

An Inner Quality Analysis of Machiavellian Politics

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To the realist and idealist within us all

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Introduction

Many years ago, I was puzzling over an apparent mismatch between the basic goodwill I felt in my heart and tendencies towards amorality which characterized much of my outer personality. This dual aspect of my character – good intentions and indifference to morality – unfortunately led me to a place where I felt justified to do almost anything I wanted on the grounds that it was the natural thing to do. Professionally, I did not have many problems with this because my career centered on international politics, where such behavior was often applauded as being realistic and pragmatic. In my profession, the logic was widely accepted: one could use almost any expedient means to achieve worthwhile national goals.¹ By contrast, my personal life was not exemplary because good intentions and amorality do not fit easily into that living space.

I came to realize that the cause of my unease was a fundamental misalignment between my inner and outer self. I was not an integrated person and therefore could not be my true self. But what was my true self? This was a difficult question for me, because I had for so many years accepted the separation between my good self and my amoral self as being normal and natural.

One evening as I contemplated the source of goodness within my consciousness, I saw and felt a point of light deep within that seemed to radiate the qualities of honor and integrity. I intuitively realized that these qualities were the character of my soul and the source of the goodness I had always felt. As I thought about this, I concluded that if I ever was to align my inner and outer self, I needed to reflect the inner qualities of honor and integrity in my outer consciousness.² I decided to try to do this as an experiment and found, in a relatively short period of time, that I

¹ For instance, see Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994). There are many other proponents of political realism. A few modern examples include Hans Morgenthau, George F. Kennan, and Charles de Gaulle.

² The inner quality is the soul's character as perceived by one's consciousness while living on earth. The understanding of one's inner quality, and how its goodness can be expressed, evolve over time.

could fairly easily determine what was and what was not appropriate in my life – and act accordingly. The pieces began to fall into place, and I realized that it was possible to construct a standard of personal and professional behavior that was consistent and suitable for almost any situation in which I might find myself.

I am a political scientist by training, so I began to think about how the inner quality might be applied to politics, especially its philosophies of governance and theories of international relations. One thinker in this area was Niccolo di Bernardo Machiavelli (1469-1527), most famous for writing *The Prince*, a classic statement of realism I had read several times because his thinking seemed to match my own in terms of realpolitik. But in other writings, such as *The Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius*, Machiavelli demonstrated another side of his political thought: how to establish the best form of government that would benefit not only the ruler but also the elite and common members of society.

This dual side of Machiavelli's analysis appealed to me because it reflected much of my own efforts to align the pragmatic with the ideal in terms of governance. In order to better understand how to make this alignment, I decided to analyze Machiavelli's main works from the perspective of the inner quality. This short book is part of that analysis.

[Purpose and Scope of this Book](#)

When you examine Machiavelli's contributions to political science, two stand out as being especially influential. The first is his methodology, which was unique and contributed greatly to the emergence of realism as one of the most prominent approaches to the study and application of politics. The second great contribution was his analysis of how power can best be seized and used to unify a country and his analysis of what the best form of government might be in more normal times.

In terms of methodology, Machiavelli carefully studied history to determine what worked and what did not work in the political affairs of ancient Greece and Rome, as well as more contemporary governments of his time. He looked at politics as they were actually conducted as opposed to how politics ought to be conducted. In this orientation towards the real as opposed to the ideal, he helped to formalize the principles of the modern Western school of realism in political science. He also contributed greatly to the Italian Renaissance and thus helped to reorient the thinking of his age towards a more rational and scientific way of looking at things.

For his contributions to modern ways of looking at ourselves and the world, Machiavelli is to be admired and praised. From the perspective of the inner quality and its philosophy of ethics and governance, Machiavelli's methodology of historical realism is valid, although it needs to be balanced with considerations of the idealistic side of mankind, which incorporate the goodness and goodwill of the soul.

In terms of Machiavelli's actual recommendations on the conduct of politics, we will examine in this book his two most famous political works, *The Prince* and *The Discourses*. These two works present quite different perspectives on politics. *The Prince* offers pragmatic advice to a strong, intelligent, and ruthless leader on how to acquire and maintain power over a principality and how to use that base to expand his control over all of Italy. *The Discourses* is more of a reflection on the best form of government based largely on a study of the history of the Roman Empire.

In both of Machiavelli's works, the audience is intended to be a unique individual who, through his own talent and efforts as well as Fortune and opportunity, has the potential to create a new nation and form of government. This is important to remember, because Machiavelli's advice is suitable in the context of being offered to a unique individual and often is unsuited for the rest of us. In essence, Machiavelli is providing realistic lessons from history to instruct a leader on how

to create a nation, and such instructions are often amoral or even evil in appearance. Machiavelli believed that the stakes involved in establishing a new state were so great that common moral principles ought not to apply; rather, the end results of the effort should be the judge of the correctness of a leader's decisions, not the morality of the decisions themselves. When you read Machiavelli's advice to these potential founding fathers, it can be better understood if you think of these people as military generals, who makes decisions of life and death, violence and mercy on a massive scale with far-reaching consequences. Under these unusual and often extreme circumstances, common moral principles – in Machiavelli's view – simply do not apply and, in any case, need to be discarded if the efforts to create a new state are to be successful.

From the perspective of the inner quality, Machiavelli's advice on the conduct of politics has had both positive and negative effects. On the positive side, he laid the foundation of many principles of republicanism found today in modern forms of governance, such as that of the United States. On the negative side, his advice provided justification for the "ends justify the means" paradigm used by countless large and small tyrants in all forms of human activity for the last 500 years.

The scope and purpose of this book is to examine Machiavelli's advice on politics as found in *The Prince* and *The Discourses* to determine where it might be improved from the point of view of the inner quality philosophy of ethics and government.

[The Inner Quality Philosophy of Ethics and Government](#)

For centuries, there have been two contending perspectives on how men should be governed.

One view is that politics should be the art of the practical and that those who follow its profession should be guided by the simple principle of determining what works best in the world of men – in other words, politics ought to be guided by expediency. Another view is that politics should be an instrument for improving the quality of life for individuals and society, and that

government should strive to serve the higher principles of mankind, even at the cost of expediency. These two approaches are frequently referred to as realism and idealism in political theory. In practice, the two approaches are often blended in politics; but analytically it can be useful to differentiate between the two theories. From a holistic perspective, however, realism and idealism both have their roles and neither paradigm is sufficient in and of itself.

The inner quality refers to the best character, or highest virtue, of an individual. Spiritually speaking, the inner quality can be viewed as the character of a person's soul: the unique aspect of individuality given to the soul by God at the time of its creation. The inner quality is thus a special seed of goodness which the soul, as it matures, is intended to share with other parts of life. In this sense, the inner quality philosophy of ethics and governance addresses the highest spiritual ideals of mankind.

The inner quality is not only a spiritual ideal, however. The character of universal goodness is also reflected in the evolutionary development of altruism and empathy, genetic traits found among humans and other advanced species. Furthermore, the inner quality has its own internal logic, as seen in its inherent ethical principles which can be rationally identified in a person's mind as categorical imperatives, highest virtues, or best human characteristics.

[Machiavelli: The Man](#)

Machiavelli is most famous for writing *The Prince*, a short manuscript completed in 1513 as a way of introducing himself for possible service to the rulers of Florence, Giuliano de' Medici and, after Giuliano's death, Lorenzo de' Medici.³ It was a sort of resume to prove himself worthy of hire in government service. Under the previous administration, he had been a diplomat in

³ This section on Machiavelli's life is based on Peter Bondanella and Mark Musa, *The Portable Machiavelli* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982). Please note that the page numbers cited in the text throughout this book are taken from *The Portable Machiavelli*.

several European courts. Falsely accused of plotting against the Medici, he was arrested and tortured before being found innocent and released. But his political career was ruined and he was forced into early retirement and semi-exile.

Being essentially unemployed, yet gifted with a powerful mind and astute observation, as well as insatiable ambition and strong desire to serve his city and his state, Machiavelli turned to writing as a way to occupy his creative energies. His writing style was uncommon, being based on imaginary conversations between himself and scholars, historians, philosophers, and statesmen of the past, as they would gather in the privacy of his library to discuss the great political issues of the ages. The result of these “conversations” was a very substantial body of documents discussing politics from different perspectives. And, depending on what he was analyzing, Machiavelli’s ideas could differ considerably.

In *The Prince* we find one of the classic arguments for realism in politics, as it describes how a ruthless and cunning leader might seize the moment and unify all of Italy under his rule. The argument centered on the premise that a successful founder of a new political order must always do what is necessary because, in the political affairs of men, the final result is the arbiter of whether the action was justified. Much as Sun Tzu’s great treatise on the *Art of War* has contributed to military strategy through the centuries,⁴ so *The Prince* has become recognized as a near perfect handbook for expediency in politics and eagerly embraced by generations of rulers and politicians.

Part of the irony of Machiavelli’s contribution to political science is that *The Prince* was written hurriedly as an appeal for a job, whereas his much larger but incomplete work – *The Discourses*

⁴ There are many translations of Sun Tzu’s classic from about 500 B.C. For example, Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, translated by Samuel B. Griffith (London: Oxford University Press, 1963).

– has been mostly overlooked. In *The Discourses*, Machiavelli argues in favor of a democratic and republican form of government, describing a political model that did not take permanent hold in Europe until the late 18th century, more than 200 years after *The Discourses* were written.

In Machiavelli's analyses of politics in *The Prince* and *The Discourses*, we see the tension that often exists in the minds of leaders between doing whatever is necessary to achieve one's personal goals and doing what is morally right to serve the higher ends of mankind. One can only speculate on the influence of the times on Machiavelli's writings, but had they been different, his advice to the Medici princes might also have been different. At minimum, he might have cautioned in *The Prince* against always using expediency and self-interest as the means and ends in politics and instead argued for at least considering the use of moral means to achieve noble results, as he did more noticeably in *The Discourses*.

Pragmatism and Virtue in Politics

By its very nature, politics is frequently called the art of the possible rather than the art of the ideal. Determining what is possible, however, is highly subjective. The vision of a leader using his or her inner quality and higher mind to determine viable options can be considerably more expansive than that of a leader with a narrower, self-centered view of what is possible. Simply said, the range of pragmatic options from the perspective of the inner quality and higher mind is generally much wider than the range of options from more limited points of view.

The reason the inner quality offers a broader range of policy options is because the inner quality expands the boundaries of perception and understanding of what is real. This expansion of perception and understanding enables the higher mind to draw upon a wider range of experience and knowledge, thereby broadening the parameters within which rationality can function. The combination of the inner quality and the higher mind expands the perceived range of what is

possible, improves one's insights and intuition, and strengthens the mind's rationality. The net result is that more choices are available for consideration in any given circumstance. More choices generally increase the probability of making wiser decisions.

Personal values play a critical role in political decision making. All people have values, and values often determine the criteria by which options are measured and compared. An individual's values come from many sources: family, culture, church, friends, peers, profession, and experience. But a person's highest standards ought to come from within oneself. These are the foundational beliefs each person uses to guide his or her way through life.

By definition, the inner quality is the best character of goodness within an individual. Also called one's highest virtue, a person's best character is the strongest foundation on which to build personal values. Values built on the inner quality are rock-solid in that they reflect a person's assessment of their true worth as an individual. Mistakes will be made, but an individual who bases his decisions on the standards of his or her inner quality will almost always be able to say that they did their best in the circumstances in which they found themselves.

A leader who is able to combine the ethical standards of the inner quality with a developed higher mind is a leader far more likely to make decisions beneficial to society than a leader who either lacks such strong personal values or who is unable to draw upon the powerful capabilities of the higher mind. Where citizens have a voice in choosing their leaders, the people should look for evidence of both strong moral values and clarity of mind in the candidates for office from whom they must choose. That candidate will probably be able to properly balance the pragmatism and idealism needed in a good leader.

The Inner Quality Theory of Governance

In this book we examine the political philosophy of Machiavelli from the perspective of the inner quality theory of governance. Central in the comparison are the various approaches used by leaders in fulfilling their common responsibility of dealing with people and circumstances as they exist, while also trying to move society and its citizens in some preferred direction.

Although Machiavelli is considered a realist in political philosophy, that does not mean he lacked morals or ideals. Realists seek to determine what works in politics and base their conclusions largely on historical evidence and personal observation. Idealists, on the other hand, seek to determine what is possible in politics and base their conclusions largely on what they think would be best for society or humanity as a whole. In Machiavelli we see both the realist and the idealist, with realism reflected in his methodology and idealism reflected in his hope that political systems can improve in the future.

The inner quality theory of governance seeks to integrate these two approaches to politics, because people are both realists and idealists by nature. All human beings have both a material and spiritual side to their existence, often referred to as body and soul. The body and soul of an individual can and ought to be harmoniously integrated in a person's consciousness, since the body and soul are two dimensions within the singularity of selfhood. The inner quality theory of governance is concerned with what works in the material world and also what might be improved upon in all aspects of moral and spiritual life. This book examines Machiavelli's political theories from the dual perspectives of the inner quality.

Machiavelli has often been called the world's first political scientist because he based most of his theories on observations of how politics actually works rather than upon moral speculation about how politics ought to work. These observations were through his own eyes as a professional

diplomat and through his extensive studies of other systems of government, in particular the classic Greek and Roman governance systems. In taking this pragmatic approach, Machiavelli initiated a substantial change in the way scholars and thinkers of his day looked at politics. As a result of his efforts, largely unrecognized by his peers, Machiavelli is considered today as one of the most influential thinkers of all times.

Machiavelli's motivation in writing these studies of politics is complicated. *The Prince* was in essence a job application to show the Medici that he would be a valuable civil servant. *The Discourses* were part of a broader effort to leave a record on his reflections on how government and politics both work and ought to work. Machiavelli wanted to leave a record of historical lessons to be followed by others more fortunate than himself who sought to serve mankind in a position of political responsibility. As he said in the introduction to Book II of *The Discourses*:

“I shall boldly declare in plain terms what I understand of those ancient times and of our own times, so that the minds of young men who read these writings of mine may be able to reject the present and prepare themselves to imitate the past whenever Fortune provides them with an occasion. For it is your duty as a good man to teach others whatever good you yourself have not been able to do, either because of the malignity of the times or because of Fortune, in order that – since many will thus be made aware of it – someone more beloved by Heaven may be prepared to put your truth into action.” (p. 290)

The key to understanding Machiavelli's work, I believe, is to view his efforts as an attempt to create a roadmap for the reunification and rebuilding of Italy, which had fallen into disgrace over the centuries. *The Prince* was a blueprint on how a powerful leader could unify the country through the most efficient means. *The Discourses* were speculation on how the new nation could

best be governed. The guidance found in *The Prince* was concisely written and completed. The guidance in *The Discourses* was preliminary and incomplete by the time of his death, although many key principles of governance had been identified.

We now turn to an in-depth discussion of Machiavelli's works, beginning with *The Prince*, his most famous articulation of how a leader might best seize and maintain control of an expanding empire through pragmatic means.

The Prince

Background

Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* in 1513 in the hopes of attracting the attention of the Medici family, then rulers of Florence, in order to find suitable employment in government. He was a gifted and energetic man, and he was anguished over having to sit on the sidelines while great matters of state were being decided in his beloved Italy. As Machiavelli wrote in the first paragraph of *The Prince*:

“Wishing, therefore, to offer myself to Your Magnificence with some evidence of my devotion to you, I have not found among my belongings anything that I might value more or prize so much as the knowledge of the deeds of great men, which I learned from a long experience in modern affairs and a continuous study of antiquity; having with great care and for a long time thought about and examined these deeds, and now having set them down in a little book, I am sending them to your Magnificence....And if your Magnificence will turn your eyes at some time from the summit of your high position toward these lowlands, you will realize to what degree I unjustly suffer a great and continuous malevolence of Fortune.” (pp. 78-79)

Machiavelli presented *The Prince* to the head of the governing family of Florence during a particular historical period in which Italy was occupied in part by mercenaries, the city states were constantly fighting one another, the Catholic Church was heavily corrupted, justice was ill-administered with torture being the norm, and cruelty and barbarisms in the conduct of war were common. He wrote *The Prince* as a tactical guide for a potential leader to bring under control all of Italy to restore its former glory. In Machiavelli's view, this required a strong and ruthless leader.

Despite the limited intent of *The Prince*, the plan of action that he urged, and especially its underlying rationale, captured an approach to politics in which moral judgments about the leader's policies and actions are set aside until the final result of those policies and actions could be determined. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli convincingly argued that, in certain situations, a strong leader may have to do things normally considered evil in order to achieve the greater good of a united and peaceful society.

The Prince sets forth an end-justifies-the-means approach to politics that has been used by generations to justify their amoral or even evil activities in their personal and professional life. From the perspective of the inner quality, there are at least two major lessons to learn from Machiavelli's advice to his prince: first, don't let your desperation for employment cause you to overemphasize existing reality and to ignore the ideal toward which all men should strive; and second, if you are a leader, don't be too good or too idealistic because in the political affairs of men the innocent and visionaries often fall prey to the powerful who seek to advance only their own interests.

Despite the misinterpretation and misuse of the arguments found in *The Prince*, it is important to remember that Machiavelli was at heart a good man who longed for justice, goodwill, and peace

in government and society. To achieve these goals during a time of troubles, however, he was willing to set aside moral considerations and employ all available means to improve social and political conditions. He found in his study of history ample evidence that such an approach often works in politics.

From the perspective of the inner quality philosophy of ethics and government, a fine balance must be maintained between doing what is necessary to fulfill one's social responsibilities and being true to one's personal ethical and moral standards. It may indeed be necessary to act amorally when protecting one's nation, community, or family from a serious threat. That necessity, however, almost never extends to justifying personal excesses. The balance between social duty and personal behavior needs to be kept firmly in mind by everyone, especially a leader, lest he or she fall prey to the temptation to believe personal immorality can be justified or overlooked because of the social good they are trying to achieve.

Given that *The Prince* did not gain him a meaningful job in the Medici government and that *The Discourses* were not completed by the time of his death, there is a high probability that Machiavelli felt personal failure in his desire to further the political wellbeing of his beloved Italy. Nonetheless, he might have felt some pride in developing a system of using historical evidence to identify important lessons for political leaders.

