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Introduction

The majority of scholars have damned Machiavelli's *The Prince* as the work of a teacher of evil. Those few who have written words of praise have interpreted it as the "book of Republicans," to cite Jean-Jacques Rousseau's famous sentence from the *Contrat Social*;[1] or as the text that inaugurates modern political realism and modern political science; or as the courageous essay that at last has explained to us that the actions of princes cannot be judged using the same criteria that we use for human actions in general and that therefore politics is autonomous from ethics.

In my opinion, none of these defenses of Machiavelli is valid. The view that *The Prince* is the "book of Republicans" comes from Rousseau's desire to rescue its author's bad reputation and make *The Prince* consistent with the *Discourses on Livy*, the text in which Machiavelli developed a comprehensive republican theory of liberty and government. Although the intention was noble, this claim misrepresents the meaning of the text. Machiavelli did not intend to reveal to the people the princes' vices and incite in them antimonarchical sentiments. Republicans can surely learn from *The Prince* precious pieces of political wisdom, but there is no question that Machiavelli's text is neither a satire of the prince nor does it embody any sort of oblique or cryptic message. He seriously wanted to instruct a new prince, a special sort of new prince, as I shall explain later.

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The view that we owe Machiavelli credit for the discovery of the principle of the "autonomy of politics from morals," though advanced by illustrious scholars, is also indefensible for two main reasons: first because it distorts Machiavelli's text, and second because it is philosophically very weak.[2] The passages that the supporters of the theory of the autonomy of politics cite are taken from chapters XV, XVI, XVII, and XVIII of *The Prince*, which form a well-identifiable section of the work. In these chapters, Machiavelli makes the infamous, or famous, assertion that it is necessary for a new prince to learn not to be good and to be able to enter into evil, if necessary. The problem with citing these passages as the foundation of the autonomy of politics is that Machiavelli here is referring not only to princes but to all human beings. The title of chapter XV, which opens the entire discussion of politics and morals is "Of Those Things for Which Men, and Particularly Princes, Are Praised or Blamed." The conclusion, at the end of chapter XVIII, concerns all human beings: "and in the actions of *all* men, and especially of princes, where there is no tribunal to which to appeal, one must consider the final result."[3]

One might claim that Machiavelli here is rejecting the relevance of ethics for all human beings, but not that he asserts that there are rules to judge princes and rules to judge ordinary human beings. To believe that Machiavelli advocated such a principle would mean attributing to him the idea that a prince acts according to the rules of politics when, to found and preserve a state, he perpetrates a cruelty, while he violates those same rules if he attains the same result by being humane. In addition to being sheer nonsense, there is no trace of such an assertion in Machiavelli's

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writings. Had Machiavelli truly theorized the principle of the autonomy of politics, on the other hand, he would have forged a very poor concept. The actions of politicians *are* judged, and *must* be judged on the basis of ethical standards. If not, we would have no defense against corrupt and oppressive politicians.

The argument that the perennial value of Machiavelli's *Prince* consists in the fact that it has inaugurated modern political realism is open to serious objections. Machiavelli was a realist *sui generis* who was not solely interested in describing, interpreting, or explaining political facts but liked to imagine political realities very different from the existing one. In the *Discourses on Livy*, he conceived a rebirth of ancient Roman political wisdom; in the *Art of War*, he fantasized about the restoration of Roman military orders and virtue. If we want to see a true realist, we must read Guicciardini, not Machiavelli. And Guicciardini considered Machiavelli a fine political expert, but one too keen to rely on the examples of the past and not sufficiently attentive to the specific features of political life.

