underlined by hand.

²¹⁸ In the typescript, "Man is the master" is underlined by hand.

²¹⁹ The references to centuries were spelled out.

²²⁰ This is the subtitle of Mandeville's *The Fable of the Bees*.

²²¹ An ellipsis precedes, and the typescript reads: "I do not want...the time is."

philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. And here it would seem Machiavelli's influence stopped. I think the opposite is true. The influence of Machiavelli continues in a more disguised form, and therefore in a more dangerous way; because I believe it is much easier to see the deficiency of the moral philosophy of men like Hobbes and Locke than that of Kant and Hegel. In the first place we could show—not now—that in Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel morality itself is reinterpreted. These thinkers by no means restored the original and traditional understanding of morality. They interpreted it differently. In a nutshell, and therefore grossly exaggerated, the place of virtue is now taken by freedom. But the more [crucial] aspect is this, that the new moral and political philosophy of Rousseau and the German Idealists is inseparable from philosophy of history, and no such connection existed in premodern thought. For what is the meaning of²²² Philosophy of History? Philosophy of History was meant to show the essential necessity of the actualization of the right social order. In other words, Philosophy of History was meant to show that there is no chance in the decisive respect. Which means that we see in the idealistic Philosophy of History the same “realistic” tendency which led to a lowering of standards in the first wave of modernity. This leads, in the second wave, to Philosophy of History. But how is the actuali[z]ation of the right order achieved? Let us address this question to Kant and Hegel. Answer: *by blind and selfish passions*.²²³ The just order, the order of perfect justice and perfect peace, is the accidental byproduct of human activities which are in no way directed toward the just order. Here we are really at the cradle of Marxism. Here we find the roots of the fantastic notion that a just order of society can be established by flagrantly unjust and cruel means, that a good end can be achieved by bad means, which would mean, as Hegel himself sometimes said, by means which really defeat the end. It seems to me that if we would succeed in tracing the typically modern approach to Machiavelli or in understanding the concealed²²⁴ Machiavellian character of the modern approach, we would make some progress in liberating our minds from a fundamental prejudice which both clouds our vision and misguides our actions. Permit me to make one brief concluding remark. It was inevitable that I should have hurt the feelings of some of you, partly by expounding without any reserve²²⁵ certain shocking thoughts of Machiavelli,

²²² End of page 17.

²²³ In the typescript, “by blind and selfish passions” is underlined by hand.

²²⁴ The typescript here reads: “concieled.”

²²⁵ In the typescript, an ellipsis is indicated after “reserve.”

but partly also by expressing certain views of my own, which could not well be to everyone's taste. As for the former offense, I plead not guilty. Not guilty of bad company, or bad association. We would make impossible freedom of historical inquiry if the historian were not permitted to set forth as clearly and thoughtfully as he can what he is certain was the view of the thinker he is studying. In addition, there are certain prodigious errors, which, if arrived at and stated in a certain manner, are so far from lacking greatness that they illumine most impressively if unintentionally the greatness of the giver of all greatness. As for my own offense, I can only say that I have the earnest desire to live in peace, and therefore to agree with the opinions of my fellow men. Through no fault of my own, my fellow men do not agree with each other. I was therefore forced to make a choice, or to take a stand. Once having been forced to do so, it would have been dishonorable, I thought, to becloud the issue or to beat around the bush. So I ask you not to take ill what to the best of my knowledge was not ill meant. Thank you.