From the point of view of the inner quality, feelings of failure or pride can be harmful to the evolution of the soul if felt too intensely. A sense of too much personal failure or too much personal pride are two sides of the same coin of excessive egoism, or being too attached to one's material self and not sufficiently attached to one's spiritual self. The reason excessive egoism can be harmful to the soul's evolution can best be understood in the context of the soul's purpose for being embodied on earth. In the inner quality philosophy, the soul – initially created by God

and given a certain character of goodness we call the inner quality – is the spiritual part of a human being. In order for the soul of man to learn the proper use of free will, the soul needs to be embodied in physical form (the material part of a human being) to learn how to make proper decisions in the material dimensions of time and space.

In this way, the earth is a schoolroom for the soul. The soul is not intended to remain forever at the same level of its education here on earth. To be too attached to its earthly existence through too much human egoism postpones unnecessarily the soul's movement into other schoolrooms of life. Therefore, even while we are human beings here on earth, we need to be cognizant of ourselves as being both material and spiritual. The inner quality is the common character shared by both the soul and its human embodiment. That is why, in the inner quality philosophy, consideration is given to both the material and spiritual dimensions of human existence, and why our decision making ought to include both material and spiritual factors. Too much of a sense of human failure or too much human pride tends to place too much emphasis on the material side of our existence and not enough on the spiritual side of our existence.

A balance ought to be maintained in outer consciousness between one's physical body and one's soul. This balance is the natural state of human existence, just like a giant tree naturally stands tall with deep roots and a vast superstructure above the ground. However, in our case, the balance can be lost if we identify too much with the denser levels of our consciousness. It is this imbalance through excessive egoism that inclines us to move away from right action, right thought, right feeling, right memory, and right spirituality.⁵ Think of consciousness as a fluid. If it is clear of excessive egoism, then the light shines through and it is easy to integrate body and

⁵ The Buddha taught the eightfold path: "Right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration." For one translation, see Thanissaro Bhikkhu, *Magga-vibhanga Sutta: An Analysis of the Path*, 1966, <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn45/sn45.008.than.html>.

soul. If it is clouded with excessive egoism, then the connectivity between body and soul cannot easily be seen. When our vision of integrated selfhood is lost or severely dimmed, then we tend to create negative karma which keeps us in cycles of birth and death as those debts are paid.

One way to lessen excessive egoism is to adopt a degree of nonattachment to the fruit of one's actions. As Krishna taught Arjuna on the battlefield in the *Bhagavad Gita*: "Fight for the sake of duty, treating alike happiness and distress, loss and gain, victory and defeat. Fulfilling your responsibility in this way, you will never incur sin."⁶ Essentially, this is guidance for a person to do his duty, and not be too attached to the result. Doing one's duty, however, requires a certain degree of confidence in the correctness of one's actions, and many people do not have this confidence. That confidence can be gained when one knows the inner quality, or character of the soul, which is our personal attribute of goodness and goodwill. When applied by one's higher mind to problems at hand, the inner quality provides a set of ethical standards and heightened intuition which bring to the outer mind a clearer sense of direction. One then needs to feel unattached to the fruits of that action, much like the Zen archer who nonchalantly shoots his arrow yet never misses the target.⁷ All of this is the natural thing to do, and it is the operational part of the inner quality philosophy of ethics and government. It is realism from an integrated material and spiritual perspective.

We now turn to an inner quality analysis of *The Prince*, with section headings roughly following those used in the original manuscript.

⁶ *Bhagavad Gita*: Chapter 2, Verse 38. For one of many translations of the *Gita* into English, see *Bhagavad Gita: The Song of God*, with commentary by Swami Mukundananda, <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/chapter/1>.

⁷ For an "explanation" of Zen archery, see Eugen Herrigel, *Zen in the Art of Archery* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953).

How many kinds of principalities there are and the way they are acquired

Machiavelli notes that all states are either republics or principalities. And principalities are either hereditary or new; and the new ones are either completely new or added to the state that acquires them. The dominions taken are either accustomed to living under a prince or accustomed to being free, and they are gained by the force of arms either by others or by oneself, either through Fortune or through cleverness. In the first several chapters of *The Prince*, Machiavelli discusses the various kinds of principalities, their strengths and weaknesses, and how the prince can best govern them depending on the individual characteristics of the principalities.

It is important to note as we proceed in our analysis that principalities, while common in the Middle Ages, are rare today. Examples include Monaco and Liechtenstein. Principalities are ruled by princes or monarchs, and they are usually very small in size. Machiavelli lived in the Italian city-state of Florence. Italy at the time was divided and occupied in part by foreign mercenaries. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli uses the principality as the initial base a prince must control and then use to expand his authorities. With a personal goal to unify Italy into one country, Machiavelli's strategy to accomplish this was through the actions of a single powerful prince whom he could advise.

On hereditary principalities

Machiavelli notes that hereditary principalities are easier to maintain than new states, "for it suffices simply not to break ancient customs, and then to suit one's actions to unexpected events; in this manner, if such a prince is of ordinary ability, he will always maintain his state, unless some extraordinary and inordinate force deprive him of it." (pp. 79-80) Moreover, in such a state, it is easy for the prince – unless he be subject to unusual vices – to be well-liked by his subjects. Beginning with this small taste of Machiavelli's realism, in the next chapter he turns to the crux of the matter: "it is the new principality that causes difficulties." (p. 80)

On mixed principalities

The first kind of new principality is a mixed principality, defined as those mixing hereditary and newly acquired territory. It is here that Machiavelli begins to make key observations about the negative traits of man, commenting that “men gladly change their masters, thinking to better themselves.” (p. 80) Because of this human instinct to watch after one’s own interest, a prince who acquires a mixed principality will find that he makes enemies of those he conquered as well as those in his old kingdom who feel themselves not properly awarded for their efforts. But he also observes, “although one may have the most powerful of armies, he always needs the support of the inhabitants to seize a province.” (p. 80)

These two themes – the untrustworthiness of men and their tendency always to look first after their own interests, and the need of even a powerful military ruler to maintain support from the people – are repeated many times in *The Prince*. From the inner quality governance point of view, the twin necessities of controlling the population yet keeping their support is the foundation of most governments, which fall somewhere on the spectrum between controlling and seeking the support of the people. Finding and maintaining a point of balance on the continuum determines in large measure the type of government. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli’s model was highly authoritarian. In *The Discourses*, his model was republican and democratic.

Machiavelli thus seems to have stood at the crux of this polarity of totalitarian and democratic forms of government. He sought, on the one hand, to instruct the prince on how to acquire complete power and control; and he sought, on the other hand, to establish principles for a new form of government that would protect freedom and liberty for the benefit of all the people. He turned to totalitarian means as the most effective and efficient way to unite Italy into a single country; and he turned to liberty as the best foundation for governing Italy as a united republic.

Returning to Machiavelli's discussion, he observes in *The Prince* that maintaining control over a province where the people are accustomed to freedom is fairly easy, for "to possess them securely, it is only necessary to have extinguished the family line of the prince who ruled them, because insofar as other things are concerned, men live peacefully as long as their old way of life is maintained and there is no change in customs." (p. 81) Further, in those acquired lands which share a common language and similar customs, it is again fairly easy to merge them into one's principality, because "anyone who acquires these lands and wishes to maintain them must bear two things in mind: first, that the family line of the old prince must be extinguished; second, that neither their laws nor their taxes be altered; as a result they will become in a very brief time one body with the old principality." (pp. 81-82)

These are some of the earliest suggestions Machiavelli makes to eliminate not only the old ruler of the newly acquired territory but also his entire family. While excessively cruel in modern times, this practice was common in the past. Nonetheless, the presentation of these sorts of lessons from history resulted in the term "Machiavellian" being used to describe brutal, expedient political acts carried out with little or no regard for morality. In *The Discourses*, however, Machiavelli does examine the positive role of moral behavior in politics and spends much time considering the principles that should guide ideal forms of government.

Viewing the issue of which political means to use, the inner quality philosophy of ethics would offer several guidelines: (1) the decision to employ moral or amoral means is always a choice of free will; (2) the inner quality of each person is a character of goodness found in the soul and also in human instincts of empathy and altruism; (3) if one's decisions are guided by the inner quality, then in virtually all cases, the free will choice to employ moral or amoral means will be decided in favor of goodwill; and (4) an individual's best approach to decision making is usually

to follow the inner quality's moral standards in personal behavior and to perform one's duty in a social context.

Machiavelli advised leaders to always to look to the future and try to head off trouble before it arises. He believed that wise leaders do not wait for time to bring them good fortune, but rather act to make good things happen at a time of their choosing. He writes:

“princes have not only to watch out for present problems but also for those in the future, and try diligently to avoid them; for once problems are recognized ahead of time, they can be easily cured; but if you wait for them to present themselves, the medicine will be too late, for the disease will have become incurable....Thus, seeing from afar any difficulties, the Romans always found a remedy; and they never let them develop in order to avoid a war, because they knew that war cannot be avoided but can only be put off to the advantage of others....Nor did they ever like what is always on the tongues of our wise men today, to enjoy the benefits of time, but they enjoyed instead the benefits of their strength and prudence; for time brings with it all things, and it can bring with it the good as well as the bad and the bad as well as the good.” (pp. 84-85)

Machiavelli thought it natural for men to want to acquire things in their lives and that those successful in doing so would be praised, while those who failed would be criticized and taken advantage of by others. He says, “The desire to acquire is truly a very natural and normal thing; and when men who can do so, they will always be praised and not condemned; but when they cannot and wish to do so at any cost, herein lies the error and the blame.” (p. 86)

Machiavelli was a close observer of the nature of men, especially their strengths and weaknesses, and these observations played an important part in his political philosophy. From an inner quality

perspective, an analysis of the behavior of men needs to be augmented by assessing their highest aspirations as well, since the ideal has the potential of one day becoming reality. A leader ought to be aware of both current reality and future possibilities and use his higher mind to work towards achieving the best possible outcome for his state. The goal of the leader is not to manipulate the people but rather to encourage them to strengthen their spirit, facilitate their health, and improve their material wellbeing.

However, to help others succeed also carries some risk in Machiavelli's view. He writes, "one can derive a general rule which rarely, if ever, fails: that anyone who is the cause of another's becoming powerful comes to ruin himself." (p. 88) Here, Machiavelli was speaking to a tyrant, reminding him that helping someone become too powerful will likely result in that person turning against the prince himself.

This is one of the most important differences between Machiavellian politics and inner quality politics. Machiavelli's prince is a tyrant who views other powerful people with suspicion and fear. Leaders guided by the inner quality view other powerful people with respect and encourages mutual cooperation to improve the lot of mankind. At the same time, inner quality leaders are aware of human frailties and are not easily out-manuevered or manipulated. Being guided by goodwill does not result in weakness but rather results in strength and confidence.

That strength and confidence comes from being aligned with one's soul and, hence, with the will of God as best as one can understand it.

[How principalities should be governed that lived by their own laws](#)

In this section, Machiavelli considers how difficult it is for a tyrant to control a territory whose people are used to liberty. He observes, "anyone who becomes lord of a city used to living in liberty and does not destroy it may expect to be destroyed by it; because such a city always has

as a refuge, in any rebellion, the name of liberty and its ancient institutions, neither of which are ever forgotten either because of the passing of time or because of the bestowal of benefits....the most secure way is either to destroy them or to go there to live.” (pp. 91-92)

This is an interesting observation by Machiavelli, because he indirectly acknowledged the strength of a society based on liberty. These societies will not easily accept outside rule from a dictator, because its citizens always remember the benefits of liberty. Hence, at any opportunity, they will rebel against the tyrant. Machiavelli’s advice to the prince considering to absorb societies living in liberty was either to destroy the society completely or to live among them and adopt their ways so they accept the prince as one of their own. Machiavelli also advised the prince that it would be easier to control a conquered society previously ruled by a dictator, because the people there were used to being subjugated and would accept a new tyrant in place of the old.

From the perspective of inner quality politics, societies living in liberty and freedom are almost always better than those living under an authoritarian government. Although at times tumultuous, a free society is usually strong and united in the face of a common threat. Because free societies are not easily controlled if conquered by authoritarian states, a free society must maintain a strong military for self-defense, because its enemies, should they be victorious, will probably find it necessary to be extraordinarily cruel and oppressive since rebellion by the previously free citizens will always be a possibility.

[On new principalities acquired by one’s own arms and by skill](#)

Machiavelli believed that both Fortune and skill were necessary for a prince to acquire and maintain power and control over his principality. This was especially true for new principalities. He notes that the very greatest of the princes who have formed new states have done so by using

the opportunity given them by Fortune to achieve their ends, for “without that opportunity the strength of their spirit would have been extinguished, and without that strength the opportunity would have come in vain.” (p. 93)

The inner quality philosophy holds a similar view across almost all human endeavors. Whether a person be a farmer, teacher, athlete, scientist, soldier, or politician – all require a certain degree of good luck to achieve their goals. At the same time, individuals must themselves develop their own skills and work hard to achieve what they set out to do. To a great extent, the opportunities one has and the skills one possesses are the product of karma, dharma, and the soul’s innate talents and virtues. This reflects the basic assumption of inner quality ethics and governance that humans are by nature both spiritual and material, and that the most successful of people are those who harness and take full advantage of the opportunities and talents they have in all dimensions of their being.

Machiavelli observes that the difficulty in establishing a new principality comes primarily from the attempt to create new things: a new system, new institutions, new methods. He notes,

“there is nothing more difficult to execute, nor more dubious of success, nor more dangerous to administer than to introduce a new system of things: for he who introduces it has all those who profit from the old system as his enemies, and he has only lukewarm allies in all those who might profit from the new system. This lukewarmness partly stems from fear of their adversaries, who have the law on their side, and partly from the skepticism of men who do not truly believe in new things unless they have actually had personal experience of them.” (p. 94)

Machiavelli was keenly aware that men's weakness caused them generally to be blind to new opportunities and resistant to new ideas. Even though men must transcend their present situation to overcome existing and emerging challenges, it is the tendency of most people to prefer the known over the unknown. Still, the nature of life is constant change, so people have an innate ability to adapt once change has been forced upon them. In a remarkably short time, they are able to adjust to a new environment.

Machiavelli suggested that a new leader should oversee the implementation of new things himself and not leave it to others to accomplish. He writes that when new leaders "lean on their own resources and can use power, then only seldom do they find themselves in peril. From this comes the fact that all armed prophets were victorious and the unarmed came to ruin. Besides what has been said, people are fickle by nature; and it is simple to convince them of something but difficult to hold them in that conviction; and, therefore, affairs should be managed in such a way that when they no longer believe, they can be made to believe by force."

As we repeatedly see, Machiavelli in general had a low opinion of people, believing them to be fickle, weak, irresolute, and disloyal. Given these proclivities in people, the prince, if he is to be successful, must find strength from within himself. He must be independent and not depend on others. Moreover, the prince must know how to use power and force, because having a new idea is not sufficient to bring about change. One must have not only the idea but also the force of will to put the idea into practice. Also, to hold on to what he acquires, the prince needs to convince the people that their support is not only justified and in their interest, but also required of them on pain of personal suffering.

It should be remembered that Machiavelli in *The Prince* addresses a certain type of person, one who believes himself destined to be a ruler and who is willing to use his own skill to create a

new state and system of government. In his rise to power, this type of person inevitably creates many enemies. Achieving victory usually requires that he vanquish those who oppose him, for only then can he live relatively secure. Machiavelli emphasizes two necessary conditions in the rise to power of this person: (1) exceptional leadership qualities, and (2) the right set of circumstances. Machiavelli is offering in *The Prince* a roadmap based on history as to how this special kind of person might best acquire power and accomplish his goals. He is not presenting a political theory applicable to the general public.

The inner quality philosophy of politics accepts as legitimate Machiavelli's attempt to address a special kind of leader in *The Prince*, one who was presented with a unique opportunity to change the course of history. The guidance here was not intended to be used by political leaders in normal conditions, but rather in times of nation building when the lives and fortunes of multitudes were at stake. In this sense, Machiavelli was similar to Sun Tzu who gave advice in *The Art of War* as to how war ought to be conducted in order to achieve victory in a life or death struggle. Sun Tzu did not believe his general to be a common person. Like the prince, the general requires a certain degree of ruthlessness to be able to successfully defeat an enemy intent on his destruction and the ruin of his state. Machiavelli and Sun Tzu were both focusing their attention on the single person best able to ensure that victory rather than defeat was the outcome. These are special people facing unique circumstances, and the advice given to them is not for normal times. To both Machiavelli and Sun Tzu, such extreme circumstances require the setting aside of common concepts of morality and proper behavior, because the cost of failure is too high.

The inner quality philosophy of ethics and government acknowledges that Machiavelli and Sun Tzu were addressing situations not often found in the affairs of man. In those rare circumstances, the morally correct behavior applicable to a person in his private affairs do not always apply to

the person in the fulfillment of his public duties. In normal times, one's private and official behavior should reflect a similar standard of morality. But, in times of violence and uncertainty, where the stakes are life and death, the standards of acceptable behavior in one's personal life and in one's public life may differ. This exception, however, does not justify improper behavior on the part of the prince or the general under all circumstances. Leaders ought to be as impeccable as possible in their personal and professional life. And, as a general principle, leaders ought never to use good intentions in their social duties to excuse misbehavior in their personal lives. Inner quality ethics suggests these admonitions, not because leaders are perfect people without vices, but because the karma of misusing power is severe and may result in the leader losing his opportunity to do all the good that he would do.

On those who have become princes through wickedness

One of the most memorable discussions in *The Prince* is Machiavelli's consideration of the role of wickedness and cruelty in the seizure and maintenance of power. Overall, from a modern perspective, such considerations seem beyond the pale of reason.⁸ However, such measures in Machiavelli's time were common practice and thus a legitimate area of historical inquiry in his analysis. He writes that although one can become a prince through wickedness, "it cannot be called skill to kill one's fellow citizens, to betray friends, to be without faith, without mercy, without religion; by these means one can acquire power but not glory." (p. 104)

Thus, while it is true that Machiavelli believed the prince was justified in sometimes using vile means to achieve noble ends or to preserve himself or his principality, he did not approve of unnecessary or excessive cruelty. To Machiavelli, achieving glory was as important as achieving

⁸In Machiavelli's time and in earlier centuries, many of the things we now consider crimes against humanity or war crimes were commonplace. For a listing of these kinds of crimes, see the several publications of the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention, <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/index.shtml>.

power, for it ennobled the prince and made him more than a tyrant. To have glory requires a leader not only to be successful, which sometimes necessitates ruthlessness, but also for the leader to demonstrate nobility of purpose. Cruelty and ruthlessness ought not to be the dominant qualities of a ruler's character.