What then is *The Prince* about, and what is its lasting value, if any? My answer is that Niccolò Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* to design and invoke a redeemer of Italy capable of creating, with God's help, new and good political order, thereby attaining perennial glory. The theory, and the myth, of the redeemer is, in my opinion, the enduring value of Machiavelli's little book. As I shall document in the last chapter of this essay, the interpretation of *The Prince* as a discourse on political redemption has a long and fascinating history. Yet contemporary scholarship, with a few exceptions, has instead disregarded or dismissed it.[4]

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The influential scholar Leo Strauss, for instance, in his essay from 1957, asserted that *The Prince* is a scientific book "because it conveys a general teaching that is based on reasoning"; at the same time, he maintains, it is the opposite of a scientific or detached work precisely because it "culminates in a passionate call to action—in a call addressed to a contemporary Italian prince." The book begins with a very dry assertion and closes with "a highly rhetorical last chapter which ends in a quotation from a patriotic poem in Italian." In this work, Machiavelli is both an investigator or a teacher and an advisor, "if not a preacher." We must recognize *The Prince* as a book "with a traditional surface with a revolutionary center ." Revolutionary in the precise sense of "a man who breaks the law, the laws as a whole, in order to replace it by a new law which he believes to be better than the old law."[5]

Strauss claims that the last chapter is the "natural conclusion of the book" and as such is the key to understand the whole text.[6] He also maintains that the "Exhortation" is not "a piece of mere rhetoric," and utterly rejects the view that Machiavelli "was not capable of thinking clearly and writing with consummate skill," when he composed those pages. But as a piece of specific counsel addressed to a specific new prince, Lorenzo de' Medici, the "Exhortation" is seriously lacking, because, Strauss explains, "it is silent about the difficulties in the way." The chapter creates the impression that the only thing required for the liberation of Italy is the Italians' strong loathing of foreign domination and their ancient valor; the liberator of Italy can expect spontaneous cooperation from all his patriots and he can be

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sure that they will fly to take up arms against the foreigners once he "takes the banner."

The problem with Strauss's view, and that of many others, is, as I will illustrate here, that the "Exhortation" *is* a fine piece of political rhetoric that ends an oration whose purpose is to impel action. As such, it is perfect—nothing is missing. To motivate a new prince to be a redeemer, Machiavelli must depict the whole enterprise as not only possible but also easy and must promise the greatest possible rewards. Machiavelli needed a political myth, but myths, to work, cannot be presented in the form of detailed prescriptions for political action.

Strauss also stresses that the "Exhortation" is the key to understanding Machiavelli's pieces of advice on political ethics. The general teachings that Machiavelli offers in the central chapters of *The Prince*, however novel and repulsive, "might seem to be redeemed if it leads up to a particular counsel so respectable, honorable and praiseworthy as that of liberating Italy." The liberation of Italy from the barbarians "means a complete revolution. It requires first and above everything a revolution in thinking about right and wrong. Italians have to learn that the patriotic end hallows every means however much condemned by the most exalted traditions both philosophical and religious."[7]

Strauss understands well the religious tones of Machiavelli's exhortation: "he mentions God as often there as in all other chapters of *The Prince* taken together. He calls the liberator of Italy an Italian 'spirit'; he describes the liberation of Italy as a divine redemption and he suggests its resemblance to the resurrection of the dead as depicted

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by Ezekiel; he alludes to the miracles wrought by God in Italy." After these acknowledgments, Strauss's tone turns sarcastic: "However much we might wish to be moved by these expressions of religious sentiment, we fail in our effort."[8] The reason Strauss finds Machiavelli's pages unmoving is that he believes that what Machiavelli means by God is nothing but chance. Strauss's essay has in sum the virtue of pointing to the "Exhortation" as the key to understanding *The Prince*, but he soon veers off the right track. Instead of seeing the emancipating content of Machiavelli's text, he proceeds to damn its malignantly concealed immorality.

