Machiavelli's reputational politics

by W.R. CAMPBELL

Department of Political Science
Miami University, Oxford.

*

— I —

All are composed in Latin, but I would call attention to the chapter heading of *Il principe.* 17. It reads : « de crudelitate et pietate ; et an sit melius amari quam timeri, vel e contra » (1). The Italian reads : « Della crudelta e pietra ; e s'elli e meglio esser amato che temuto. o piu tosto temuto che amato » (2). The words *timeri* and *temuto* are rendered into English as if *paura* were their meaning. Yet, *paura* appears twice while temuto appears six times (3). Why ? Machiavelli was interested to discover whether it is better for a prince to be loved or also to be regarded with awe. Awe or dread patents the meaning our author intended to convey by his choice of words. As Professor Bossart argues : dread . . . must be distinguished from fear. I fear an object which approaches and threatens me, and my fear arises from the uncertainty as to whether it will strike or pass me by. Hence fear arises on the level of the problematical, for it involves a realtion between my self as subject and a threatening object. Like any experience on the level of the problematical, fear can be controlled — at least in principle. If I can eliminate the threatening object, or if I can get out of its path, I can eliminate my fear. Dread, however, has no object ; no matter where I look I cannot locate its source or cause.

The individual possessed by dread has lost his sense of reality. The world and his life in the world appear empty and devoid of continuity

---

(1) Niccolò MACHIAVELLI, *Il Principe e Discorsi*, a cura di Sergio Bertelli (Milano : Feltrinelli Editore, 1968). Hereafter referred to as either *principe* or *Discorsi, principe,* p. 68 (60). Page numbers appearing in parentheses refer to the page(s) of the Modern Library edition of the *Prince and the Discorses.*

(2) *Ibid.*

(3) *Ibid.*, pp. 68-71 (60-63).

and coherence. Life is understood as a mere succession of moments which arrive and pass away without the historical continuity of the person (4).

For Professor Bossart, dread is one of the moods — the others being *ennui* and joy — by virtue of which a man encounters his own being and, thereby, Being itself. Dread therefore, is a metaphysical experience. It « operates as one basic predisposition in the history of human thought, for it is the source of nihilism » (5). Dread « is an experience of what the world would be like without being » (6). Without Being, the world is unintelligible.

Here I pause to comment upon our author's use, in the chapter under discussion, of two additional words — *pietate* or *pieta* and *fede*. While its heading opposes *crudelitate* to *pietate,* the chapter itself begins with a critique of the common opinion that Borgia's actions in the Romagna were cruel.

Principe. 7, argues that Borgia acted to *a)* bring to its inhabitants the good government not previously enjoyed, *b)* identify this government with himself, and *c)* dissociate from himself all measures which, albeit necessary, could be considered cruel. If Borgia was not *crudele,* then he must have been *pietoso.* Apparently, *pieta* is distinguished from *crudelita* by its commitment to humanity or benevolence. What of the notion of *fede ?*

Of course, *fede* means faithfulness. It also connotes confidence, trust, belief, or more especially, credibility. Included among its meanings is loyalty, which in Italian *(lealtà)* has the additional sense of fairness ; a word interesting in its own right, since it implies unblemished status. Often forgotten is its Latin form *fides,* which refers not only to a goddess but to « a quality residing in men, institutions, and gods which one could solicit for protection and help » (7). To have *fides* is « to have the power to stimulate confidence, for *fides* fundamentally signified dependability and truth » (8).

By the nature of the case, a reputation for having *fides* was gained slowly as one showed his merits in a variety of undertakings, but even a great reputation could be quickly and irretrievably lost by a single

---

(4) William BOSSART, « Metaphysical Experience », *The Review of Metaphysics,* XV (September 1961), p. 44.

(5) *Ibid.,* p. 45.

(6) *Ibid.,* p. 44. Dread is a radically personal insight into what the world would be like if being were inarticulate, i.e., essentially impersonal.

(7) David C. RAPOPORT, « Rome : *Fides* and *Obsequium,* Rise and Fall », in J.R. Pennock and J.W. Chapman (eds), *Political and Legal Obligation* (New York, Atherton Books, 1970), p. 231f.