Here we see the subtlety of Machiavelli's view on the ends justifying the means. He argues that doing what is usually considered to be evil is justified under certain conditions. However, it is not justified to do evil for evil's sake or to use its means simply to exert or to acquire power. Machiavelli would argue that there is a moral difference between someone acting with an evil heart and someone acting with a good heart. Both may use the same devices, but the one does so to achieve evil ends and the other does so to achieve some worthwhile goal. Based on his study of what worked in the past, Machiavelli seemed to believe that sometimes it is necessary to do cruel things so that good may come at the end. If these means were not employed, the good may never come. In the world of Machiavellian politics, to achieve great ends, a leader must do what works and avoid what does not work – including sometimes using cruelty effectively and avoiding being too good when it leads to one's ruin.

From the inner quality perspective, Machiavelli's argument highlights one of the weaknesses of a purely realist approach to politics – the weakness being that the evidence you are using to draw conclusions for the present is based on a temporary reality. Since all environments change over time, so will your observations and conclusions. If we analyze from a realist perspective events occurring during an evil time, then the conclusions we draw are likely to be heavily influenced by the normalcy of evil. On the other hand, if we are realists analyzing events during a time of goodwill, then goodness will be reflected in our conclusions. In other words, reality being observed strictly from a realist point of view can result in completely opposite conclusions. This

is particularly true when a realist perspective is used to analyze politics, because the political environment in all societies changes constantly, sometimes moment to moment. That is why political science, when based solely on data collection, often has inconclusive or even contradictory results: you cannot take a picture of what occurred at a specific point in time and space and draw firm conclusions. Nor is it possible for the human mind to encompass all realities in its analysis. The realist approach is not based on reality at all.

Idealism as an approach to political science has its weaknesses as well, in that it is often based on the imagination and instincts of the analyst, a mostly subjective approach. The differences between quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis in politics is notorious for leading to conclusions not supported by the other. That is why, in the analytical approach of inner quality, the best analysis comes from an ability to move seamlessly from one paradigm to the next, from one level of analysis to another, and to be able to synthesize and integrate as many perspectives as possible into a close approximation of what works and what is possible. The inner quality method of analysis not perfect at all, but at least it expands the spectrum of reality being examined and thereby increases the probability of getting closer to the truth of the matter.

Machiavelli was not wrong in trying to view politics from a realist perspective. His efforts were successful in the sense that he helped thinkers in future generations move away from relying too much on religious doctrine in the solving of human problems. But Machiavelli's efforts also fell somewhat short in that politics, as in all affairs of men, are a combination of what is possible and what is practical, what is spiritual and what is material. The proper perspective is not pure realism nor pure idealism; it is a combination of the realist perspective and the idealist perspective, both of which need to be considered in developing political philosophy and theory

because human beings have both a material and spiritual dimension to their existence here on earth.

Machiavelli does not advocate the frequent use of cruelty, but he does note that it has been used in the past. And when it has been used, it has been employed more successfully in some ways than in others. He observes that the prince can hold on to power through cruel means, but it depends largely on how cruelty is used. He writes:

“I believe this [holding on to power through cruelty] depends on whether cruelty be well or badly used. Well used are those cruelties (if it is permitted to speak well of evil) that are carried out in a single stroke, done out of necessity to protect oneself, and are not continued but are instead converted into the greatest possible benefits for the subjects. Badly used are those cruelties which, although being few at the outset, grow with the passing of time instead of disappearing. Those who follow the first method can remedy their condition with God and with men...; the others cannot possibly survive.” (p. 106)

Machiavelli continues:

“Wherefore it is to be noted that in taking a state its conqueror should weigh all the harmful things he must do and do them all at once so as not to have to repeat them every day, and in not repeating them to be able to make men feel secure and to win them over with the benefits he bestows upon them....Injuries, therefore, should be inflicted all at the same time, for the less they are tasted, the less they offend; and benefits should be distributed a bit at a time in order that they may be savored fully. And a prince should, above all, live with his subjects in such a way that no unforeseen event, either good or bad, may make him alter his course; for when emergencies arise in adverse conditions,

you are not in time to resort to cruelty, and that good you do will help you little, since it will be judged a forced measure and you will earn from it no thanks whatsoever.”(pp. 106-107)

In these passages, Machiavelli reveals several important things about his beliefs and the lessons of history he thinks are important for a prince. He shows that he believes in God and that he thinks cruelty is evil. He shows that he believes in goodness as being more important in governance than cruelty and evil. Nonetheless, he also shows his willingness to employ cruelty under certain conditions. Cruelty, if it is to be used, must be employed only when necessary, be directed only towards a limited portion of the population, be ended as soon as possible, and be replaced by good deeds of benefit to the people. In Machiavelli's view, those who employ cruelty because they like it, because it is in their nature, or because they misuse it as an instrument of policy will come to a quick and violent end.

From the perspective of the inner quality, evil and cruelty are not appropriate means in politics, although they can be effective instruments if used as Machiavelli suggests. A leader in the inner quality tradition is not evil or cruel, because his consciousness is anchored in goodness. That is not to say that harsh measures should never be employed in public policy. Policy ought always to have a dual side: benefits and costs. Setting aside the instruments of cruelty in the past which have been largely outlawed in modern times, the application of penalties for disobedience to the law or rebellion against the state are appropriate under these conditions: (1) the punishment is appropriate to the offense; (2) the punishment is fair and just; (3) the intent of the punishment is to deter and instruct, not to abuse the offender; and (4) the administrator of the punishment must not be malevolent or prone to excessive harm. The difference between an appropriate and inappropriate application of penalties, therefore, has mostly to do with the intentions behind the

penalty and the instrument of justice used. A desire to do cruel things or to enjoy its application is wrong; a willingness to use punishment as a deterrent or instrument of instruction is acceptable and necessary in all systems of governance.

On the civil principality

Machiavelli observed that a principality also can be gained through the favor of one's common citizens, and that "one reaches this principality either with the favor of the common people or with that of the nobility. For these two different humors are found in every body politic; and they arise from the fact that the people do not wish to be commanded or oppressed by the nobles, and the nobles desire to command and to oppress the people; and from these two opposed appetites there arises one of three effects: either a principality or liberty or anarchy." (p. 107)

Machiavelli describes the various combinations by which a prince may come to power with the aid of either the nobles or the common people. He emphasizes that the prince must fear those nobles who do not commit themselves to him, and he must always seek to win over the support of the people. He writes, "a prince must have the friendship of the common people; otherwise he will have no support in times of adversity." (p. 109) Also, "when the prince who builds his foundations on the people is one who is able to command and is a man of spirit, not confused by his adversities, and does not lack other necessities, and through his courage and his institutions keeps up the spirits of the populace, he will never find himself deceived by the common people, and he will discover that he has laid sound foundations." (p. 110)

To Machiavelli, society always has two basic groups: the nobility and the common people, both of whom are in opposition to the other – the former seeking control and the latter seeking liberty. Machiavelli strongly suggests that government should rest upon the support of the common people, not the elite. In this, he is far ahead of his time, for government during his period

routinely relied upon the support of society's nobility and elite. Machiavelli believed the ruler should serve the common people, who consequently will never abandon their support for the ruler. Machiavelli despised a ruler who oppresses the people, but he did justify the use of violence and deception when seizing and maintaining control over the elite in society. The nobility, according to Machiavelli, can pose a threat to even to a good prince, but that threat rarely occurs from the common man when he is treated fairly by the prince.

Machiavelli noted that the greatest danger to princes governing principalities won by popular support is when "they are about to change from a republic to an absolute form of government." (p. 110) In these cases, the people may not support him, since the people naturally love liberty. Machiavelli concludes: "therefore, a wise prince should think of a method by which his citizens, at all times and in every circumstance, will need the assistance of the state and of himself; and then they will always be loyal to him." (p. 110) Later in his discussion, Machiavelli states that the ideal qualities in a leader are purity, goodness, humanity, and generosity. (p. 126)

From the perspective of the inner quality theory of politics, Machiavelli correctly concludes that leaders must base their rule on the support of common citizens rather than the elite of society. At the same time, he accurately observes that the common people greatly prize liberty and will not easily tolerate being deprived of their freedom. If a prince wants to keep power, Machiavelli advises that he always maintain the support of the people, either by respecting their liberty or by making himself indispensable to their wellbeing. Centuries later, Machiavelli's observations on the importance of the common citizen were picked up by political philosophers who lay the theoretical foundations for modern democratic forms of government.

On those things for which men, and particularly princes, are praised or blamed

The conflict in a leader's mind between doing what is necessary and doing what is good is a frequent theme addressed by Machiavelli in *The Prince*. His views on the issue were clearly raised when discussing in this section the methods a prince should use in dealing with his subjects and policy matters. Emphasizing that he was trying "to search after the effectual truth of the matter rather than its imagined one" (p. 126), he writes:

"there is such a gap between how one lives and how one ought to live that anyone who abandons what is done for what ought to be done learns his ruin rather than his preservation: for a man who wishes to make a vocation of being good at all times will come to ruin among so many who are not good. Hence it is necessary for a prince who wishes to maintain his position to learn how not to be good, and to use this knowledge or not to use it according to necessity." (p. 127)

Machiavelli insisted that a prince needed to know how to use means that were not good and to be ready to employ them, but he also believed such means ought not to be used unless necessary. He also believed that, in the world as it exists, to always be good – no matter the circumstances – would lead to a prince's ruin. The inner quality philosophy of ethics and government would modify this advice somewhat, noting that goodness ought always to be in the leader's heart and mind, while being aware of the necessity at times to act in ways not normally considered good in the performance of one's duties to preserve the community and to protect its interests. An evil person can use the sword, and a good person can use the sword. The difference is not so much in the sword as it is in the intentions of the wielder of the sword.

Machiavelli continues:

“all men, when they are spoken of, and particularly princes, since they are placed on a higher level, are judged by some of these qualities which bring them either blame or praise....And I know that everyone will admit that it would be a very praiseworthy thing to find in a prince...qualities...that are held to be good; but since it is neither possible to have them nor to observe them all completely, because human nature does not permit it, a prince must be prudent enough to know how to escape the bad reputation of those vices that would lose the state for him, and must protect himself from those that will not lose it for him, if this is possible; but if he cannot, he need not concern himself unduly if he ignores these less serious vices. And, moreover, he need not worry about incurring the bad reputation of those vices without which it would be difficult to hold his state; since, carefully taking everything into account, one will discover that something which appears to be a virtue, if pursued, will end in his destruction; while some other thing which seems to be a vice, if pursued, will result in his safety and wellbeing.” (pp. 127-128)

These few sentences encapsulate the essential Machiavellian philosophy of political leadership at the highest level. He believes that men are by nature imperfect; they possess vices as well as virtues. For a leader, it is prudent and his duty to preserve the state by whatever means are necessary. In Machiavelli's view, it is a far greater error to lose a state because of good but ineffective means than it is to use expedient methods to keep the state safe and secure.

Expediency does not necessarily mean the use of evil means or vices, for sometimes good measures can preserve the state. Machiavelli's view of expediency is that it is not always dishonorable for a leader to do bad things when necessary to fulfill his duty. However, it is always dishonorable for a leader to lose the state because he is unwilling to do bad things. The

acumen of a great leader is to be as good as possible whenever possible, but to know when and how to do bad things when absolutely necessary to preserve his own power and his state.

Machiavelli preferred men to be perfect and good, but he recognized that in the real world people are not always perfect and good. In fact, according to Machiavelli, history shows that leaders who are too good are usually destroyed by those who are not good. In the view of history, these failed good leaders are not praised at all, but rather criticized for having neglected to do their duty to protect their power and the state. On the other hand, those leaders who have normal vices but who are mostly good, and who did successfully use necessary means to preserve their power and the state, are highly praised. Like a successful general on the field of battle, a successful leader in politics during a time of crisis ought not to be too sensitive in doing what is necessary to achieve victory. In Machiavellian politics, fulfilling one's duty to protect the state is far more important than failing in one's duty by being too good.

So, how is a person who is in contact with their inner quality and who knows how to utilize their higher mind perform his or her duties as a leader? A couple of points may help clarify any differences between Machiavelli's view and that of the inner quality philosophy.

First of all, it is exceedingly rare to find a political leader who is also a saint. The two paths are quite different. Perhaps the most that can be expected of a leader is that he or she always keep their best character in mind when making decisions of state. Machiavelli suggested something of a middle way in *The Prince* when he recommended the leader be noble and good whenever possible, but be willing to be not good if that is the only viable option for survival of the person or the state. When he said that leaders sometimes need to do things that are not good, Machiavelli spoke the truth. But he did not make clear enough the need to place moral boundaries around the leader's actions; not doing so leaves the human self with the sole authority

to make moral judgments. From the inner quality perspective, it may be morally correct to employ cruel means to save a state or one's life, but it is usually immoral to employ cruel means merely to gain advantage for oneself or when cruelty is not the only option.

Second, Machiavelli's advice might also have been improved if he had suggested ways in which the prince could encourage the people to attain a higher glory. History teaches the importance of this lesson as well, for there have been many great leaders who improved the culture of their society.⁹ In the inner quality philosophy of politics, a leader must be concerned with both social survival and cultural transcendence. Being able to communicate a vision of a better future and to lead the people in that direction is nearly as important as being able to defend the state.

Machiavelli's great contribution to political science in *The Prince* was that he shifted the attention of thinkers away from what ought to be to what has actually happened. The problem is that *The Prince* shifted the focus of politicians too much away from the ideal to the strictly pragmatic. In reality, both ideal and pragmatic perceptions need to be articulated in political philosophy and demonstrated by a successful and great leader.

[On cruelty and mercy and whether it is better to be loved than to be feared or the contrary](#)

Here and elsewhere in *The Prince*, Machiavelli discusses how minor vices can be used by the prince for his benefit, as long as the vices are not carried to extreme, are seldom displayed, and the outcome has a positive impact on most of society. In discussing whether cruelty might sometimes be justified when the prince is seeking to acquire and hold a new principality,

Machiavelli observes:

⁹ A few examples include Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), George Washington (1732-1799), Winston Churchill (1874- 1965), Moses (c 1391 – 1271 BC), Asoka (c. 260 – 232 BC), and Charlemagne (742 – 814).

“every prince must desire to be considered merciful and not cruel; nevertheless, he must take care not to misuse this mercy....a prince must not worry about the reproach of cruelty when it is a matter of keeping his subjects united and loyal; for with a few examples of cruelty he will be more compassionate than those who, out of excessive mercy, permit disorders to continue, from which arise murders and plundering; for these usually harm the community at large, while the executions that come from the prince harm one individual in particular.” (p. 130)

Machiavelli weighs the social costs of displaying cruelty toward specific individuals who threaten the state versus the use of excessive mercy that allows social disorder to occur, since none fear punishment. Machiavelli clearly is a strong disciplinarian and urges the prince to preserve law and order in order to maintain peaceful conditions that benefit society as a whole. To serve this purpose, he approves the limited use of cruelty against specific threats to society and his government. Although cruelty was very much accepted as part of justice in Machiavelli's time, he was not in favor of excessive cruelty. As in most things, Machiavelli urges caution and prudence on the part of the prince, a middle road which avoids extremes in any direction.

In terms of whether it is better to be loved than to be feared, or vice versa, Machiavelli notes that “one should like to be one and the other; but since it is difficult to join them together, it is much safer to be feared than to be loved when one of the two must be lacking.” (p. 131). Machiavelli explains that this is necessary because of the character of men:

“For one can generally say this about men: that they are ungrateful, fickle, simulators and deceivers, avoiders of danger, greedy for gain; and while you work for their good they are completely yours, offering you their blood, their property, their lives, and their sons...when danger is far away; but when it comes nearer to you they turn away. And

that prince who bases his power entirely on their words, finding himself stripped of other preparations, comes to ruin; for friendships that are acquired by a price and not by greatness and nobility of character are purchased but not owned, and at the proper moment they cannot be spent. And men are less hesitant about harming someone who makes himself loved than one who makes himself feared because love is held together by a chain of obligation which, since men are a sorry lot, is broken on every occasion in which their own self-interest is concerned; but fear is held together by a dread of punishment which will never abandon you.” (p. 131)

He adds later in the text: “I conclude, therefore, returning to the problem of being feared and loved, that since men love at their own pleasure and fear at the pleasure of the prince, a wise prince should build his foundation upon that which belongs to him, not upon that which belongs to others.” (p. 133)

In these statements we have, once again, clear indications of Machiavelli’s view of men in general. His view reflects not only his observations of people but also his personal bitterness at being unjustly imprisoned, tortured, exiled, and denied employment in government. In many ways, Machiavelli felt his life was wasted, and his experience with many other men had not been happy – although there were exceptions to this as seen in his personal correspondence.

This negative view of people goes a long way in explaining why Machiavelli condoned a leader’s vices in *The Prince*. Because the leader cannot trust most men, he must rule – for his own safety and for the security of his principality and people – not simply by kindness and love but also by fear. Machiavelli believed strongly in the principles of having men fear you to keep them under control but also having men seek and be grateful for your generosity earned by their good service.

In the inner quality philosophy of ethics and government, there is recognition that all men have two sides: one material and one spiritual. On the material side, the embodied person has both virtue and vices, and these two tendencies often are seen during times of crisis which bring out the best and the worst in man. On the spiritual side, the soul is man's link to his Creator and the repository of the highest good of the person as a son or daughter of God. Machiavelli's concentration in *The Prince* was on the realities of politics in the material world, which reflect the duality of good and bad in people's outer character. Machiavelli believed it best for the prince to be both loved and feared, based on the people's self-interest. The inner quality philosophy also takes man as he is but deliberately seeks to move his character in a higher direction by working with the best side of man (his soul), while at the same time recognizing man's vices and trying to keep those under control.