The seminal essay by Hans Baron, published in 1961, also indicates national redemption as a fundamental theme of Machiavelli's *Prince*. Baron claims that *The Prince* was the outcome of the new personal and intellectual experience that Machiavelli lived in the forced solitude of Sant'Andrea in Percussina in the second half of 1513.[9] In addition to his fresh reflections on classical works, Machiavelli used his expertise on "the diplomatic techniques and administrative efficiency that he had learned in the service of the republic" to build up "the rule of a new prince." Machiavelli's key motivation and inspiration for *The Prince*, Baron stresses, was "both his burning desire for a place of action in the world of politics and his wounded Italian feelings," which "caused him to nurture a fresh hope for a powerful founder of a new state."[10] He also tells us that the founder that Machiavelli portrays in *The Prince* is quite different from those he indicates as examples in the *Discourses*, thereby stressing once again the differences separating Machiavelli's two works.[11] Yet Baron does not believe it relevant to go beyond this general, though precious, indication. Of the final

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"Exhortation," he mentions only that "the sincerity of Machiavelli's call, in the epilogue of the *Prince*, for a deliverer of Italy from foreign domination has remained a matter of debate until today." He did not consider it necessary to explain how in fact Machiavelli's hope for the new founder in 1513 translated into the text of *The Prince*.

Some years later, in two papers of 1968 and 1972, Baron reexamined the issue of the date of composition of chapter XXVI, and discussed whether we should regard the conclusion of *The Prince* as the key political message to which the entire work was oriented since the beginning. On close examination of the Italian political context of the period from late 1513 to October 1516, Baron reaches the conclusion that

> another incubus of Machiavellian scholarship, has been removed: the "national" interpretation of the *Prince*, created by Hegel, Fichte and Ranke, and the Italian historians of the *Risorgimento*, and still maintained by Meinecke and Chabod, will never have the power to make a comeback. We can now grasp, unconcerned, the pragmatic character of the *Prince* and appraise it realistically. We are at liberty to draw the picture of the evolution of Machiavelli from the Machiavellianism of the *Prince* to the new historical vision and the republican and moral values of the *Discourses*.[12]

Also the scholars who have made fundamental contributions to the study of *The Prince* by placing it in the context of the humanist advice for princes books did not focus, in general, on the "Exhortation." Felix Gilbert, in his

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article of 1939, "The Humanist Concept of the Prince and *The Prince* of Machiavelli," does not even touch the issue. In a later essay, "The Concept of Nationalism in Machiavelli's *Prince*" (1954), Gilbert concentrates his attention on the last chapter and mentions the debate that had been going on for years between the advocates of the view that the "Exhortation" is a mere rhetorical peroration contrasting the pragmatic style of the rest of the book and those who maintain that it was instead the core of Machiavelli's text. Gilbert prefers to analyze the "Exhortation" from a different angle—namely, to see how it related to early-sixteenth-century ideological and political views on Italy's liberation. What makes Machiavelli's "Exhortation" truly unique, Gilbert concludes, is his recommendation, against the Florentine aristocracy, to carry out the policy of Italian redemption "over the head of the individual state, relying on the feelings of the masses," rather than on the cooperation among states. Though Gilbert left in the background the issue of the relevance of the "Exhortation" for the understanding of *The Prince*, he surely succeeded in isolating its powerful and subversive message of emancipation.

In 1978, Quentin Skinner, in his groundbreaking *Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, proposed another reading of *The Prince* within the context of Italian humanism.[13] Contrary to the view that *The Prince* is a book *sui generis*, Skinner argues that it is in fact a "recognizable contribution" to the genre of advice books for princes and at the same time a radical critique of them. The revolutionary meaning of Machiavelli's little work therefore lies in his direct attack on the humanist and Christian tenet that a prince, if he wishes to preserve his state and attain perennial glory,

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must at all times follow the political virtues of justice, magnanimity, fortitude, prudence, and temperance, as well as the distinctively princely virtues of clemency, liberality, and honesty. To be a truly virtuous prince for Machiavelli meant instead to adapt one's own behavior and political strategy to the changing winds of fortune and to display outstanding military ability in raising and commanding loyal troops. In Skinner's perspective, the "Exhortation"—in which Machiavelli also dishonors himself in an "uncharacteristic moment of flattery"—is one of the sections of the work that illuminates Machiavelli's concern for the paramount role of virtue, properly redefined, in political affairs. As Skinner has clarified in a more recent study, "the prince's basic aim, we learn in a phrase that echoes throughout *Il Principe*, must be *mantenere lo stato*, to maintain his power and existing frame of government." It must also be "to establish such a form of government as will bring honor to himself and benefit the whole body of subjects."[14]