(8) *Ibid.,* p. 232.

reckless act. Hence, *fides* presumed capacities for self-control and prudent judgment (9).

Thus, when our author says that Borgia « racconica la Romagna, unitola, ridottola in pace et in fede », we are told the supposed cruelty of Borgia had restored unity to the Romagna by peace and by faith (10). Hence, it seems that the relationship between *pieta* and *fede* is mediated by benevolent action, eg. foundation or reconstitution. *Pieta* refers to a dispositional benevolence while *fides* involves its realization, i.e., actualization and recognition (11).

I take a further detour since the issue of credibility has been raised. Savonarola failed in whatever were his designs, because he was bereft of the means required to force the multitude to believe in him, once their incredulity had been aroused (12). The fate of Savonarola teaches that a prophet must come to his endeavor armed ; having at his disposal the means required to insure his credibility (13). He must be truthful, refusing to make predictions or promises the means to whose consummation either are not apparent or are not subject to his control. Otherwise, his *dignitas* (the social manifestation of his *fides*) will be compromised. Regarding the requirements for *obsequium,* it appears that Savonarola was either intemperate, in that he claimed to know more than was possible, or imprudent, in that he claimed more than the means at his disposal could secure.

When, then, in discussing Savonarola he says of the incredulous multitude, « se possa fare credere loro per forza » our author would not have thembeaten into submission to an incomprehensible « truth ». As stated elsewhere, the would-be reformer is ever endangered by the « incredulita delli uomini ; li quali non credano in verita le cose nuove, se non ne veggono nata una ferma esperienzia » (14). The notion of « *per forza* » must be understood to mean « in the course of things. » Men believe only that of which they have a firm experience. Therefore, it is occasionally necessary to coerce their presence at, or their attention to, those events which entail belief. This matter I take to be central to *principe.* 6-9 ; those chapters which discuss the fortunes of dominion variously achieved.

---

(9) *Ibid.*

(10) *Discorsi, op. cit.*, pp. 160-162, 183-185 (145-149, 172-174) where our author speaks of Numa.

(11) See John FERGUSON, *Moral Values in the Ancient World* (London, Methuen and Co., 1958), pp. 164-172.

(12) *Principe, op. cit.*, p. 32 (22).

(13) *Ibid.*

(14) *Ibid.*

This interpretation is corroborated by additional passages of *Il principe,* the first of which is found in the chapter discussing the actions of Agathocles. Unlike Borgia, Agathocles acquired dominion by villainous means ; « non si puo ancora chiamare virtu ammazare li sua cittadini, tradire le amici, essere sanza fede, sanza pieta, sanza relligione ; li quali modi possono fare acquistare imperio, ma non gloria » (15). It was no longer possible to call virtuous the murder of one's fellow citizens, traitorious actions regarding one's friends, lack of trust or loyalty, lack of reverence, and lack of religion. Acting in a manner bereft of these qualities might gain *imperio,* but no longer *gloria* (16).

A distinction is drawn between the actions of Agathocles, deemed cruel *in se,* and those of Borgia. Elsewhere I have suggested this distinction involves the fact that Borgia's domination of the Romagna was beneficial ; the domination of Syracuse by Agathocles was detrimental. Still, such observations do not distinguish between *imperio* and *gloria.* The text implies that the substance of *gloria* involves an exhalted honor or majesty. About those things called glorious there is an aweful nouminosity. *Imperio* compels its subjects by means of fear. Typically, it depends upon the instruments rather than the virtue of governors ; it involves the capacity of the state to insure the death of anyone defying its will (17). *Gloria* involves a kind of respect. Thus, so far as respect is its synonym, *gloria* connotes authority (18), albeit of a special sort : the sort patented by *fides.* Hence, the characterization of regimes as either imperious or glorious illuminates the difference between power and authority as the source of imperative coordination.

The sense of this distinction can be garnered from the *Arte della guerra.* The first book argues : « la forza fa mala contentessa » (19). The impressment of citizens or subjects tempts them to mutiny. Even recruitment on a voluntary basis can not guarantee the preferred

---

(15) *Ibid.,* p. 42 (32).