How a prince should keep his word

Machiavelli continues in this section to describe his view of mankind, which is not good, and which requires in turn that a successful prince sometimes act in ways that are not good as well. For example, here he argues that an honest prince will almost always lose to his dishonest enemies. He writes:

“How praiseworthy it is for a prince to keep his word and to live by integrity and not by deceit everyone knows; nevertheless, one sees from the experience of our times that the princes who have accomplished great deeds are those who have cared little for keeping their promises and who have known how to manipulate the minds of men by shrewdness; and in the end they have surpassed those who laid their foundations upon honesty.... A wise ruler, therefore, cannot and should not keep his word when such an observance of faith would be to his disadvantage and when the reasons which made him promise are

removed. And if men were all good, this rule would not be good; but since men are a sorry lot and will not keep their promises to you, you likewise need not keep yours to them.” (pp. 133-134)

From the inner quality perspective, mankind do have much to be ashamed of in their character and actions. Most politicians continue to try to deceive people to hold onto power and to promote their own political agendas. This is partly because of man’s nature and partly because politics itself is nearly always about power and political power is a scarce commodity not comfortably shared. To win in politics, most politicians seek to manipulate the people, the media, and other politicians into believing their words are true and their ideas are correct. Politics in many ways is like war, business, sports, and other competitive arenas in life: deception is routinely used to gain an advantage in order to win the game that is being played.

Even though this side of mankind must be acknowledged, there is also the other side of mankind that hopes for honesty, integrity, and goodness to be shown in all affairs of life. From the point of view of the inner quality philosophy of ethics and government, the leader must know the negative side of man and also his good side. While it is necessary on earth to work within an environment of imperfection, the inner quality leader ought never to tire of trying to find ways to improve the character of people. Every increment of goodness is an improvement that is worth the effort; however, the leader must also know how to deal with imperfect people and to deflect the efforts of those who would do him harm. This requires a fine balance in the character and skill of the inner quality leader.

Machiavelli continues: “You must, therefore, know that there are two means of fighting: one according to the laws, the other with force; the first way is proper to man, the second to beasts; but because the first, in many cases, is not sufficient, it becomes necessary to have recourse to

the second. Therefore, a prince must know how to use wisely the natures of the beast and the man...and the one without the other cannot endure.” (pp. 133-134) Of the beasts to emulate, Machiavelli chooses the fox and the lion:

“Since, then, a prince must know how to make good use of the nature of the beast, he should choose from among the beasts the fox and the lion; for the lion cannot defend itself from traps and the fox cannot protect itself from wolves. It is therefore necessary to be a fox in order to recognize the traps and a lion in order to frighten the wolves. Those who play only the part of the lion do not understand matters.” (p. 134)

Machiavelli continues: “A prince never lacks legitimate reasons to break his promises... and he who has known best how to use the fox has come to a better end. But it is necessary to know how to disguise this nature well and to be a great hypocrite and a liar: and men are so simpleminded and so controlled by their present necessities that one who deceives will always find another who will allow himself to be deceived.” (p. 134)

From an inner quality perspective, these passages show that Machiavelli knows and accepts a moral right and a moral wrong. However, he tends to dismiss morality as being a practical guide for leaders since the environment of politics is not governed by moral rules. One senses that as *The Prince* progresses, Machiavelli is on an increasingly slippery slope of amorality. Having accepted the idea that it is sometimes necessary to be immoral when personal and social survival are at stake, he begins to blend the distinction between what is necessary and what is convenient, thereby expanding the justification for use of immoral means. From the point of view of the inner quality, it is very easy for a politician to get out of alignment with his own soul’s sense of honor and integrity. For that reason, the inner quality philosophy emphasizes that one’s highest virtue ought to be held constantly in the heart and mind of leader and citizen alike so that the

natural corruptive aspects of political power can be held in check. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli largely turns to the lessons of history, in which abuse of power is common and often successful in achieving the goals of political leaders.

Machiavelli admits there is a conflict between doing what is morally right and doing what is morally wrong. However, to acquire and keep political power, it is necessary for the prince to be able to switch easily from one side of the moral coin to the other. He writes that it is important for the prince:

“to seem merciful, faithful, humane, forthright, religious, and to be so; but his mind should be disposed in such a way that should it become necessary not to be so, he will be able and know how to change to the contrary. And it is essential to understand this: that a prince, and especially a new prince, cannot observe all those things by which men are considered good, for in order to maintain the state he is often obliged to act against his promise, against charity, against humanity, and against religion. And therefore, it is necessary that he have a mind ready to turn itself according to the way the winds of Fortune and the changeability of affairs require him; and, as I said above, as long as it is possible, he should not stray from the good, but he should know how to enter into evil when necessity commands.” (p. 135)

In this passage we see the essence of Machiavelli’s advice to a prince. His fundamental premise is that a leader of a state is required to live according to a standard different from ordinary people. The leader should keep to the good whenever possible; however, he should always be able in the face of necessity to do things that are not good.

From an inner quality point of view, it is understood that leaders may be inclined at times to accept evil deeds as expedient or useful under certain conditions. This perspective, while understandable, reflects the corruptive arrogance of power that often comes to those who have command authorities. The temptation to view oneself as always being right tends to overwhelm the common sense of what is appropriate. When a leader accepts the view that his position gives him the sole authority to force his decisions on others, then the door is open to use falsehoods and other deceptions as convenient means to manipulate or compel others to accept the leader's preferred direction.

At a certain point, doing evil on the grounds of expediency becomes a more powerful rationalizing argument than the moral imperative of doing good because it is the right thing to do. It becomes easier and easier to do whatever is expedient, regardless of whether it is necessary or wise. A leader in this state of mind becomes increasingly immune to the impulses of conscience that normally come to one when weighing moral options. And if a leader becomes deaf to his conscience, then he can gradually lose contact with his soul, his true self, and his God. Thus, the rationale that it is acceptable to do evil that good may come can eventually cause great harm to the soul of the leader or whomever else may employ that logic. That is why, within the inner quality philosophy, leaders are urged to always use their best character as a moral sounding board before making substantive decisions. This simple technique will assist the leader to avoid the addiction of expediency.

Machiavelli continues on the need of the prince to appear to be good but to be ready to do the opposite if required to do so. He writes:

“A prince, therefore, must be very careful never to let anything slip from his lips which is not full of the five qualities mentioned above: he should appear, upon seeing and hearing

him, to be all mercy, all faithfulness, all integrity, all kindness, all religion. And...in the actions of all men, and especially of princes, where there is no impartial arbiter, one must consider the final result. Let the prince therefore act to seize and to maintain the state: his methods will always be judged honorable and will be praised by all; for ordinary people are always deceived by appearances and by the outcome of a thing; and in the world there is nothing but ordinary people....” (pp. 135-136)

Machiavelli’s statement that “in the actions of all men, and especially of princes, where there is no impartial arbiter, one must consider the final result” is one of the key components of his political philosophy. In the Italian, this is “si guarda al fine” (often mistranslated as “the ends justify the means.” Machiavelli never wrote “the ends justify the means.” In *The Discourses*, Book I, chapter xiv, Machiavelli writes, in speaking of those individuals who found a new state or new institution: “It is, indeed, fitting that while the action accuses him, the result excuses him; and when this result is good, as it was with Romulus [founder of Rome], it will always excuse him; for one should reproach a man who is violent in order to destroy, not one who is violent in order to mend things.” (pp. 200-201) Machiavelli excused and even encouraged decisive action to gain control of the state or to achieve some noble goal of the state. He believed that in achieving this end, the prince would be judged by the achievement not by the methods employed.

From the inner quality perspective, there is a certain logic in what Machiavelli is saying, but only within the context of giving advice to a general or a leader or founder of a nation. By definition, this is an uncommon man with uncommon responsibilities, one who is attempting to achieve great things for a great many people. But this type of moral exceptionalism carries with it great danger as well as great opportunity, because the scope of the impact of a leader’s moral decision

is far beyond the individual himself – hundreds, thousands, even millions of people can be affected. Thus, the karmic accountability of the leader is many times greater – good and bad – than the karmic accountability of an individual.

In the inner quality philosophy, it is recognized that few people on earth are completely free from sin or some kind of habitual vice. On the other hand, the sense of the ideal, the pure, the perfect can also be found in almost everyone. The proportion and the strength of the moral and immoral varies considerably between people and within individuals themselves at different times. The common man and the leader all share this human characteristic. Regardless of their station, the inner quality philosophy encourages all men to discover and seek to become more of their highest virtue. This encouragement is especially important to political leaders, who are often drawn into the conundrum of seemingly needing to employ immoral means to achieve benefits for society.

According to the inner quality philosophy, one way out of this conundrum is for the leader to always seek to maintain a proper sense of moral balance. This occurs when the leader tries to express his highest virtue whenever possible in his political decisions. That choice is always the preferred choice. In exceptional circumstances, employing less virtuous means may be necessary if no viable alternative exists and key interests are at stake. But only as a last resort.

The leader should remember that God and the heavenly host support a conscientious person trying to do his civic duty in the best way possible. Asking for their assistance ought to be part of the daily ritual of a leader, because an effort to integrate his spiritual and material sides will strengthen his moral courage and often inspire him to move in a morally correct and effective direction. The key to maintaining this integration is to use one's inner quality and higher mind as the standard and the instrument for determining how best to achieve one's goals. This is

especially true when one's goals are seen as a duty to accomplish some great task such as unifying or creating a new nation.

Machiavelli in *The Prince* was trying to lay the groundwork for such a goal, and he understood from the study of history that to achieve that goal would necessitate moral tradeoffs. The main weakness in his advice was that he ignored too much the idealistic and spiritual dimensions of mankind and focused instead too intensely on the prince's manipulation of the negative traits of humanity. He adopted this methodology with the intent of being realistic; however, his approach in *The Prince* was biased in the sense that those creating a new country must not only deal with human imperfections but also know how to uplift and inspire men to work towards a better future.

We now turn to an analysis of *The Discourses*, where Machiavelli is much more balanced in his treatment of the moral imperatives of political leaders to lay a proper foundation for a new form of government.

The Discourses

Introduction

In *The Prince* Machiavelli sets forth practical guidelines for a new prince to seize and maintain control of a principality in 16th century Italy. Machiavelli's hope was that Lorenzo d'Medici would read this treatise, adopt his suggestions, and employ Machiavelli as an advisor to help unify Italy. *The Prince* is filled with descriptions of how to deal with the court intrigue, deception, and ruthlessness common in Machiavelli's day, as well as in ancient Greece, Roman, and other political systems studied by Machiavelli. In *The Prince* Machiavelli indicates on several occasions that he believes in God and in the ideals of goodness, but he focuses on overcoming human weaknesses in the systems of government at the time. For centuries, *The*

Prince has been considered a model for a realistic and scientific approach to the study of politics, and Machiavelli is given well deserved credit for having a huge influence on the Renaissance and Reformation period in Europe.

Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* while he was concurrently writing *The Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius*, a broader study of politics directed toward defining an ideal form of government, which he believed to be a free republic, or a society with liberty. *The Prince* took only a few months to write, whereas *The Discourses* were written over many years and never fully completed. But from the two documents, we can see two sides of Machiavelli's political philosophy. On the one hand, he was a practical realist as shown in *The Prince*; on the other hand, he was an idealist as reflected in *The Discourses*.

Although Machiavelli is best known for *The Prince* and a pragmatic approach to politics, *The Discourses* – while less widely read – made important contributions to the concept of liberty in government, with a republic being recommended as the most likely form of government through which to realize liberty in personal and public life. In fact, as one reads *The Discourses*, the parallels between Machiavelli's historically based conclusions as to the best form of government and the principles of governance found in United States and other modern democracies are clear. Drawing primarily from a close reading and commentary on Livy's monumental history of Rome,¹⁰ Machiavelli's lessons influenced the rationale for many institutions built into the American Constitution.

The Discourses were first published in 1531; they were never written as a complete book. He set aside *The Discourses* in 1513 to write *The Prince*, and then returned to in 1515 with the final

¹⁰ For an online copy, see, "Titus Livius: The History of Rome," <http://mcadams.posc.mu.edu/txt/ah/Livy/>. Livius is also referred to as Livy in English literature.

drafting being done in 1517. *The Discourses* reflected Machiavelli's discussion of republics (states) in general, whereas *The Prince* concerned itself primarily with authoritarian control of principalities. *The Discourses* are believed to have been developed out of Machiavelli's marginal notes while reading Livy's history of Rome. The fact that the writings came from marginal notes helps explain why the chapters are organized the way they are. The chapter titles closely parallel the marginal notes, so that the chapter titles themselves are often the lessons Machiavelli drew upon reading the various sections of Livy's history. The ordering of the chapters is not always consistent, but rather reflect Machiavelli's thoughts as he read and commented on Livy's work over many years.

As with our previous discussion of *The Prince*, in this examination of *The Discourses* we will move chapter by chapter through the book and comment on those sections which seem relevant to the inner quality philosophy of ethics and government. In *The Discourses*, that relevancy will mostly be on the founding principles of best government, based on Machiavelli's analysis of Roman history. There are three books, or main sections, of *The Discourses*. The chapters in Book I are considered in greater detail than the chapters in Books II and III, because Machiavelli's observations were repeated several times.

Book I

In Book I Machiavelli discusses the decisions the Romans made in matters concerning their internal affairs. In his Introduction to Book I, Machiavelli reveals something of his character and his low esteem for his fellowman: "Because of the envious nature of men, it has always been no less dangerous to discover new methods and institutions than to explore unknown oceans and lands, since men are quicker to criticize than to praise the deeds of others. Nevertheless, driven by that natural desire I have always felt to work on whatever might prove beneficial to everyone,

I have determined to enter a path which has not yet been taken by anyone....” (p. 169) He explains why he has adopted his unique approach to the study of politics: “in instructing republics, maintaining states, governing kingdoms, organizing the army and administering a war, dispensing justice to subjects, and increasing an empire one cannot find a prince or a republic that has recourse to the examples of the ancients.” (p. 170)

Machiavelli wanted to write something of use to mankind even as he was critical of their basic meanness. His fundamental character was intellectually creative and courageous, and he was willing to explore new ideas and methodologies if he felt these held promise to contribute value to society. His approach to the study of politics was to analyze the past and bring forth the lessons of the ancients in order to instruct the political elite of his day. Because his methodology was unique for the times and is still used today by many social scientists, he is considered by many to be the father of modern political science.

What the beginnings of all cities have been and what, in particular, was the beginning of Rome

Machiavelli writes that cities were established by native peoples because “inhabitants, dispersed in many small groups, feel they cannot live securely” in a threatening world. (p. 171) This is Machiavelli’s assumption on one of the fundamental questions of politics: Why did people form societies and government in the first place? In this chapter Machiavelli concludes that one of the factors in the success of a city is that it must be fertile enough so that its inhabitants can prosper yet it must be bound enough by nature or by domestic law so that idleness does not weaken the people. It is interesting that Machiavelli’s views on the necessity of a balance between challenge

and opportunity parallels in several ways the conclusions of historian Arnold Toynbee on the need for a proper balance between challenge and response in the success of civilizations.¹¹

On how many kinds of republics there are and of what kind the Roman republic was In this chapter, Machiavelli focuses on cities built by native peoples, not those established by foreigners. He observes, “A republic can, indeed, be called fortunate if it produces a man so prudent that he gives it laws organized in such a manner that it can live securely under them without needing to revise them.” (pp. 171-172) Machiavelli here establishes a basic principle that wisely conceived and administered laws are keys to the survival and wellbeing of a successful society, and that these laws and civil institutions must be built at the outset of the society, else the society might fail.

Generally following the order of the ancient Greeks, Machiavelli notes that there are three types of republics: “principality, aristocracy, and democracy.” (p. 176) Each of these are good in themselves, but each can turn into a bad government: “the principality easily becomes tyrannical; aristocrats can very easily produce an oligarchy; democracy is converted into anarchy with no difficulty.” (p. 177) He does not here show a preference of the type of government best suited for all men at all times, but he does express his belief that any government can become corrupt, abusive, and destructive.

Machiavelli also presents a very interesting theory about the rise and fall of the various political systems as they evolve from one to another. He writes that forms of government:

“are born among men by chance: for in the beginning of the world, when its inhabitants were few, they lived at one time dispersed and like wild beasts; then, when their numbers

¹¹ Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948).

multiplied, they gathered together and, in order to defend themselves better, they began to search among themselves for one who was stronger and braver, and they made him their leader and obeyed him. From this sprang the knowledge of what things are good and honorable, as distinct from the pernicious and the evil: for if someone were to harm his benefactor, this aroused hatred and compassion among men, since they cursed the ungrateful and honored those who showed gratitude; and thinking that the same injuries could also be committed against themselves, they made laws to avoid similar evils and instituted punishments for transgressors. Thus, the recognition of justice came about. The result was that, later on, when they had to elect a prince, they did not select the bravest but rather the one who was most prudent and most just. But when they began to choose the prince by hereditary succession rather than by election, the heirs immediately began to degenerate from the levels of their ancestors....So, as the prince came to be hated he became afraid of this hatred and quickly passed from fear to violent deeds, and the immediate result was tyranny.

“From this there came next the destructions, the conspiracies, and the plots against princes, carried out not by those who were either timid or weak but by those who surpassed others in generosity, greatness of spirit, wealth, and nobility: these men could not stand the disreputable life of such a prince. The masses, therefore, following the authority of these powerful men, took up arms against the prince, and after he had been eliminated they obeyed those men as their liberators. And since those men hated the very idea of a single ruler, they constituted for themselves a government, and in the beginning, since they remembered the past tyranny, they governed according to the laws instituted by themselves, subordinating their own interests to the common good, and they managed

and maintained both their private and public affairs with the greatest of care. When this administration later passed to their sons, who did not understand the changeability of Fortune, had never experienced bad times, and could not be satisfied with equality among citizens, they turned to avarice, ambition, and the violation of other men's women, and they caused a government of the aristocrats to become a government of the few, with no regard to any civil rights; so that in a short time they experienced the same fate as the tyrant, for as the masses were sick of their rule, they assisted, in any way they could, anyone who might plan to attack these rulers, and thus there soon arose someone who, with the aid of the masses, destroyed them. And since the memory of the prince and of the injuries received from him was still fresh, they turned to a democratic form of government, having destroyed the government ruled by a few men and not wishing to return to that ruled by a prince; and they organized it in such a way that neither the few powerful men nor a prince might have any authority whatsoever in it. And because all governments are, at the outset, respected, this democratic government was maintained awhile, but not for a long time, particularly after the generation that organized it passed away; it immediately turned to anarchy, where neither the individual citizen nor the public official is feared; each individual lived according to his own wishes, so that every day a thousand wrongs were done; and so, constrained by necessity, either because of the suggestion of some good man or in order to flee such anarchy, it returned again to the principality; and from that, step by step, the government moved again in the direction of anarchy, in the manner and for the reasons just given.