In my view, the "Exhortation" is particularly relevant precisely for its role in the assessment of Machiavelli's work in the context of advice books for princes. No other text of this genre ends like *The Prince*. Petrarch brings to a close his letter to Francis of Carrara with an appeal to correct "the morals" of the subjects of Padua. One moral that stands in urgent need of correction is the practice of loud and indecent wailing in the streets and churches upon someone's death. Such a habit, Petrarch, stresses, is "contrary to any decent and moral behavior and unworthy of any city under your rule." "You must therefore immediately command," Petrarch enjoins, that "wailing women should not be permitted to step outside their homes."[15]

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Bartolomeo Sacchi's (Platina) *De Principe* (around 1470) ends soberly with a chapter on war instruments apt to ensure the prince a blessed and felicitous victory.[16] Giovanni Pontano's *De Principe* (1468) closes with a long discussion on the fundamental princely virtue of majesty in which he details how a fine prince ought to speak, dress, walk, eat, and so on. His final words are a profession of modesty: "you shall read my work not to learn something, since there is nothing for you to learn, but only to be able to recognize yourself and what you already are doing with universal praise in the pursuit of glory."[17]

Francesco Patrizi dedicates the last pages of his *De Regno* to instruct the king how he ought to live the last day of his life. The king's main concern, he remarks, is to have an honest death, and not to worry about the sepulchre, because if he has lived according to virtue, he will be forever praised.[18] As Quentin Skinner has clarified, *The Prince* is surely a subversive critique of the accepted wisdom on princely virtues, but it is no less true that it also contains an equally radical critique of the parochialism and lack of true greatness of the princes of his time and of their learned humanist mentors.

In his highly influential book *The Machiavellian Moment* (1975), John G. A. Pocock eloquently claims that *The Prince* is "an analytic study of innovation and its consequences" in which Machiavelli focuses his attention on the ultimate political problem of his time—that is, the "problem of *fortuna*."[19] What we find in Machiavelli's most famous work, Pocock maintains, is "a typology of innovators and their relations with *fortuna*." Innovation simply means that the new prince has overthrown or replaced some form of government that preceded him. The title of the treatise

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is itself misleading, because as we advance in our reading, it appears evident that the category of the "innovator" has replaced the category of the "new prince," in the sense that the former "is more comprehensive and capable of greater theoretical precision than the latter.[20] Yet, Pocock does not consider the final exhortation, in which Machiavelli delineates the image of the liberating hero, as the point of arrival toward which all previous chapters "are to be seen as leading up to."[21] In his view, Machiavelli does not present here "a single rounded portrait, but a gallery of specimen types of innovators."[22] As a result, *The Prince* is for Pocock an essay on political innovation in general in its relationship with *fortuna*, not an essay on political redemption specifically conceived against foreign domination.

Political theorists of the early 1960s, who composed excellent works on radical and revolutionary political theory and political practices, also did not regard, in general, Machiavelli's *Prince* as a text that contains a genuine or particularly relevant liberation message. Sheldon Wolin, in his *Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought* (1960), presents *The Prince* as a text that rejects traditional norms like natural law and is exclusively focused on "questions of power."[23] Machiavelli openly showed his antipathy toward hereditary monarchies, and the new man he painted was "the political arriviste," a figure that was to bedevil modern politics. His creed was the maxim "I love my patria more than my soul," and when he was writing on national revival, Wolin notes, Machiavelli displayed "an important substratum of religious feelings and imagery." But the focus of his *Prince* is power, not emancipation. Machiavelli considers the State as an "aggregate of power," and

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the new kind of political action he encourages ought to be above all "an economy of violence, a science of controlled application of force."[24]