(16) Agathocles is said to lack those qualities which, in chapters six through nine in *Il principe,* are judged essential to the efficient, and ultimately effective, survival of a prince. The virtue to which reference is here made is that one whose nature is illuminated above in footnote 29. Because the *imperio* of Agathocles was not glorious, he had te rely upon other military institutions than the militia ; to defend Syracuse he had to take the offensive rather than await his enemy at home as he ought to have done if his state were well-ordered.

(17) In his *Istorie fiorentine,* a cura di Franco Gaeta (Milano, Feltrinelli Editore, 1962), p. 264, Machiavelli remarks that he could not believe a government to be either good or secure, which required much violence for its defense. Hereafter cited as *Istorie fiorentine.* Cf *Discorsi, op. cit.,* p. 175 (162).

(18) See Peter A. BERTOCCI, « The Moral Structure of the Person », *Review of Metaphysics,* XIV (March 1961), pp. 369-388 ; and his « A Reinterpretation of Moral Obligation », *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research,* VI (January 1945).

(19) Niccolò MACHIAVELLI, *Arte delle guerra e scritti politici minori,* a cura di Sergio Bertellini (Milano, Feltrinelli Editore, 1961), p. 347.

characteristics of a military establishment which the Romans secured by the practice called *deletto* (20). *Deletto* realizes the capacity of governors to select the best men of a province for service in the militia, even if some have desires contrary to its requirements (21). But is *deletto,* then, not compulsion for some ?

For Machiavelli ; *deletto* remedies the inconveniences of an army constituted either by volunteers or the impressed. *Deletto* is « una via de mezzo dove non sia ne tutta forza ne tutta volonta, ma sieno tirate da uno *respetto ch'egli abbiano al principe,* dove esse *temano* piu lo *sdegno de quello,* che la presente pena ; e sempre occorrerach'elle fia una forza in modo mescolata con la volonta, che non ne potra nascere tale mala contentezza che faccia mali effetti » (22).

Implicitly we are told that a prince may employ *deletto* only within his own country ; there alone may he enjoy that respect which renders obligatory his requests for service (23). Those recruited by *deletto* are said to dread the scorn of their prince even more than the rigors of service. Under the conditions in which *deletto* may operate, men would rather risk and perhaps lose their lives than provoke their prince. Why ?

In *principe.* 17, we read : « le amicizie che si acquistono col presso e non con grandezza e nobilità d'animo, si meritano, ma ella non si hanno et a' tempi non si possono spendere » (24). Friendship which obliges a man either to risk or to lay down his life is secured only by grandeur, noble intention and courage of its object. This friendship is sponsored by a certain reputation : the kind we call glorious. A prince must, minimally, avoid interfering with the property of his citizens or subjects and with their women (25). But this abstainance is the lesser part of the substance of a prince's reputation. « Nessuna cosa fa tanto stimare uno principe, quanto fanno le grande impresse e dare di sé rari esempli » (26).

Early in *Il principe* the Secretary avers, « camminando li uomini quasi sempre per le vie battute da altri, e procedendo nelle azioni loro con le imitazioni, né si potendo le vie d'altri al tutto tenere, né alla virtú di quelli che tu imiti aggiungnere, debbe uno uomo prudente intrare sempre per vie battute da uomini grandi, e quelli che sono stati eccellentissimi imitare, acciò che, se la sua virtú non vi arriva, almeno ne renda qualche odore » (27). Prudent men follow paths forged by great

(20) *Ibid.*
(21) *Ibid.*, p. 344.
(22) *Ibid.*, p. 347.
(23) *Ibid.*, p. 344.
(24) *Principe, op. cit.*, p. 70 (61).
(25) *Ibid.*
(26) *Ibid.*, p. 89 (81).
(27) *Ibid.*, p. 30 (19-20).

men. The prudent man emulates those most excellent ; so that, if he does not attain their greatness, at least he regenerates the sweet smell of their success. Because this statement occurs at the beginning of the chapter in *Il principe* devoted to an analysis of the actions of men exalted for their virtue, it is reasonable to infer a distinction between prudence and *virtu*.