“And this is the cycle through which all states that have governed themselves or that now govern themselves pass; but rarely do they return to the same form of government, for

virtually no state can possess so much vitality that it can sustain so many changes and remain on its feet....

“Let me say, therefore, that all the forms of government listed are defective: the three good ones because of the brevity of their lives, the three bad ones because of their inherent harmfulness. Thus, those who were prudent in establishing laws recognized this fact and, avoiding each of these forms in themselves, chose one that combined them all, judging such a government to be steadier and more stable, for when there is in the same city-state a principality, an aristocracy, and a democracy, one form keeps watch over the other.” (pp. 177-179)

Machiavelli did not believe in ancient golden ages in which men were at one time perfect and their governments also perfect; rather, he believed history as it was recorded and accepted these descriptions as fact. From the study of history and his own observations, he concluded that men evolved from a low estate into an increasingly sophisticated one, and that as man and his social institutions evolved, different lessons were learned and applied in various types of governing institutions and styles of governance.

Machiavelli drew from history the lesson that societies and governments pass through definable and even predictable cycles; and further that the most stable political system is one in which a set of checks and balances are established by law – based on the lessons of history – such that each powerful group in society keeps an eye out on the others. To Machiavelli, the powerful centers in society were princes, nobility, and common man, which, if left to rule by themselves, would establish, respectively, a principality, aristocracy, and democracy. He felt that all three centers of power had important roles to play in government, and that a stable government required the contributions of each. However, their negative tendencies had to be controlled and balanced

through political institutions and laws. In this chain of reasoning, Machiavelli identified through historical examples the fundamental principles of checks and balances found so prominently in the U.S. Constitution.

Which events caused the creation of the tribunes of the plebeians in Rome, making the republic more perfect

In this chapter, Machiavelli again makes plain that he believes all man are evil to some extent, and that it is important for governments to recognize that inherent tendency and to counter it through laws and institutions. He writes:

“As is demonstrated by all those who discuss civic life (and as history is full of such examples), it is necessary for anyone who organizes a republic and institutes laws to take for granted that all men are evil and that they will always express the wickedness of their spirit whenever they have the opportunity; and when such wickedness remains hidden for a time, this is due to a hidden cause that is not recognized by those without experience to the contrary; but then time, which is said to be the father of every truth, will uncover it....men never do good except out of necessity; but when they have the freedom to choose and can do as they please, everything immediately becomes confused and disorderly.” (pp. 181-182)

Machiavelli believes that those who establish states and make laws must assume that all men are evil and that they will express that evil whenever they have the opportunity. He does not mean that all men are evil by nature, but rather that all men have an evil side which will come out on occasion. Because of this inclination, he advises that it would be a mistake to assume that people are good and will behave properly. Since all men will express the evil inside of themselves at times, and in order to protect society as a whole and to encourage man’s good side, institutions

and laws ought to be designed to dissuade and counter that evil tendency. Machiavelli is making an argument based on history that those who found republics must assume the worst and institute laws to guard against people's evil tendencies.

From an inner quality perspective, this is an interesting issue: whether government institutions ought to assume citizens are good or bad. Since all people seem to have both tendencies inside of themselves, the inner quality theory of governance assumes that laws and institutions ought to work with both sides of people: on the one hand, encouraging their good side; on the other hand, deterring their bad side. Thus, government and laws should not only constrain the bad but also promote the good; in other words, the state and government should be organized in such a way as to reward the good and to punish the bad.

Elsewhere in his writings, Machiavelli does suggest this more balanced approach, but his emphasis is mostly placed on how to deter the evil side of men rather than to promote the good. The primary reason for his approach is that good deeds seldom threaten the state, whereas evil deeds always present a risk to society. From the point of view of the inner quality, man is naturally good at the level of the soul and the true self. The character of the soul reflects God's own goodness. However, when looking at how society functions in the material world, mankind in embodiment often does evil things. Since society reflects both the good and the bad within its citizens, constraints are required to ensure that the bad does not prevail over the good.

Theoretically, from the inner quality perspective, there seems to be at least seven different influences that impact human consciousness and behavior at any given time:

1. There is the will of God, the flow of life, the direction of the Tao, that is everywhere present in the universe and which acts impersonally on man as well as on other parts of existence.
2. There is the inner quality, the true self, the source of goodness that is tied to God; the subjective desire to be one's true self is innate in virtually all men.
3. There is the evolutionary instinct built within the DNA of the body of man that seeks to survive, prosper, and procreate; these instincts exist in all men in embodiment.
4. There is the influence of evil that rebels against the will of God, a destructive force that repeatedly has been demonstrated throughout history.
5. There is the pervasive influence of the environment and random circumstances, for how one acts is often in reaction to the challenges and opportunities afforded in life.
6. There is man's free will and his ability to choose; free will is mankind's natural birthright, and its decisions are based on personal experience, education, personality, circumstances, and other conditions in the life of the individual.
7. There is dharma and karma, that is, the mission or duty the soul carries into its embodiment on earth as well as the positive and negative conditions that return to the individual because of the proper or improper use of free will.

These influences (and probably others), individually and collectively in various combinations, affect a person's thoughts, feelings, and behavior – good and bad – almost every waking moment of the day. Given all of these confluences in the person and in society as a whole, a government to preserve social order and best opportunity for its citizens must have in place a complex,

interactive, integrated, and flexible system of laws, regulations, policies, and institutions that are sustainable, balanced, predictable, affordable, and responsive, as well as mostly manageable.

This presents a tremendous challenge to those involved with politics and public policy, especially in modern times with its rapid change, increasing complexity and interdependence, growing populations, and uncertainty of cost, benefits, and eventual outcomes.

To Machiavelli's credit, he tried to bring all of these factors together through an objective study of history in order to come up with a set of practical guidelines to aid in the establishment and organization of new forms of government that might more effectively benefit its many and varied citizens. A large number of these principles found their way, through the minds and contributions of many thinkers over the centuries, to the Constitution of the United States. As imperfect as it may be, the U.S. Constitution is a remarkable document that deserves careful consideration as a model for many nations. And two of the most important forces in human nature that Machiavelli built upon in determining those principles were liberty and freedom. Most of Machiavelli's principles, certainly those supporting liberty and freedom, are also foundations of the inner quality theory of governance.

How the conflict between the plebeians and the Roman senate made that republic free and powerful

Machiavelli in this chapter discusses the Roman Empire and the reasons for its success. He observes that liberty and freedom are actually the results of conflicting interests between various classes in society: "in every republic there are two different inclinations: that of the people and that of the upper class, and that all of the laws which are made in favor of liberty are born of the conflict between the two." (p. 183)

Here Machiavelli is saying that good laws and good institutions come from the articulation and accommodation of conflicting interests within a society. In an ideal society of perfect people, one would expect that such laws and institutions would come from reason, common sense, and goodwill. But men in the real world of politics are not always reasonable, use their common sense, or express goodwill. Thus, if government is to function well, it must be able to use the natural conflicting interests of individuals to balance each other and in the process establish laws and institutions for the sake of mutual self-interest. In these observations, Machiavelli is once again identifying political insights which lay the foundation for representative democracies such as the United States. Most modern governments establish institutions and procedures which balance power between conflicting groups in the hope that they will find it in their best interests to compromise with each other. To make this possible, Machiavelli states, “every city must have a means by which the people can express their ambition, and especially those cities that wish to make use of the people in important affairs.” (p. 184)

Interestingly, despite his often stated low opinion of mankind in general, Machiavelli seems to have high regard for the common people in terms of political affairs, and he clearly considers as superior a government which gives them a voice and an opportunity to participate in public policy. The goal of good government, in Machiavelli’s view, is not to force upon everyone a single point of view or to eliminate all controversy and conflict of interests, but rather to give these various points of view an opportunity for self-expression and participation in the public policy process. This is accomplished through good laws and good institutions allowing open dialogue and encouraging all parties to participate in policy discourse. Machiavelli was very much in favor of a civic society in which virtually everyone could and did participate. He

believed that such a system would result in the compromises necessary to produce good and lasting laws.

The inner quality theory of governance agrees with this perspective, but would note – as did the American founding fathers – that for this type of system to work, extreme partisanship must be overcome through multiple systems of effective checks and balances.

Whether the protection of liberty may be more securely placed in the people or in the upper classes; and which has the strongest cause for creating uprisings, those who wish to acquire or those who wish to maintain

Machiavelli notes that one of the most necessary things to organize in a republic is the protection of liberty, and that according to how well this is done the state will either last a long or a short time. He advises:

“those should be put in charge of a thing who have the least desire to usurp it. And without a doubt, if we consider the goal of the nobles and the commoners, we shall see that in the former there is a great desire to dominate and in the latter only a desire not to be dominated, and, as a result, a greater will to live in liberty since they have less hope of acquiring it than the powerful: so, if the common people are set up as the caretakers of liberty, it is reasonable that they will have a greater concern for it, and since they cannot seize it themselves, they will not permit others to do so.” (pp. 184-185)

Machiavelli believes that the common people are the best protectors of liberty and should be in charge of its continuation, since they have the most to lose if liberty is lost. However, he also admits the reasonableness of the argument of those who say that the nobles are the best protectors of liberty since they can be more objective in its protection, having already acquired it themselves, and will not permit the excesses of the masses, who are never satisfied with their power. In these observations, Machiavelli sets forth the justification for two different centers of

power in two separate institutions – an idea carried forward in the United States in its Congress having two chambers: the Senate and the House of Representatives.

How the right to bring public charges is necessary for a republic to preserve its liberty Machiavelli stresses the need for a mechanism to allow the grievances of citizens to be expressed and be resolved according to law: “nothing makes a republic so stable and strong as organizing it in such a way that the agitation of the hatreds which excite it has a means of expressing itself provided for by the laws....adequate provision for this is made by making a number of judges available before whom public indictments may be made; and these accusations must be given proper importance.” (p. 193, 195-196)

Machiavelli is arguing for an independent judiciary that is fair and impartial, and where the people can bring their grievances under the law without fear of retribution and with confidence that they will be heard and that justice will be administered. This outlet for the people’s passion and frustrations, he believes, is essential to maintain the state’s stability and strength. The alternative is for aggrieved citizens to invite foreigners to intervene on their behalf, which results in harm to the republic at large. Machiavelli makes the important point that this system of justice has to be part of the fundamental laws of the state. Machiavelli was far ahead of his time in arguing for an independent judicial system. Later in *The Discourses*, Machiavelli makes the point that false accusations are as harmful to republics as the bringing of public charges is useful.

How a man must be alone in order to found a new republic or to reform completely its ancient institutions

Machiavelli states as a general rule:

“it rarely or never happens that a republic or kingdom is well organized from the beginning, or completely reformed, with no respect for its ancient institutions, unless it is

done by one man alone; moreover, it is necessary that one man provide the means and be the only one from whose mind any such organization originates; therefore, a prudent founder of a republic, one whose intention it is to govern for the common good and not in his own interest, not for his heirs but for the sake of the fatherland, should try to have the authority all to himself; nor will a wise mind ever reproach anyone for some extraordinary action performed in order to found a kingdom or to institute a republic. It is, indeed, fitting that while the action accuses him, the result excuses him; and when this result is good, as it was with Romulus, it will always excuse him: for one should reproach a man who is violent in order to destroy, not one who is violent in order to mend things.” (pp. 200-201)

Machiavelli here briefly returns to the lessons of history explored in *The Prince*. Namely, that it takes an exceptional man who accomplishes exceptional things for the good of many by establishing a new order of things, especially a new republic. In his efforts, which often involve violent means as in a revolution, his amoral actions will almost always be overlooked and even approved in hindsight – if he is successful. While this argument is close to the end justifying the means in the specific setting of establishing a new republic, Machiavelli is careful to say that he is talking about the founding fathers of states, and further, that these founding fathers are acting not to advance their own interests but to establish a new government for the benefit of all.

From the perspective of the inner quality philosophy of ethics and government, Machiavelli’s argument has a degree of truth when all of these qualifiers are considered, because – in the affairs of men – a few are called upon whose duty it is to destroy the old in order to bring in the new. This argument is easily misused, however, since many people look for excuses to justify their immoral actions. If everyone adopted Machiavelli’s rationale for their life’s activities, then

society would be without honor or justice. Machiavelli does repeatedly make the point – often ignored – that those who use violence to destroy others or their property for the sake of cruelty or for self-interest should be condemned. He only states that those who use violence to build new institutions, create new states, or heal broken laws should not be condemned if their efforts to improve things are successful.

In his argument, Machiavelli focuses on three moral dimensions: (1) a man's actions, (2) the results of a man's actions, and (3) the man's intentions in performing the actions. Of the various combinations, Machiavelli would greatly honor a man if his actions were peaceful, the results beneficial to many, and his intentions were good. Machiavelli would consider this man both wise and fortunate. However, Machiavelli would pardon a man if his actions were evil but the results and his intentions were good. According to Machiavelli, these people are exceedingly rare in history, and judgment of them should be based on what they accomplished not on the methods they used. The worst leaders are those whose actions were evil, their results a failure, and their intentions evil.

Machiavelli makes the point that, after the republic is established, the founder ought not to turn his power over to his heir or to any other person. He writes:

“The founder should be so prudent and able-minded as not to bequeath the authority he has taken to his heir; for, since men are more apt to do evil than good, his successor might use for ambitious ends what the founder had employed virtuously. Besides this, though one man alone is fit for founding a government, what he has founded will not last long if it rests upon his shoulders alone; it is lasting when it is left in the care of many and when many desire to maintain it. As the many are not fit to organize a government, for they cannot recognize the best means of doing so because of the diversity of opinion

among them, just so, when they have realized that they have it they will not agree to abandon it.” (p. 201)

In other words, while the many cannot agree on how a new republic should be organized, the many are essential to maintaining a republic once it has been established. This has implications for a democratic government. The majority of the people can be trusted to help in the preservation of the state, but not in the creation of its government, since the masses do not have the vision of the founder and, even if they did, they could not agree amongst themselves which road to take. Only a very few can create political institutions; many, however, are required for their preservation.

Those who found a republic or a kingdom deserve as much praise as those who found a tyranny deserve blame

In the judgment of leaders, Machiavelli considers what it is they have accomplished and how they have achieved it. He writes:

“Among all praiseworthy men, the most praiseworthy are those who were leaders and founders of religions; next come those who founded either republics or kingdoms; after these the most celebrated men are those who, commanding armies, have increased either their own kingdom or that of their native land; next to these may be placed men of letters, who, since there are of various types, are each praised according to their merits. To other men, whose number is infinite, some portion of praise may be attributed according to the skill they possess in their art or profession. On the other hand, men who have destroyed religions, wasted kingdoms and republics, and have been enemies of virtue, letters, and every sort of profession that brings gain and honor to the human race – such as the impious, the violent, the ignorant, the useless, the lazy, and the wicked – are considered

infamous and detestable; and no one will ever be so mad or so wise, so sorry or so good that, given the choice between the two kinds of men, he will not praise those who merit praise and blame those who deserve blame.

“Nevertheless, in the end nearly all men, deceived by a false appearance of good and a false sense of glory, allow themselves, either by their own choice or through their ignorance, to join the ranks of those who deserve more blame than praise; and while they have the possibility of establishing, to their perpetual honor, either a republic or a kingdom, they turn instead to tyranny, not realizing how much fame, glory, honor, security, tranquility, and peace of mind they are losing by such a decision, and, on the other hand, how much infamy, vituperation, blame, danger, and unrest they incur.” (p. 203)

Machiavelli in these two paragraphs reveals much about his views of leaders and mankind in general. He is idealistic in the sense that he places the highest glory upon those who found religions and well-administered republics, and his severest condemnation is given those who do not believe in God, who are wicked and selfish, who destroy religion and kingdoms, and who establish tyrannies. He considers himself as being realistic when he expresses pessimism over the quality of even the best of men, noting that most fail in noble activities and most of those who do succeed wind up establishing tyrannies.

Specifically in this chapter, Machiavelli considers how often the founders of republics give in to the temptation to hold on to all reins of power for themselves. Instead of creating a democracy for the benefit of all, they instead gravitate toward tyranny for which they are universally condemned. Machiavelli clearly holds religion and goodness as ideals for men; but he expresses

disappointment in people, because he observes that men almost always fail to reach or sustain the highest levels of accomplishment which they can attain.

From the inner quality perspective, much of this tendency for men to fail, even at the door of triumph, is due to a mistaken sense of self-identity. Not knowing one's true self has two principal results. On the one hand, there is a sense of human glorification, or excessive egoism. On the other hand, there is a will to fail that stems from a lack of self-respect. A true sense of self and self-respect can be acquired when the individual comes to know and begins to reflect his or her best character, or inner quality. By doing this, the individual has a sense of becoming the true self, and it is that sense that gives one greater self-knowledge and more self-respect. The redefining of one's sense of self-identity and discovery of personal virtue and value dissipate the will to fail and frees the individual from the tendency to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

Machiavelli provides additional insight into how an aspiring prince should view his opportunities and ought to choose the noblest path forward:

“In the times when good emperors governed, he [a student of history] will see a ruler secure in the midst of his secure citizens, and a world of peace and justice; he will see a senate with its full authority, the magistrates with their honors, the rich citizens enjoying their wealth, the nobles and ability exalted, and he will find tranquility and wellbeing in everything; and on the other hand, he will see all rancor, licentiousness, corruption, and ambition extinguished; he will see a golden age in which a man can hold and defend whatever opinion he wishes. He will, in the end, see the world rejoicing: its prince endowed with respect and glory, its peoples with love and security. If next he studies carefully the times of the other emperors, he will see them full of the atrocities of war, the conflicts of sedition, and the cruelties of both peace and war, so many princes put to

death by the sword, so many civil wars, so many foreign wars, all of Italy afflicted and full of previously unknown adversities, and her cities ruined and sacked. He will see Rome burned, the Capitoline destroyed by her own citizens, her ancient temples desolate, her rituals corrupted, and the cities full of adulterous conduct; he will see the seas covered with exiles and the earth stained with blood. He will find countless cruelties in Rome and discover that nobility, wealth, past honors, and especially virtue are considered capital crimes. He will see the rewarding of those who accuse falsely, the turning of servants against their masters and freedmen against their former owners, and he will see those who, lacking enemies, are oppressed by their friends.