For Hannah Arendt, Machiavelli is "the spiritual father of revolution in the modern sense" because he possesses "that conscious and passionate yearning to revive the spirit and the institution of Roman antiquity which later became so characteristic of the political thought of the eighteenth century."[25] The protagonists of the revolutionary experiments justified and supported revolution as a return to the true principles of the political community. Great modern revolutions originated as "restorations or renewals" in the Machiavellian meaning of renovations that return the body politic to its origins and thus save it from corruption and death. Machiavelli's idea of the rebirth of the ideals and virtues of antiquity had a very powerful influence, as Arendt points out, in the thought of the founders of the American republic:

> From a historical point of view, it was as if the rebirth of antiquity that had taken place during the Renaissance, and had come to a sudden end with the advent of the modern age, had suddenly found a new lease on life; as if the republican fervor of the Italian city-states in their brief existence—already condemned, as Machiavelli knew full well, by the advent of the nation-state—had only be sleeping, so that it could give the nations of Europe the time to grow, as it were, under the tutelage of absolute monarchs and enlightened despots.[26]

Machiavelli contributed to revolutionary theory precisely with his thoughts on the role of religion in the

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foundation of new political orders. The birth of a new political order, in fact, demands, alongside violence, religion; alongside power, authority—the force of arms and the force of words. "Machiavelli," concludes Arendt, "the sworn enemy of religious considerations in political affairs, was driven to ask for divine assistance and even inspiration in legislators—just like the 'enlightened' men of the eighteenth century, John Adams and Robespierre for example."[27] Arendt is right to stress that the founding fathers of the American Revolution made wise use of Machiavelli's ideas—however indirectly received—on the renewal and rebirth of political bodies. But she has always in mind the *Discourses on Livy*, not *The Prince*. Modern revolutionary political thought and practices, in her view, did not recognize *The Prince* among its sources.

One of the best works on the origin of modern radical politics, Michael Walzer's *Revolution of the Saints*, fails to notice the redeeming message of Machiavelli's *Prince*. Walzer considers Machiavelli the advocate of a form of political action that discourages the citizens' conscious engagement and therefore lacks any liberating value:

> In the early sixteenth century, Machiavelli's *Discourses* offer an imaginative and realistic discussion of political life and are filled with a genuine yearning for civic virtue and citizenship. His *Prince*, however, is not a program for activist citizens, but a handbook for adventurers. The new consciousness of politics as a matter of individual skill and calculation, which Machiavelli best embodies, was as yet unaccompanied by a new ideology that might give form to the creative work, limiting and shaping the

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> ambition of princes and making available to them the willing cooperation of other men. The new consciousness thus produced only an intensely personal, faction-ridden politics. Artistry freed from form gave rise to the political *condottiere*, the virtuoso of power.[28]

Even if English seventeenth-century puritan militants were following Machiavelli's "rational, amoral, pragmatic consideration of political methods," *The Prince* is for Walzer one of the last voices of the old medieval politics, not one of the first instances of modern radical politics marked by the continuous involvement of men "systematically active, imaginatively responsive to opportunity, seeking victory" sustained by the persuasion that their struggle against tyranny was consistent with God's plans.[29]

A text like *The Prince*, in which the author extols Moses, Romulus, Cyrus, and Theseus as the exemplary figures that a new prince should imitate, hardly qualifies as a handbook for political adventurers. Equally incorrect is the view that Machiavelli's conception of political emancipation discourages active citizenship. In the "Exhortation," Machiavelli asserts that a new prince committed to the task of emancipating Italy from foreign domination would surely animate in the people a widespread devotion and love, and a strong willingness to serve and fight in the new army created and commanded by the prince himself.

The model that Machiavelli outlines in the "Exhortation" shows some features of millenarianism. He presents Italy's emancipation as a swift realization. But he also largely draws from the biblical Exodus: a people capable of achieving their own emancipation, through their own

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efforts and sufferings, under the guidance of a great political founder not only sent by God but also a friend of God, just like Moses. The Machiavellian founder, and the people devoutly following him, are instruments of God, just like the puritan militants. The glory that they gain, if they succeed in their effort of founding new and good political orders, goes also to the God who has inspired and helped their struggle. If the exodus is the paradigm of radical emancipatory politics, then Machiavelli's *Prince* is surely a book on political emancipation, not a handbook for adventurers.