“And the prince, without a doubt, if he is a man, will be frightened away from any imitation of the bad times and will burn with an ardent desire to follow the ways of the good times. If a prince truly seeks worldly glory, he should hope to possess a corrupt city – not in order to ruin it completely as Caesar did but to reorganize it as Romulus did. And the heavens cannot truly bestow upon men a greater opportunity for obtaining glory than this, nor can men desire a greater one....In conclusion, then, let those to whom the heavens grant such opportunities observe that there are two paths open to them: one allows them to live securely and makes them famous after death; the other makes them live in continuous anxiety and, after death, allows them to leave behind an eternal reputation of infamy.” (pp. 205-207)

In this passage, Machiavelli reveals several important insights into his political philosophy. First, he is most desirous of creating a well-functioning and just society, believing firmly that a good ruler and a good government produce such a society; whereas an evil, corrupt, or ineffective ruler or government can undermine a good society and bring to it all manner of catastrophes.

Second, Machiavelli is concerned with bringing to the leaders of his day the lessons of history, urging them to study the past, and he takes upon himself the drawing of those lessons so they may find the wisdom to rule justly and with honor.

Third, Machiavelli believes that a golden age in society is possible with a good ruler; but that such a golden age would be impossible for a bad ruler to achieve, since he will almost certainly destroy the society he governs. Fourth, Machiavelli sees no greater blessing to a potential leader than to be given the opportunity to establish a good government or to reform one that is bad. Such an opportunity, from Machiavelli's view, is granted by heaven. And fifth, Machiavelli notes that, even if one is given an opportunity to create a new republic or to reform a corrupt one, the choice of action will be up to the individual: he can take a correct path, or he can take an incorrect path. Heaven provides the opportunity, but the choice as to what to do is always up to the individual.

The inner quality philosophy of government would agree with all these observations by Machiavelli.

The religion of the Romans

Machiavelli points out that the Roman senate appointed Numa Pompilius as Romulus' successor to take care of the things left undone by Romulus in the creation of an empire. "Numa found the Roman people most undisciplined, and since he wanted to bring them to civil obedience by means of the arts of peace, he turned to religion as an absolutely necessary institution for the maintenance of a civic government, and he established it in such a way that for many centuries never was there more fear of God than in that republic – a fact which greatly facilitated any undertaking that the senate or those great Romans thought of doing." (p. 207)

Machiavelli thus determined from early Roman history that religious institutions can play a vital role in civic harmony, thereby linking religion and politics in a well-run state. From the inner quality perspective, this is true. By strengthening religion's role in the spiritual life of society, these institutions can help sustain a political environment conducive to the proper functioning of government – if that government itself is founded and run by decent leaders and supported by the people.

Machiavelli continues: “Thus, anyone who examines Roman history closely will discover how much religion helped in commanding armies, encouraging the plebeians, keeping men good, and shaming the wicked.” (p. 208) He says, “there never existed a person who could give unusual laws to his people without recourse to God, for otherwise such laws would not have been accepted: for the benefits they bring, although evident to a prudent man, are not self-explanatory enough to be evident to others. Therefore, wise men who wish to avoid this difficulty have recourse to God.” (p. 208)

Machiavelli saw religion as a practical necessity in society and as a very useful tool in supporting many government efforts, especially in convincing people to accept new laws or to achieve great things. A leader should strive to be recognized by his citizens as having the blessings of God. A leader should not hide his religion, but rather demonstrate it to the people so they believe he is acting nobly and with God's approval.

Machiavelli further elaborates on the importance of religion:

“And as the observance of religious teaching is the reason for the greatness of republics, in like manner the disdain of the practice is the cause of their ruin; for where the fear of God is lacking a kingdom must either come to ruin or be sustained by the fear of a prince

who makes up for the lack of religion. And since princes are short-lived, it is most likely that a kingdom will fail as quickly as the abilities of its prince fail; thus kingdoms which depend upon the ability of a single man cannot last long, for such ability disappears with the life of the prince....The wellbeing, therefore, of a republic or a kingdom cannot rest upon a prince who governs prudently while he is alive, but rather upon one who organizes the government in such a way that it can be maintained in the event of his death.” (pp. 209-210)

Based on his reading of history, Machiavelli thought a strong republic must be based on belief in God, for religious belief lasts far longer than the ability of any single ruler. A person must be wise to establish a republic or kingdom; however, the republic or kingdom will not last long beyond the life of the founder if the institutions necessary to sustain the republic are not well established. And of those forces sustaining republics, religion is one of the most strong, enduring, and important.

From the perspective of the inner quality, established religions can and do play an important role in the sustainment of a nation. While the inner quality philosophy is not a religion, it helps to create a strong sense of spirituality and morality for individuals – rulers and citizens alike – who comprise the state. A personal sense of morality and high ethical standards within society improve the character of the nation and greatly assist national unity. Religion is a necessary pillar in a country’s culture and a reflection of the spirituality inherent in every individual.

How much importance must be granted to religion, and how Italy, without religion, thanks to the Roman Church, has been ruined

Machiavelli seemed to have been a deeply spiritual person in that he loved God and Jesus, and he very much appreciated the important roles that religion and spirituality played in political affairs

and other social institutions and activities. To Machiavelli, religion was one of the forces that bound a nation together and made it strong, honorable, prosperous, and secure. Despite holding these views of the importance of religion in society, he believed that the dominant religion of Italy – the Catholic Church – had failed in its moral responsibilities and thereby had severely weakened Italy and its city-states. He writes of the importance of religion:

“Princes or republics that wish to maintain themselves without corruption must, above all else, maintain free of corruption the ceremonies of their religion and must hold them constantly in veneration; for there is no greater indication of the ruin of a country than to see its religious worship not respected. This is easy to understand when one realizes upon what basis the religion of the place where a man was born is founded, because every religion has the foundation of its existence in one of its main institutions. The essence of the religion of the pagans resided in the responses of oracles and upon a sect of fortune-tellers and soothsayers: all of their ceremonies, sacrifices, and rites depended upon these.

“Therefore, it is the duty of the rulers of a republic or of a kingdom to maintain the foundations of the religion that sustains them; and if this is done it will be easy for them to keep their republic religious and, as a consequence, good and united. And they must favor and encourage all those things which arise in favor of religion, even if they judge them to be false; the more they do this the more prudent and knowledgeable in worldly affairs they will be.” (pp. 210-211)

However, his criticism of the Roman Catholic Church strong. Machiavelli writes:

“If the rulers of Christian republics had maintained this sort of religion according to the system set up by its founder, Christian states and republics would be more united and

happier than they are at present. Nor can there be another, better explanation of its decline than to see how those people who are closer to the Roman church, the head of our religion, are less religious. And anyone who examines the principles upon which it was based and sees how different present practice is from these principles would conclude, without a doubt, that it is drawing near either to calamity or a scourge.” (pp. 211-212)

Machiavelli condemned the Church of Rome for at least two reasons: first, the Church and priests caused Italians to “become irreligious and wicked”; second, the Church divided the state of Italy, and “no land is ever happy or united unless it is under the rule of one republic or one prince.” (p. 212) He says, “Italy has been under many rulers and lords, and from this has come so much disunity and so much weakness that she has continued to be at the mercy not only of powerful barbarians but of anyone who might attack her. This is the debt we Italians owe the Church and no one else!” (p. 213)

The root of the problem in Machiavelli’s view was that the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church had abandoned the principles taught by Jesus, whom he greatly admired. Machiavelli also strongly criticized the leaders of Italy for not being more assertive in ensuring that Christian principles were adhered to by the Church. Machiavelli firmly believed that a strong state requires a strong religion.

The inner quality philosophy of ethics and government agrees with Machiavelli’s assessment that if the spiritual leaders of the country become corrupt, inept, abuse their power, or take advantage of their followers, then the common people will begin to lose faith in those leaders and in the religion they represent. This weakens the spiritual foundations of the state and the moral fabric of society. The result is more decadence and an erosion of state unity and resilience. For both moral

and governance reasons, Machiavelli believed a strong state requires religious institutions that are above reproach.

One advantage of the inner quality philosophy is that it gives the individual a personal set of ethical principles and moral standards that enable him to be spiritual but not overly dependent upon an established church or religious doctrine. Being a member of an established church is a good thing; having one's own contact with the soul and its character and being aware of one's own spirituality is also a good thing. Just as political freedom is good in politics, so spiritual freedom is good for the soul in embodiment. There does not have to be a conflict between established religion and one's personal spirituality; indeed, they should complement and strengthen each other.

The inner quality's moral standard is simple: Take what God has given you and do something good with it. The idea behind this moral standard is that an individual can do enormous good in life, in whatever his or her circumstances might be, by using one's free will to act, think, and feel in ways reflective of one's highest virtue. This can be done through every aspect of one's life. And this moral principle aligns very closely with almost all religions.

The same events often occur among different peoples
Machiavelli makes the observation that people do not change much over time and that, therefore, lessons can be learned from history. He writes:

“Anyone who studies present and ancient affairs will easily see how in all cities and all peoples there still exist, and have always existed, the same desires and passions. Thus, it is an easy matter for him who carefully examines past events to foresee future events in a republic and to apply the remedies employed by the ancients, or, if old remedies cannot be found, to devise new ones based upon the similarity of the events. But since these

matters are neglected or not understood by those who read, or, if understood, remain unknown to those who govern, the result is that the same problems always exist in every era.” (p. 252)

In making these observations, Machiavelli identifies the basic assumption underlying most theories of history and the social sciences – that is, people are essentially the same at all times and all places, that lessons and principles can be derived from a close study of the past and comparing it to the present, and that similar circumstances in the past can be used by current leaders to guide their present and future policies. To Machiavelli, man does not evolve much over time or civilization. He also notes, however, that it is rare for people – especially leaders – to study the past in order to understand the present and to forecast the future.

From the perspective of the inner quality, Machiavelli is right in saying that the mistakes of the past are repeated because the lessons of history are ignored. However, from the inner quality perspective, man and his political institutions can be improved upon and the future can be better than the present. This is because human beings have an inborn, evolutionary instinct to try to transcend their present conditions. The instinct of transcendence can be used as an agent of change to help drive efforts towards social and political improvement.

On the creation of the decemvirate in Rome and what is noteworthy about it; wherein, among many other matters, how the same event may either save or oppress a republic is considered

Machiavelli here discusses how tyrannies can arise when checks and balances are not in place.

He observes that tyrannies usually arise “from too much desire on the part of the people to be free and too much desire on the part of the nobles to command. And when they do not agree in creating a law which favors liberty, but instead one of the factions throws its support in favor of one man, then tyranny is quick to arise.” (p. 257)

Machiavelli is making the point that, in a republic, it is essential to balance the desires of the people and the desires of the nobles or elite in society. If this balance can be found, then from their natural competition a sound republic can be built because the laws resulting from their competition and compromise protect the society as a whole through liberty, which does not allow any one class or individual to assume dominance. This idea of checks and balances is one of the most important foundations of U.S. democracy and modern political systems.

From the perspective of the inner quality theory of governance, Machiavelli's idea of checks and balances is a good and pragmatic one, based on observations that men as a whole naturally compete against each other, with more concern about themselves than with the republic as a whole. This propensity of mankind to pursue their own interests was taken into consideration by the U.S. founding fathers in establishing a multilayered system of checks and balances that made nearly impossible the dominance of the government by any one group. The natural competitiveness and selfishness of people, when managed by a system of checks and balances, enables the republic to live in liberty and to thrive. It gives every citizen an opportunity to realize his basic needs for personal freedom, a sense of security, opportunity to prosper, and the enjoyment of personal possessions. The satisfaction of these basic needs, in turn, give individuals the time, energy, and resources necessary to improve society's culture. This is an example of the pragmatism one must adopt in politics: balancing the need to be practical and the need to be idealistic is part of successful governance.

Machiavelli observes that tyranny is always a threat to a free republic, and that tyranny usually arises as a result of a severe threat to the republic or because extreme distrust between the classes prevent compromise and effective lawmaking. Only under the direst of circumstances should a republic grant through law extraordinary powers to one person or a small group, and then only

under tight supervision, for a specific purpose, and for a short period of time. Machiavelli believed a totalitarian temptation existed in the minds of powerful men that must be guarded against in the republic through the means of good laws.

From his study of history, Machiavelli describes the way tyrannies are established in republics:

“When a people is led to make this error – to bestow on one man the power to attack those they despise – and if that one man is shrewd, he will always turn out to be a tyrant in that city, for, with the people’s support, he will wait until he has done away with the nobility, never moving to oppress the people until he has rid himself of the nobles, and by the time the people see themselves enslaved they will have no one to whom they can turn. All those who have founded tyrannies in republics have used this method.” (pp. 257-258)

Machiavelli also notes the historical lesson that nobles cannot gain control in a republic unless they have the support of the common people. He writes:

“For while nobles wish to rule as tyrants, that part of the nobility which is excluded from the tyranny is always opposed to the tyrant; nor can the tyrant ever win all their support for himself, since, owing to the great ambition and greed of the nobility, the tyrant cannot possess so much wealth or enough offices to satisfy all of them....Thus it follows that those tyrants who have the people as a friend and the nobles as enemies are most secure, since their force is maintained by greater strength than that of those tyrants who have the people as an enemy and the nobility as a friend.” (p. 258)

Machiavelli believed that nobles in general have too much greed and ambition. However, the wise ruler can use this to his advantage by keeping the nobility divided against one another out of jealousy. If he, at the same time, works to win the trust and support of the people, then his rule

will be fairly secure. And of the two classes, it is better for the ruler to have the support of the masses rather than the elite of society.

To leap from humility to arrogance and from mercy to cruelty without appropriate stages in between is an imprudent and unprofitable affair

Machiavelli observes, “anyone who has appeared to be good for a time and intends, for his own purposes, to become bad must do so in appropriate stages and in such a way as to be governed by circumstances, so that before your altered nature deprives you of old supporters it will have provided you with so many new ones that your authority will not be diminished; otherwise, finding yourself unmasked and without friends, you will be ruined.” (p. 260)

This is classic Machiavelli, as he objectively records the lessons of history, without much moral comment. In this statement, he describes how tyrants in the past have either retained or lost power. From an inner quality perspective, it is legitimate to ask whether it is appropriate for an historian to only record the facts as they are, or should he make moral judgments and thereby try to influence his readers in a positive direction?

Looking at the example of the world’s great teachers, it would seem that the best way is to record the evil men have done as well as the good, and to point the right choice out to the intended audience. Machiavelli does not always do this, although – taking his work as a whole – one can see that he clearly prefers the good over the bad, liberty over tyranny, truth over falsehood, and honor over dishonor. This is why Machiavelli – and other influential thinkers – must be read in the totality of their writings; otherwise, the historian and philosopher are easily misunderstood. Because Machiavelli’s observations have been repeatedly misused by ruthless people, one cannot help but feel that he should have placed a bit more emphasis on the positive side of mankind and deliberately made a point of noting where good can be done through politics and government.

From the point of view of inner quality analysis, there is much to be admired in Machiavelli's intellectual contributions. His realistic approach helped to move men's minds away from religious and idealistic dogma to a scientific and pragmatic examination of the world around them. However, a still broader paradigm of reality needs to become the norm among today's thinkers. A more accurate approach to discovery is to balance realism and idealism so that the whole of mankind and his universe – material and spiritual – can be taken into consideration. Just as the laws of physics do not seem to apply in a black hole or in the world of quantum mechanics, so the laws of materialism do not necessarily apply to the spiritual dimensions of man. As we become more aware of the vastness of the universe and the incredible diversity of life, we need to broaden our sense of reality in order to explore and understand our broader potential as human beings.

How easily men can be corrupted

Machiavelli observed in his lengthy study of Roman history that men can easily be corrupted, even when they are well trained. Thus, he noted that it is important that lawmakers create laws to restrain the passions and excesses of men and to ensure that evil-doing is punished appropriately. From the inner quality point of view, this is a sound piece of advice. No matter how ideal the political system, it is vital that laws be enacted to restrain the untoward passions of men. No matter how well-meaning political leaders and institutions, just laws, fairly enforced, must form the foundation of government if society is not to fall into chaos.

It is a bad example not to observe a law that has been passed, especially on the part of its legislator; and it is most harmful to the ruler of a city to commit new offenses every day

Machiavelli notes that it is “against good governmental procedure to violate the laws, especially one that had just recently been enacted; for I believe that there is no worse example in a republic

than to enact a law and then not to observe it – even more so when it is not observed by the one who created it.” (p. 263)

Machiavelli respects the rule of law and believes it should be obeyed by everyone – common citizen as well as legislator and government official. To enact a law and then not to obey it, is a terrible example in a free republic. From the inner quality perspective, rulers and legislators have a special responsibility to be a positive example to the people. If the leaders of society lack respect for the law they themselves create, then common citizens will consider their leaders corrupt and show lack respect for the law as well. And if both leaders and the people do not respect the law, then lawlessness and chaos will gradually creep into society.