My interpretation rests on the idea that Machiavelli composed the "Exhortation to liberate Italy," where he openly expresses the *Prince*'s message of emancipation at the time when he wrote the other chapters of his work, between August 1513 and January 1514, not two or three years later, as some scholars have claimed. I discuss the much debated and still unsettled issue of the date of composition of *The Prince* in the first chapter of this essay.

To support my position, I cite internal textual evidence as well as references to external political events. I also consider, at some length, what kind of man Niccolò Machiavelli was when he sat down to write his *Prince*. I am neither attempting to produce a psychological study nor suggesting some kind of causal connection between Machiavelli's existential condition and the text. More modestly, I claim that the study of Machiavelli's life—in particular, the interpretation of his passions and beliefs—helps us to understand the meaning of *The Prince* and to better identify the date of composition of the "Exhortation."[30] Machiavelli's private letters do in fact indicate that between early 1514 and late 1517 he was too disconsolate and miserable to write a text

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like the "Exhortation" to invoke a redeemer of Italy after December 1513 or early 1514. They also allow us to see that Machiavelli imagined Italy's political redemption as strictly intertwined with his own resurrection—that is, the possibility of being himself again, of being able to actively translate his deepest passion, love of country, into political action.

A powerful objection stands against my interpretation, however—that is, that Machiavelli called his work *De Principatibus*, not *De principe*, to suggest that the focus of his discussion is the different types of principalities and how they can be preserved and how they are lost, not the figure of the prince. A possible reply is that in the *Discourses on Livy* (III, 42), Machiavelli refers to his essay as *De Principe*. This change of language could indicate that the essay has evolved from a study of principalities into a study of the prince, or that Machiavelli, a few years after its composition, remembers his essay as being on the prince. On balance, I think that the reasons that support the view that *The Prince* is about the prince as a redeemer and founder are stronger than the reasons that militate in favor of the view that the *Prince* is about principalities.

Can we believe that an author who openly declares that his intention in writing *The Prince* is to concentrate only on the effectual truth of the matter could have composed an essay to design an ideal figure, and to propose a political myth? My reply, in chapter 2, is that Machiavelli was a realist *sui generis* who was not solely interested in describing, interpreting, or explaining political facts but also liked to imagine political realities very different from the existing one and wrote the *Prince*, and all his works, to make the imagined realities he loved real.

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My claim that Machiavelli has put the political and moral message he really wanted to convey in the final "Exhortation" receives further and important support from a correct interpretation of the style of *The Prince*. As I will detail in chapter 3, *The Prince* is an oration, in the proper sense of the word, from the first line to the last. This means that Machiavelli has put the most important message, the most important message for him, at the end. And at the end of *The Prince*, we find the "Exhortation," with the myth of the redeemer.

If we read the *Prince* from the angle of the redeemer, we understand better Machiavelli's hotly debated arguments on ethics and politics. As is well known, Machiavelli asserts that "it is necessary for a prince who wants to maintain his state to learn how not to be good, and to use this knowledge or not to use it according to necessity," and that

> a prince, and especially a new prince cannot observe all those things for 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, 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 deviate from the good, but he should know how to enter into evil when necessity commends it.

He assures us, in chapter VIII, that if new princes resort to "well used" cruelty, they can "remedy their condition with God and with men." He also explains, in the "Exhortation,"

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that the redeemers can count on God's friendship because their enterprise is just: "for their enterprises were no more just, nor easier, nor was God more a friend to them than to you." Machiavelli here explicitely alludes to Moses and the book of Exodus. To have God as friend means not only that the redeemer can count on His help when he has to face almost impossible tasks, but also that God will understand and excuse him if, forced by necessity, he has to enter in evil and not be good. Friends are indulgent. In the Bible, God remains a friend to Moses even after he committed horrible cruelties. What Machiavelli is therefore telling his readers is not that politics is autonomous from ethics but that the redeemer, because of the moral excellence of his task, deserves special consideration.

The much debated issue of the intellectual and political compatibility of *The Prince*—a text in which he teaches a new prince how to conquer and maintain his power—and the *Discourses on Livy*—the acclaimed foundation of modern republican thought—is seen in a new light if we read *The Prince* as an oration on the founder and the redeemer. The prince of *The Prince* is not the founder of a reigning dynasty but the founder of an independent state with good armies and good laws that may evolve, and that Machiavelli would like to see evolving, in a republic. There is no hint in the entire work about rules or criteria of succession. This silence is quite resounding, particularly if we compare Machiavelli's *Prince* with the other advice books for princes that do indeed contain indications on the designation of the successor.

The figure of the founder who acts as a monarch but then opens the path for a republic appears also in other works of Machiavelli. The obvious reference is *Discourses*

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on Livy, I, 9, where Romulus, who is also one of the heroes of *The Prince*, was surely a king, but the political orders he instituted in Rome were more congenial to a free and civil way of living rather than to a tyranny. When Rome became a republic, very small institutional changes were needed.[31] Another less known example is from the *Discourse on Remodeling the State of Florence* composed in 1520 at Cardinal Giulio de' Medici's request, for Pope Leo X. In that essay, Machiavelli exalts the figure of the reformer of political orders with words very similar to those he had used in *The Prince*, and openly says that as long as the pope and the cardinal are alive, their power will be a monarchy ("ella è una monarchia"). Afterward, Florence must resume its republican institutions.[32]

A founder and a redeemer are necessary for both republics and kingdoms. In both cases, they must have extraordinary authority, display exactly the same virtues, and face the necessity of entering in evil. Machiavelli's *Prince* is indeed the "book of Republicans." Not in the sense that it reveals the horrible vices of the prince and instills in its readers a hatred for monarchy, as Rousseau believed, but in the sense that it delineates the image of the founder and redeemer that republican political theory needs. After all, Machiavelli explicitly tells us that, "If princes are superior to peoples in ordering laws, forming civil lives, and ordering new statutes and orders, peoples are so much superior in maintaining things ordered that without doubt they attain the glory of those who order them."[33] Unless we are prepared to believe that good republics come into existence, endure, and are reformed only through the wisdom and the active participation of their citizens, we must accept the

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view that republics need great political leaders. *The Prince* is about great political leadership, the leadership of founders and redeemers. Hence, it is not a problematic alternative to the *Discourses*, but an integral counterpoint to it. Together, they make for a fine theory of political emancipation.

It is just speculation, but I believe that *The Prince* has remained relevant for five hundred years, and will probably survive in good health for many years to come, because it is a living work, as Antonio Gramsci nicely put it.[34] It is a living work in the sense that Machiavelli was able to infuse in that text a poignant message that has helped to stimulate political action with redemptive goals, be they national, social, or inspired by ideals of republican liberty.

In history, resurrections and redemptions are rare experiences. As hopes and aspirations in the lives of peoples, they are, however, real and long-lasting. Readers perceive that while Machiavelli was writing about an imagined redeemer of Italy, he was striving for his own resurrection. As he was composing the pages of *The Prince*, he was no longer a defeated man, deeply wounded in his body and his soul, compelled to live his days as "Quondam Secretario" (former Secretary). He was again himself, a man who found in grand politics his spiritual nourishment. And for him, grand politics *was* the politics of founders and redeemers. What makes *The Prince* exceptional is that it is a text on political redemption and founding composed by a man who was trying to redeem himself. This is not the only meaning to be found in *The Prince*. Only the theme of redemption and founding, however, casts the proper light on all the pages of Machiavelli's oration and permits us to savor its dramatic beauty.