Machiavelli adds,

“A government also does great damage when it arouses and renews each day in the minds of its citizens ill feelings over fresh injuries done to one person or another. [It is damaging] to a republic or to a prince to hold the spirit of subjects in fear and suspense with continuous punishments and penalties. And, without a doubt, there is nothing more injurious to a government, for when men start suspecting that they are about to suffer some evil they protect themselves from dangers at any cost and become more audacious and less cautious in planning a revolution. Therefore, it is necessary either not to injure anyone or to inflict the injuries all at one, and then to reassure men and give them a chance to calm down and settle their spirits.” (pp. 263-264)

Here Machiavelli emphasizes that one of the worst things a government can do is to keep its citizens in a state of uncertainty and fear. In that state of mind, people will seek ways to protect themselves, and a large number of citizens will lose their fear of trying to overthrow the

government if given the opportunity. Citizens want and need stability in their lives; and, if they must, they will overthrow existing regimes in order to find security, peace, and stability once again. In terms of harsh and broad punishments, Machiavelli advises that, should these be necessary, it is best to do them quickly and to aim them at the fewest possible people.

Afterwards, it is important to allow peace to be restored so that social harmony can be regained.

In the inner quality theory of governance, one of the most important functions of government is to provide a sense of security, stability, and predictability to the citizens of the state. What is most harmful to the state is for people to fear for their person and property, and to be uncertain over a long period of time as to their own future. People understand the need for sacrifice during times of crisis, but the duration of these periods ought to be made as short as possible so things can return to a state of normalcy as soon as is safe to do so.

Men rise from one ambition to another; first they seek to avoid suffering injury themselves, then they injure others

Machiavelli observes after studying Roman history that “in desiring to defend its liberty each side [the nobles and the common people] tried to become strong enough to oppress the other.

And the cause of all this is that in trying to escape fear men begin to make others fearful, and the injury they themselves seek to avoid they inflict on others, as if it were absolutely necessary either to harm or to be harmed.” (p. 265) Machiavelli concludes that men often do evil when given the chance, and that the reason they do this is because they seek to avoid injury to themselves. Fearing to be the victim of others, people tend to believe that their only protection is to harm others first.

This is the very opposite of the ideal of the Golden Rule: Do unto others what you would have them do unto you. From the inner quality perspective, these two approaches to personal security

– harming others first to avoid them injuring you, and doing good to others as you would have them do good to you – reflect the moral duality of man. Materially speaking, human beings are programmed by nature to protect themselves as part of their survival instinct. Spiritually speaking, human beings are drawn together in cooperation and peace because their souls share an origin in God. These two sides of man often are in conflict, but they need not be.

Machiavelli is largely correct in describing material reality. Jesus and other great spiritual teachers are correct in saying that we ought to treat each other with kindness and goodwill. We thus have two equally correct descriptions of reality: one based on actual behavior in the material world and one for proper moral behavior based on spiritual ideals. One standard is predicated on fear, the other on love. However, since human beings on earth are used to dealing with moral contradictions, they usually can accommodate these opposites within themselves.

In the inner quality philosophy of ethics, a much stronger person will emerge if that person can integrate their material and spiritual sides. One way that integration is accomplished is by the person knowing and acting at the level of their soul consciousness, because their soul is that part of themselves connected to both God and man. An individual can know and act at the level of the soul when the person's outer consciousness perceives the character of the soul, or the inner quality. The person, then being aware of both the material and spiritual sides of himself, becomes integrated in consciousness and is able through the higher mind to determine how best to act in the world. This is what it means to be an integrated person, or one's true self.

The masses are wiser and more constant than a prince
Machiavelli believes that the masses are much better than princes in deciding proper policy for a republic. This observation is a logical justification for democracy and a free society. It further reveals Machiavelli's preference for a republican versus an authoritarian government.

Machiavelli notes that most historians say, “nothing can be more unreliable and more inconstant than the masses.” (p. 281) However, Machiavelli takes issue with this view, because a closer look at history reveals that kings and princes behave properly and within the law at the same time that the masses do. In other words, the masses and the princes both behave well at the same time and both “neither obey humbly nor rule arrogantly.” (p. 282) Machiavelli writes:

“Therefore, I come to a conclusion contrary to the common opinion, which declares that when the people hold power they are unstable, changeable, and ungrateful; I affirm, rather, that the people are no more susceptible to these sins than are individual princes....a people which have power and are well organized will be no less stable, prudent, and grateful than a prince; in fact, they may be more so....a prince freed from the restraint of law will be more ungrateful, changeable, and imprudent than the people. And the changeability of their behavior does not arise from a different nature, for it is the same in all men, and if there is one better than the other, it is the people; it comes, rather, from having greater or lesser respect for the laws under which they both live.” (p. 283)

In other words, the masses in general respect and obey the law more than their princes. When they are under good laws, the people will be more prudent, steadfast, and grateful than their leaders. Machiavelli thus sets forth the idea that the people themselves can make political decisions as well as, if not better than, kings and princes. People are the same, but as a group the masses have more respect for the laws that govern them than individuals who feel they are above the law and therefore easily succumb to the temptation of abuse of power. The key, in Machiavelli’s view, is the establishment of good laws and good institutions which encourage the people to obey the laws and reward them for their proper behavior.

Machiavelli says when speaking of the masses, “it is not without reason that the voice of the people is likened by that of God: for it is evident that popular opinion has marvelous power in predicting, so much so that it would appear to foresee its own good and evil fortune through some occult ability.” (p. 284) He observes from history that the people have an uncanny ability to know what is going to help or harm them. His conclusion is that the masses should be involved in deciding laws that affect them, and that governments should seek out public opinion before deciding on issues of importance to the state. These were startling conclusions during Machiavelli’s time, although commonly held in modern democratic politics.

He continues, “As for its judgment in various matters, when the people hear two equally able speakers, each arguing different opinions, only very rarely does it happen that they do not choose the better opinion and are incapable of understanding the truth of what they hear.” (p. 284)

Machiavelli is saying that the people can make informed judgments for themselves when given the facts of an issue or when they are able to hear both sides of an argument. The lesson for governance theory is that it is beneficial to the state to educate the people and give them an opportunity to hear all sides, and then solicit their opinion in order to develop sound policy. He further says:

“It is also evident that the people make better choices in electing magistrates than does a prince, for one can never persuade the people that it is good to elect to public office an infamous man of corrupt habits – something that a prince can easily be persuaded to do in a thousand ways; and when the people begin to feel an aversion for something, we see them persist in this aversion for many years – something we do not observe in a prince.”

(p. 284)

Machiavelli points to these characteristics as evidence that the people make a better foundation on which to build a government than a powerful prince or king. He concludes by stating unequivocally: “government by the people is better than government by princes.” (p. 285) Machiavelli was very much in favor of individual liberty and government controlled by the people, concepts which lay the foundation of democracy in later centuries. He states,

“if we were to discuss all the faults of the people and all those of princes, all the glories of the people and all those of princes, it would be evident that the people are far superior in goodness and in glory. And if princes are superior to the people in instituting laws, forming civic communities, and establishing statutes and new institutions, then the people are so much more superior in maintaining the things thus established that they attain, without a doubt, the same glory as those who established them.” (p. 285)

Machiavelli here makes the important point that, while individual leaders may be better at establishing states and laws, the people are better at preserving good states, laws, and institutions once they have been established since they are more honorable and have more goodness. He continues,

“just as the states of princes have endured for a long time, so too have the states of republics; both have needed to be regulated by laws, for a prince who is able to do what he wishes is mad, and a people that can do what it wishes is not wise. If, therefore, we are talking about a prince obedient to the laws or a people restricted by them, we shall observe more ability in the people than in the prince; if we are discussing either one or the other as being free from these restrictions, we shall observe fewer errors in the people than in the prince; moreover, they are less serious ones and easier to remedy. For a licentious and unruly people can be spoken to by one good man and can easily be brought

back to the right path; however, with an evil prince there is no one who can speak to him and no other remedy than the sword.” (p. 285)

Machiavelli believes that both princes and republics need to be governed by laws. But if those laws are absent, then the people are less likely to err than the prince, who is far more dangerous as an individual than members of the masses. He observes, “The cruelties of the masses are directed against anyone who they fear might act against the public welfare; those of the prince are directed against anyone he fears might act against his own interests.” (p. 286)

In all of these arguments, Machiavelli demonstrates a strong preference for a popular government rather than government by a king, prince, or other authoritarian figure or special interest group. The above chapters set forth many of the principles justifying the establishment of a democracy such as found centuries later in Europe, the United States, and other countries around the world.

Book II

Introduction

In Book II of *The Discourses*, Machiavelli focuses on what the Roman people did for the expansion of their empire. But in his Introduction, he also makes a number of interesting observations about his approach to discerning truth from history, the nature of man and government, and his hope that the lessons identified from history will help future generations to improve the world if given an opportunity.

Machiavelli says that the “lives and customs of men” do not offer clear evidence of themselves as they existed in antiquity, since historians tend to embellish the good and diminish the evil in the societies they write about. (p. 288) Machiavelli believed it imperative to analyze things for oneself, without trusting to others a proper interpretation of events and people. As noted earlier,

his methodology is primarily a form of historical analysis, which has its strengths and weaknesses, as Machiavelli himself acknowledges. He knowingly bases his conclusions on his personal study of ancient history, while at the same time recognizing the difficulty of trying to glean lessons from history since it is rarely written objectively.

Machiavelli writes, “human affairs are always in motion, either rising or declining.” (p. 288) He thus affirms the inevitability of change, which is natural and cannot be avoided. Further, change can either be good or bad from the perspective of each individual and each state, and it can result in either the rising or the falling of one’s status and fortune. He continues:

“As I reflect on why these matters proceed as they do, I believe that the world has always been in the same state and that there has always been as much good as evil in it; but this evil and this good changes from country to country, as we can see from what we know of ancient kingdoms that were different from each other according to the differences in their customs, while the world remained the same as it always had been. There is only this difference: the world’s talents first found a home in Assyria, then moved to Media, later to Persia, and, in time, came into Italy and Rome; and if, after the Roman empire, no succeeding empire has lasted, nor has there been one where the world has retained all its talents in one place, nevertheless we can still see them scattered among many nations where men live ably.” (pp. 288-289)

From these comments, it appears that Machiavelli is drawing several broad conclusions from his study of history:

1. There is as much good as evil in the world, but it is unevenly distributed over time and space.

2. Good and evil are somewhat relative in terms of their distribution due to individual customs and kingdoms; the same culture can be good or evil depending upon its stage of development and history.
3. Despite different interpretations of what is good and evil, the way the world actually works always remains the same.
4. The talent, goodness, and evil of mankind is not found in any one location, but rather scattered around.
5. It is possible to track the migration of goodness and great talent over time by looking at the dominant culture of a given period.
6. Good talents, while sometimes found in abundance in one state, are also scattered at various times, so that a concentration of great good in one location is rare in human affairs, although it has existed.
7. Peoples and kingdoms seem to act in the same way, wherever and whenever they are found on earth.
8. Too much change cannot be expected in the future, since the balance of good and evil will pretty much remain the same.

If one accepts Machiavelli's observations on the consistent balance of good and evil on the planet, then the transcendence of mankind as a whole is impossible. Thus, Machiavelli's view of man's fate is rather pessimistic, although he hopes future generations can find political mechanisms that will institutionalize greater good in society. Machiavelli had a very high

opinion of the ancient Greeks and Romans, but believed the states during his time had fallen greatly in stature, ethics, and custom.

Machiavelli held high ideals and maintained a keen sense of order, justice, and proper behavior. His cultural, social, and economic environment, however, was one of depravity and injustice, and he felt great frustration in seeing the waste of good men (himself included) who were ignored when they were capable of helping society. He had a very low estimation of most of those in power in Italy during the time. He wanted to serve his country, to see it united, and to revive its greatness. But he was practical enough to know that this was not going to happen during his lifetime. Reluctantly and with a certain bitterness, Machiavelli concluded that his fate was to observe and record the events of history and his day, and then he would pass from the screen of life with little or no recognition of his insights and contributions.

Machiavelli observed that the desires and opinions of men change considerably over the course of their lives. He writes:

“Since these desires change, and the times do not, things cannot appear to men to be the same, since they have other desires, other pleasures, and other concerns in their old age than they had in their youth. For as men grow older they lose in vigor and gain in judgment and prudence, and the things that seemed acceptable and good to them in their youth become, later on, as they grow older, intolerable and bad; and although they should place the blame for this on their own judgment, they blame the times instead. Besides this, human desires are insatiable, for we are endowed by Nature with the power and the wish to desire everything and by Fortune with the ability to obtain little of what we desire. The result is an unending discontent in the minds of men and a weariness with

what they possess: this makes men curse the present, praise the past, and hope in the future, even though they do this with no reasonable motive.” (pp. 289-290)

Machiavelli identifies changing desire as the principal reason for man’s discontent and conflict. This he attributes to man’s nature. Man’s condition in life, according to Machiavelli, is to have insatiable desires but to live in a world of limited resources, so that man is never content with what he has and always struggles to possess that which he does not have. From the inner quality perspective, Machiavelli’s views on desire were correct. However, he might have also added that one way out of this dilemma would be to hold less intense desire and more nonattachment, two ancient Indian philosophical concepts he may not have been aware of.

Machiavelli explains that he studied history to find the lessons of good and bad government. He believed the ancients had much to teach because they had achieved great things. He notes,

“I shall boldly declare in plain terms what I understand of those ancient times and of our own times, so that the minds of young men who read these writings of mine may be able to reject the present and prepare themselves to imitate the past whenever Fortune provides them with an occasion. For it is your duty as a good man to teach others whatever good you yourself have not been able to do, either because of the malignity of the times or because of Fortune, in order that – since many will thus be made aware of it – someone more beloved by Heaven may be prepared to put your truth into action.” (p. 290)

In this insightful passage, Machiavelli reveals much of himself and his motivations. He clearly identifies himself as a good man and points out that he is researching and writing these studies in order that younger men in the future may be able to see what the right course of action is in

political affairs and to implement it in their own times should an opportunity arise. He accepts the fact that he is unable to act himself on these matters, a condition he attributes to the malignity of the times and to his own ill fate. Even though Machiavelli was a religious person, he openly wonders if Heaven did not favor him, since he did not have the opportunity to accomplish the good in society which he identified as being possible from his study of the past.

At the time of writing this section of *The Discourses*, late in his life, Machiavelli seems to have reconciled himself to his fate. Despite his sense of personal failure, Machiavelli decided that the best he could do under the circumstances would be to set forth the lessons of history for others to learn and follow. Thus, when reading *The Discourses*, one should keep in mind that he is instructing future leaders, especially young men, with the wisdom of the ages so they might use their energy and possible good fortune to do something noble and significant in their own times.

Whether ability or fortune was the main reason the Romans conquered their empire Machiavelli strongly believes in fate or Fortune, as he calls it, but he does not think that Fortune was the cause of Rome acquiring its empire. He writes, “the ability of her armies caused her to acquire her empire, and the institution of her conduct and her individual way of living, which were discovered by her first lawgiver, allowed her to keep her conquests.” (p. 291)

Machiavelli also observes that one key to Rome’s survival was its ability to fight one war at a time, and that this required Fortune, ability, and prudence. Rome continued to survive because other peoples were afraid of attacking Rome due to her strength, which in turn enabled Rome to attack whomever and whenever it chose. Its strategy upon determining to enter other’s territories was, as Machiavelli described it, to always try “to have some friend in a new province who might serve as a ladder to climb up or a gate through which to enter or as a means to hold onto it.” (p. 294). Rome essentially turned on its enemies one by one to defeat them, and it conquered

other territories mostly by allying itself with one or more factions within that province to use as a means or as an excuse to enter the territory.

With what kinds of peoples the Romans had to fight, and how stubbornly those people defended their liberty

Machiavelli notes that the people Rome fought were generally fierce in their defense of liberty.

He therefore studies the importance of freedom and its role in these provinces and how

eventually they were defeated by Roman strength. He writes,

“It is an easy matter to understand the origin of this love for free government among peoples, for experience shows that cities have never enlarged their dominion nor increased their wealth except while they have existed in freedom....The reason is easy to understand, for it is the common good and not private gain that makes cities great. Yet, without a doubt, this common good is observed only in republics, for in them everything that promotes it is practiced, and however much damage it does to this or that private individual, those who benefit from the said common good are so numerous that they are able to advance it in spite of the inclination of the few citizens who are oppressed by it.

“The contrary happens when there is a prince; in general, what he does in his own interest harms the city and what he does for the city’s benefit harms him. For this reason, when a tyranny replaces a free government the least amount of evil that results in cities so affected is that they no longer advance or increase in power and riches; but, in most cases – in truth, always – they decline.” (pp. 295-296)

In trying to explain why the ancients defended and loved freedom more than men in his own day,

Machiavelli observes that this “is due to the difference between our education and ancient

education, based upon the difference between our religion and ancient religion. Since our

religion has shown us the truth and the true path, it makes us value the honor of this world less; whereas the pagans, who valued it very much and considered it the highest good, were more fierce in their actions.” (p. 298)

Machiavelli thought that his city’s religion had made men weak in their defense of liberty. To Machiavelli, being less worldly was a weakness, not a strength. Machiavelli thought the world should be loved, honored, and protected by men, not abandoned in a search of non-worldly spiritual truth. Machiavelli believed the world belonged to men and that it was their obligation to try to make the world the best that they could. While Machiavelli was a spiritual person at heart, he did not think people should try to escape from the world through excessive spiritual contemplation and the abandonment of positive worldly traits such as courage, aggression, and fierceness. These were the traits people needed to preserve their political liberty.

From the inner quality perspective, there is nothing wrong with following either a spiritual path or a material path in pursuit of liberty, as long as the goal is to improve oneself and humanity, rather than to seek the exploitation of others. God is both spiritual and material as reflected in His creation. The key lesson for the soul is to take the gifts God has given it and to do something positive with them in whatever plane of existence the soul finds itself. Since each soul is unique, the contributions it makes to universal goodwill varies in its characteristics. The soul must be free to do this in order to fulfill its spiritual destiny, and liberty in a political sense is freedom for the soul while in embodiment in the material world.