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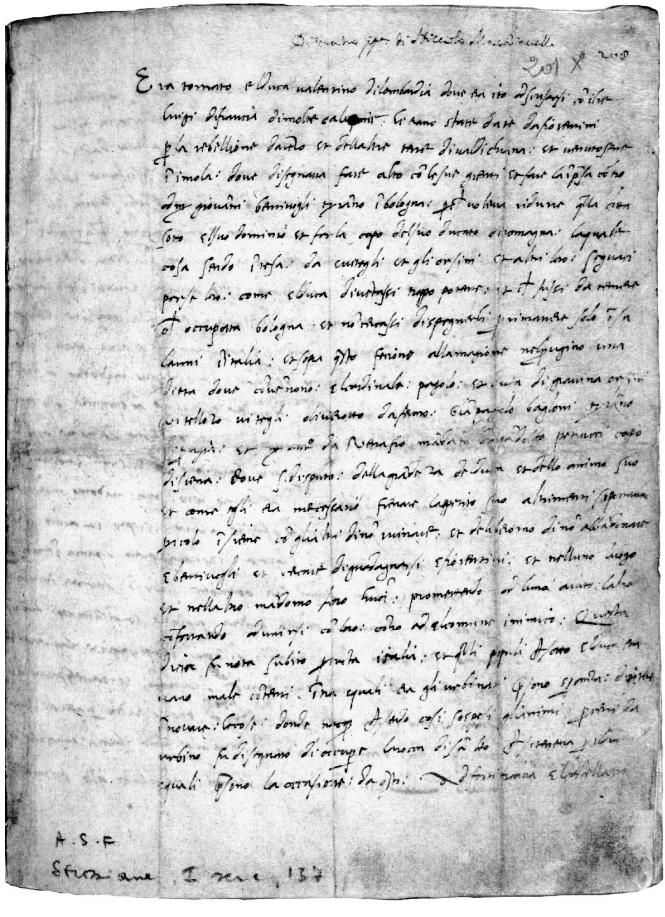

Figure 1. Carte Strozziane I 137, c. 201. Courtesy Archivio di Stato Firenze. Page showing Machiavelli's handwriting and signature.

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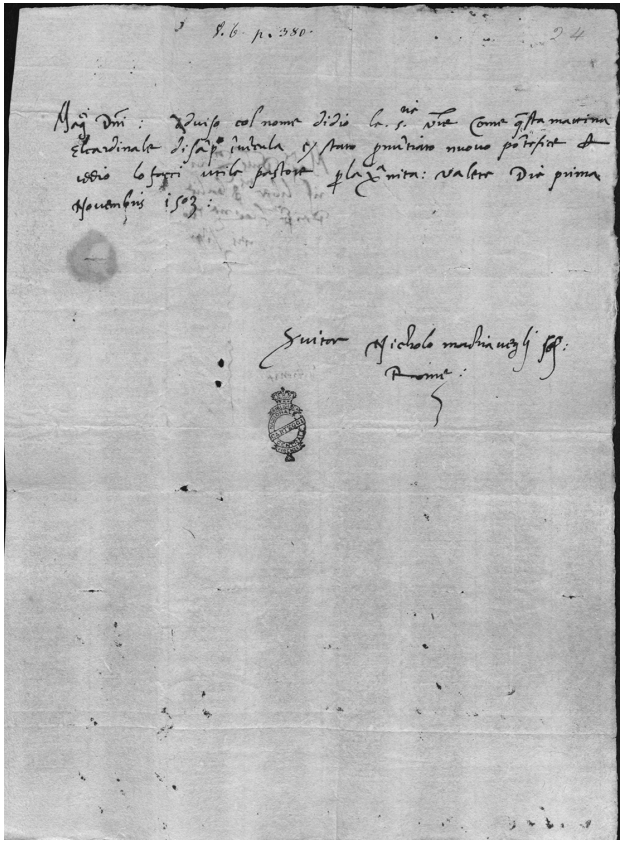

Figure 2. Machiavelli Papers, I C. 24r. Courtesy Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze. Page showing Machiavelli's handwriting and signature.

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