Machiavelli describes many of the social, economic, and political advantages of freedom:

“All countries and provinces living in freedom make very great progress; for wherever there is a growing population marriages are freer and more desired by men, since every

man willingly procreates the children he believes he can provide for without fear that his patrimony will be taken away; he is assured that they will be born free, not slaves, and that they may, through their own ability, become great men. Wealth derived from agriculture as well as from trade increases more rapidly in a free country, for all men gladly increase those things and seek to acquire those goods which they believe they can enjoy once they have acquired them. Thus, it comes about that men in competition with each other think about both private and public benefits, and both one and the other continue to grow miraculously.” (p. 300)

Fortune blinds men’s minds when she does not want them to oppose her plans Machiavelli believed in heaven and the critical role of God and fate in human affairs. He believed that, on occasion, heaven had a plan that brooked no interference from man, and that often heaven’s plan proceeded without the foreknowledge of man. In his political theories, Machiavelli frequently pointed to the roles of God and Fortune in the things that happened to man. He writes, “If we consider carefully how human affairs proceed, we will see that many times things happen and incidents occur against which the heavens do not wish any provision to be made.” (p. 342) Continuing, he says,

“men who normally live under great adversity, or with success, deserve less praise or blame, for in most cases it is evident that they have been driven to a grand or a disastrous action by a great opportunity that the heavens have granted them or taken away from them the chance to act effectively.

“Fortune certainly does this, for when she wishes to bring about great things she chooses a man of such spirit and ability that he recognizes the opportunities she offers him. In like manner, when she wishes to bring about great disasters, she puts men there who will

contribute to that downfall. And should there be someone present who could oppose her, she either kills him or has him deprived of all means to achieve anything good....

“Again, let me affirm as true, according to what is evident from all the histories, that men can assist Fortune but not oppose her; they can weave her schemes but they cannot break them. They should never give up, for not knowing her goals as she travels through crooked and unknown roads, men always have hope and with those they should never despair in whatever fortune and whatever difficulty they find themselves.” (p. 343-345)

Machiavelli greatly respects God’s will, even though men often do not know what that will is or what role they ought to play in the unfolding of God’s plan. He also believes that no man can ever oppose God’s will successfully. To Machiavelli, the best men can do is to demonstrate a character of not easily giving up or losing hope, no matter how desperate one’s situation. He does not claim to understand Heaven’s will, but he is willing to accept it. Precisely because the will of Heaven cannot be understood by men, Machiavelli suggests that one be determined never to give up striving to succeed and do great things.

In this assessment of the ties between God and man, the inner quality philosophy agrees. As humans, we cannot know the totality of God’s will. At best, we can know our own inner quality and seek to express it, in the faith that our inner quality is good and that in its expression we will have some positive effect on human life here on this planet. This takes more than a little courage, because when we act we do not know the outcome of our actions. We can only know our intentions, and for those we must take responsibility and make every effort to ensure they are honorable and acted upon with both integrity and goodwill.

Book III

In Book III of *The Discourses*, Machiavelli mostly discusses military matters, which I have chosen not to include in this analysis. The subjects reviewed below include how it is sometimes necessary to return to one's roots in order to become strong again, how it is necessary to change with the times, how kindness or harshness can both achieve greatness, why one's country must be defended, and the similarities of men.

In order for a religious group or a republic to exist for a long time, it is necessary often to bring it back to its beginnings

In this chapter, Machiavelli notes that kingdoms, religions, republics, and cultures have life cycles, and that nothing stays the same or is permanent. He also identifies the true strength of a state or an individual as being its innate goodness, the quality that made it great in the first place. To live to the fullest of one's potential, the state and individual must periodically return to that initial state of goodness in a process of renewal and rediscovery. This can be accomplished by processes of renewal built into the system or through some external event that causes the organization to return to its roots. Machiavelli writes:

“It is a sure fact that all things of this world have a limit to their existence; but those which complete the entire life cycle ordained for them by Heaven are those which do not let their bodies fall into disorder but, rather, keep them in an orderly fashion so that no change occurs, or, if it does, it is a healthy change and not a damaging one. And since I am speaking of mixed bodies, such as republics and religious groups, let me say that those changes are healthy which bring such bodies back to their beginnings. It follows that among such states or groups, those having the best organization and longest life span are those that can often renew themselves through their own institutions or can arrive at

such a renewal through some incident outside their own operation. And it is clearer than the light of the sun that without such renewals these bodies do not endure.

“The means of renewing them is to bring them back to their beginnings, for all the origins of religious groups, republics, and kingdoms contain within themselves some goodness by means of which they have gained their initial reputation and their first growth. Since, in the course of time, this goodness becomes corrupted, if nothing intervenes that may bring it up to the proper mark, that body is, of necessity, killed by such corruption....This return to beginnings, in the case of republics, is accomplished either by an external event or as a result of internal foresight.” (p. 351)

From the perspective of inner quality, these observations by Machiavelli are valid, since every individual and social entity has a unique goodness that defines their true or ideal character. The United States has a certain character, often described as love of freedom and liberty. China has a certain character, often described as being cultured and sophisticated in its social organizations. I have an ideal character of honor and integrity; my wife has a special character of goodness and honesty. And so on. The qualities of goodness are infinite and they can be seen expressed in people and in their social institutions. It is a good thing for individuals and institutions to revisit periodically the source of their goodness, because it rejuvenates the person and the state and enables them to continue to make their contributions to the betterment of mankind.

How it is necessary to change with the times in order always to enjoy good fortune Machiavelli believed that all men and societies have a certain nature that interacts with their environment and the times in either harmonious or inharmonious ways. Those that tailor their activities to act in harmony with the times are almost always more successful and happier over the long-run than those whose activities are not in such harmony. He says,

“I have often observed that the reason for the bad as well as good fortune of men is to be found in the way in which their way of working fits the times: for it is clear that in their actions some men proceed with impetuosity, others with care and caution. And since men go beyond the proper limits in both these methods, they make errors in both, not being able to follow the true path. But that man whose method of procedure...fits the times makes fewer mistakes and enjoys a prosperous fortune, for you always act as Nature inclines you.

“Therefore, the truth is that a republic is of longer duration and has a much better fortune than a principality, for a republic, by virtue of its diverse citizenry, can better accommodate itself to the changeability of the conditions than can a prince. For, as I have said, a man who is used to acting in one way never changes; he must come to ruin when the times, in changing, no longer are in harmony with his ways.

“There are two reasons why we cannot change ourselves: first, because we cannot oppose the ways in which Nature inclines us; second, because once a man has truly prospered by means of one method of procedure it is impossible to convince him that he can benefit by acting otherwise. As a result, it happens that Fortune varies for a single man, for she changes the times when he does not change his ways.” (pp. 381-383)

From the inner quality perspective, Machiavelli is echoing here the timeless wisdom of the Chinese concept of the Tao, that is, the constant flow of nature and life that carries all things along with it. Those individuals and governments able to adjust to the changing circumstances of life and the environment are usually more successful and long-lived than those that are unable to adjust. There is not, however, only one way to adjust to changing circumstances. What might work for one person may not work for another person. Therefore, it is important to match your

thoughts and activities with the environment in which you live. This is best done by following the instincts of your inner quality or natural self when you encounter new circumstances. You ought never to fight or oppose either your inner quality or the changing circumstances of the Tao. Rather than putting oneself into opposition with the movements of the tide or the river's flow, one should seek to find a harmonious merger of one's free will with one's inner quality and the Tao. In terms of political institutions, Machiavelli believed that republics are better able to adjust to changing circumstances than autocratic rulers; and that, therefore, a republican form of government is better than either a principality or kingdom in most situations.

How the harshness of Manlius Torquatus and the kindness of Valerius Corvinus earned the same glory for each man

Machiavelli observes, "if you want to be obeyed you must know how to give orders." (p. 395)

He notes that to give strong commands, one's nature must be strong. There has to be a corresponding strength between the person giving the order and the person receiving it. If the commander is stronger than his subjects, he can give strong orders; if he is weaker than his subjects, he should rule by love. In the case of Manlius, he loved his country and would do nothing to harm it; in giving harsh orders he was passing on to his troops the kind of rules he imposed on himself. He was following his nature. Such a leader can be vital to a republic, according to Machiavelli, since it can bring the republic back to its roots and fundamental values through self-discipline.

Machiavelli comments that historians are divided on whether rule by fear or by love is best.

Nonetheless, he concludes, "for a citizen who lives under the laws of a republic, I believe the procedure of Manlius to be more praiseworthy and less dangerous. This method works entirely for the wellbeing of the public and in no way involves private ambition, for a man cannot acquire

partisans by such a method since he always shows himself to be stern toward everyone and to love only the common good.” (p. 398)

However, the approach by Valerius, even though it achieved the same results as Manlius in protecting Rome, is more dangerous to the republic over the longer run, since goodwill alone is not likely to stop the ambition and greed of one’s fellow citizen. In Machiavelli’s view, corruption is more likely to arise in the case of one governing by love than one governing by discipline. And corruption leads to the ruin of the republic.

But, Machiavelli continues, “if we have to consider a prince [as opposed to a republic]...we should follow faithfully the example of Valerius and abandon that of Manlius; for a prince ought to seek obedience and love in his soldiers and subjects. Observing the institutions and being considered skillful bring him obedience; affability, kindness, mercy, and the other qualities Valerius possessed...bringing him love.” (p. 398) Machiavelli concludes that, for a citizen in a republic, the type of commander best suited is that of the self-disciplined Manlius; for a prince in a principality, the best approach is that of the love and generosity of Valerius.

It is interesting that Machiavelli’s conclusion here – that a strict but fair ruler is better for a republic and a kind ruler is better for a principality – seems somewhat contradictory to the advice given in *The Prince*. However, it must be kept in mind that *The Prince* was specifically addressed to a specific kind of person: a prince inclined to establish a new principality and expand it to include the entirety of Italy. Machiavelli had different advice for different types of leaders in different circumstances, so it is important to know to whom he is addressing and the situation in order to understand the advice he is offering.

In examining Machiavelli's views on kinds of leadership, the inner quality theory of politics would agree that the circumstances of nations are different, as are the personalities of leaders and the characteristics of societies and citizens. What is appropriate in one situation is not necessarily appropriate in another; moreover, while circumstances may be similar, there is not only one successful leadership style. Machiavelli was highly circumstantial and relativistic in his analysis, which reminds us that – while Machiavelli excelled in reaching conclusions based upon the history of the Roman Empire – other histories from different cultures and civilizations may teach different lessons based upon their unique circumstances.

One's country must be defended, whether with shame or with glory, and it is well defended in any manner

Machiavelli writes that, when the nation's survival is threatened, all means are justified in its defense: "when the entire safety of one's country is at stake, there should be no consideration of just or unjust, merciful or cruel, praiseworthy or disgraceful; on the contrary, putting aside every form of respect, that decision which will save her life and preserve her liberty must be followed completely." (p. 411)

This is the essence of Machiavelli's conclusion about statecraft: every means necessary can and should be used to preserve the life and liberty of the state. From the perspective of the inner quality philosophy of ethics and government, this is true when survival is threatened and the stark choice is national life or death. However, when a threat exists that is less than this extreme, other appropriate means ought to be considered. When survival is not threatened, one's response ought to be proportionate. In most cases, these proportionate responses will fall within the inner quality standards of morality and justice.

To Machiavelli, the survival of the state is the fundamental responsibility, and the most sober duty, of the country's leader. If the state is lost because the leader is too good, that is a far worse sin than the state being preserved using any means available. Machiavelli notes, however, that this kind of reasoning can be misused; for example, when a leader uses the state's survival as an excuse to do immoral things for the leader's own benefit. The inner quality philosophy would agree with this cautionary note and make the general observation that ensuring this misuse does not occur is one of the greatest challenges to all forms of governance.

That men born in any given province always display almost the same nature Machiavelli observes that history can give insight into the future because people are very much the same, especially within a given culture. He writes,

“Prudent men often say, neither casually nor groundlessly, than anyone wishing to see what is to come should examine what has been, for all the affairs of the world in every age have had their counterparts in ancient times. This is because these affairs are carried on by men who have, and have always had, the same passions and, of necessity, the same results come from them. It is true that their actions are more effective at one time in the prince than in another, and more in that than in this one, according to the kind of education from which those peoples have taken their way of living. Knowing future affairs is also facilitated by knowing past ones, especially when a nation has maintained the same customs for a long time – for example, being continuously greedy or fraudulent or having some other similar vice or virtue.” (p. 413)

In this paragraph, Machiavelli presents a theory of historiography, based on the assumption that men have always been the same, with only provincial differences, and that there is similarity within a culture between how men acted in previous times and how they will act in the present

and in the future. Students and practitioners of politics, therefore, should become familiar with history – especially the history of their own culture and nation – in order to understand what might work now and what future developments might be.

From the perspective of the inner quality, where the existence of the soul and its evolution are assumed, Machiavelli's observations are valid but not quite complete. Whereas it is true that souls are embodied together, lifetime after lifetime, to work out their karma and to fulfill some common destiny, it is also true that the soul does not remain at the same level of maturity. The soul is intended to learn from its experiences on earth the many lessons required to master free will choices, including how more fully to express the goodness of the soul's character. Thus, instead of human beings existing in a static state, mankind evolves in a (hopefully) positive direction over time. That being said, human beings do seem to evolve slowly, so much of Machiavelli's theory of historiography is true.

Conclusion

The purpose of this book has been to examine from the perspective of the inner quality Machiavelli's views on politics and government as recorded in *The Prince* and *The Discourses*, written in the early 16th century. Three summary observations can be made from this brief study. First, even though on the surface the two documents are remarkably different, they need to be considered as a whole body of work. In both books, Machiavelli is consistent in his style of historical analysis – that is, reviewing the histories of the past and drawing therefrom lessons of politics useful to present and future leaders – and consistent in his methodology – that is, addressing one topic at a time in objective detail. In *The Prince* and *The Discourses*, Machiavelli is analyzing two different subjects through the lens of a common methodology. It is his strict

adherence to objective historical analysis that has earned for Machiavelli his fame as the father of modern political science and the founder of the school of realism in political analysis.

When reading Machiavelli, it is important to remember that he is addressing two separate subjects for different purposes. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli draws from history the lessons applicable to someone of exceptional leadership ability who wants to establish, maintain, and expand a principality for the purpose of uniting Italy under one government. Machiavelli hurriedly wrote *The Prince* as a way of introducing himself for possible service to the Medici family in Florence, whom he believed might be able to unite Italy through a series of conquests and expansions, including the expulsion of foreign mercenaries then found throughout the country. Essentially, Machiavelli wanted to help the Medici reestablish the glory of the ancient Roman Empire. Thus, in *The Prince*, Machiavelli's advice was mostly tactical in the sense of a military-style conquest to unite the country in a life or death struggle for political supremacy. In this kind of political environment, the only alternative to success is catastrophic failure, so the appropriate psychological mindset of the prince must be victory at any cost, without regard to normal moral standards of human decency. And Machiavelli detailed what has worked best under similar conditions in ancient Rome and Greece and in contemporary affairs.

In *The Discourses*, written over many years and never fully completed, Machiavelli uses the same methodology of historical analysis to identify the best possible form of government. Of the three different kinds of political units examined by Machiavelli – principalities, kingdoms, and republics – he considered republics to be superior. And of the various kinds of republics – authoritarian or democratic – he thought the democratic to be the most successful and of greatest benefit to its citizens. In considering the foundations for a successful democratic republic, Machiavelli identified and explained the rationale for many of the features that appeared in the

U.S. system of government and other democracies established more than two hundred years later. These features included systems of checks and balances, institutionalizing liberty and fairness, a constitution ensuring that no one group of society could dominate the others, giving the common citizen power and the ability to participate in political decisions, separation of powers, an independent judiciary, and other practical mechanisms designed to ensure stability and longevity in a republic. Whereas *The Prince* focused on the behavior of a supreme leader in a time of national crisis, *The Discourses* explored how best to create a stable and popular-based government, a strategic perspective similar to that of a nation's founding fathers.

Second, Machiavelli's study of history and his derived recommendations were based on a decidedly negative view of the nature of man and his personal and social behavior. Machiavelli believed that, while man did possess a noble, honorable, kind, generous, and trustworthy side, these ideal characteristics never were expressed long nor were they able to withstand the temptations and impulses of man's baser motivations and actions. As a consequence, neither the prince nor the republic could trust people to do the right thing. The prince, for his own survival and success, would need to control all others through amoral means – sometimes being good, sometimes being cruel, whatever was expedient. The prince sought absolute control of his territory and those he acquired. Machiavelli believed that a republic, for its survival and success, would need to control its citizens through institutions, procedures, and systems designed to ensure that no single person or interest group could dominate the others in society. The republic needed to be organized in such a way to avoid autocratic control by allowing everyone to participate in politics but within a system of checks and balances making dominance impossible and consensus necessary for mutual benefit.

Third, from the perspective of the inner quality philosophy of ethics and government, there is much to be admired in Machiavelli's political ideas and a few things that need to be revisited and reconsidered. On the positive side is his introduction of historical realism to examine real life situations to draw lessons of relevancy to current and future events. In this, he contributed greatly to the Renaissance and Reformation in Europe, which led to the modern world as we now know it. Also, and of great importance, the inner quality philosophy recognizes Machiavelli's invaluable contributions to the historic justification for many of the principles behind representative democracies found throughout the worldwide today.

On the side of Machiavelli's political philosophy that might have been improved, the most important point is that there are both material and spiritual aspects of humanity and every individual. Machiavelli described the material aspect of mankind's history all too well, because the terms "Machiavellian" and "realism" have come to describe all the amoral and evil things that are done in the name of politics around the world. However, there is a spiritual aspect of human nature as well, reflected in the concepts of God and soul, the presence of goodness within almost every person, the near universality of religion and spirituality, and the strong sense of idealism appearing in cultures throughout history. For a political philosophy to be "realistic," it ought to consider both the material and spiritual aspects of mankind individually and socially. Machiavelli's theories would have been more complete had he attempted to integrate these two sides of humanity rather than to concentrate so heavily on mankind's negative political behavior.

The most important challenge for any government has remained the same over the centuries: how to control the amoral or evil tendencies in people while at the same time giving them the freedom and liberty necessary to discover, become, and express their inner goodness. The inner quality philosophy of ethics and government attempts to solve that challenge by focusing on the

need for each individual to become the true self, which is a fully integrated spiritual and material person, that is, a person who is aware of their soul and its character and who strives diligently each day to express that inner character to the best of his or her ability. As the individual citizen improves his outer personality and moral character, so eventually will improvement be made in the institutions he creates to help manage his social needs and responsibilities.