Machiavelli did not distinguish the prudent from the virtuous prince in terms of the values held by each. Rather, the difference of attitude with respect to shared values distinguishes the prudent from the virtuous prince. The selfishness of prudence did not consist in the acceptance by a prince of common values as means to his private end. His self-regard consists in his caring for no one's end but his own : in regarding or appreciating others only insofar as they constitute relevant means to a private end (28). As Plamenatz argues :

Though to accept the values involved in a private ambition is not to accept them as a means to the attainment of that ambition, it is also not to desire them for their own sake. A man cannot have private ends without accepting some values, but he can have private ends without also having public ends ; he can accept the values (and the institutions concerned with them) without it being his purpose to preserve or enlarge them. They are not the objects of his endeavor, they are not his ends. He still has only private ends, true though it may be that he could not have them unless he accepted certain values and institutions (29).

A prince is evil only if he fails either in prudence or *virtú* : incompetence is the equivalent of evil. « E veramente cercando un principe la gloria del mondo, doverebbe disiderare di possedere una città corrotta, non per guasterla in tutto come Cesare, ma per riordinarla come Romolo » (30).

We have come full-circle with my argument. Seeking the glory of this world, a prince must await the *occasione* to reform a corrupt situation. By successfully undertaking such a project (a project which,

---

(28) Assuming that Machiavelli could hope only for a prudent prince, it becomes clear why, for the sake of social and political justice, he argued so fervently for a citizen militia and against mechanized warfare. Note particularly that the Latin heading of the chapter includes the word *virtutes*. As Whitfield pointed out : « there is in Latin a gap between *virtus* and *virtutes*. It is only the first that admits the sense of energy of the will, or bravery ; the second is already concerned only with good actions, or good qualities. » J.H. WHITFIELD, *Machiavelli* (New York, Russell and Russell, 1965), p. 98ff.

(29) John PLAMENATZ, *Man and Society* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1963) 2 vol., p. 253.

(30) *Discorsi, op. cit.*, p. 159 (145).

our author reminds us time and again, is practically impossible) a prince promulgates the reputation constitutive of true friendship. His awesomeness derives from the fact that he *intends* government where or in a manner which men have seldom dared. The realization of this intention substantiates the power natural to princes (31).

— II —

The question remains : why should one who transgresses true friendship feel dreadful, not fearful ? Part of the answer is that whenever someone shirks his responsibilities to a true prince he feels the full impact of the nullity of his life. Indeed, if a prince « ingegnarsi che nelle azioni sua si riconosca grandezza, animosità, gravità, fortezza e circa maneggi privati de' sudditi volere che la sua sentenzia sia irrevocabile ; e si mantegna in tale opinione, che alcuno non pensi né a ingannarlo né ad aggirarlo » (32), he will gain such a reputation that, not only will it be difficult to conspire against him ; the initiation of agression will be likewise difficult, inasmuch as the absence of conspiracy proves for potential agressors that he is both competent *(eccellente)* and revered *(reverito)* by his people (33).

This observation tallys with the statement in *principe.* 17 : « il timore è tenuto da una paura di pena che non ti abbandona mai » (34). Does Machiavelli define dread in terms of fear ? Before articulating my argument, let me observe that *paura* appears once more in this chapter.

Regarding princes, we are told : *« né si fare paura da sé stesso,* e procedere in modo temperato con prudenzia et umanità, che la troppa confidenza non lo facci incauto e la troppa diffidenzia non lo renda intollerabile » (35). A prince should not be afraid of himself ? What could this mean ?

In the first sentence of this chapter weread : « Debbe per tanto uno principe non si curare della infamia di crudele, per tenere e' sudditi sua uniti et in fede ; perche con pochissimi esempli sarà piú pietoso che quelli e' quali, per troppa pietà, lasciono seguire e' disordini, di che ne nasca occisioni o rapine » (36). A prince must not be frightened by his reputation. *Sé stesso* is identified with reputation. In the epistle dedicatory of *Il principe* we read : « a conoscere bene la natura de' populi bisogna

(31) *Ibid.*, p. 156 (141).
(32) *Principe, op. cit.*, p. 75 (67).
(33) *Ibid.*
(34) *Ibid.*, p. 70 (61).
(35) *Ibid.*, p. 69 (60). Italics added.
(36) *Ibid.*

esser principe, et a conoscere bene quella de' principe bisogna esser populare » (37). To know the *essential* traits either of a prince or of the people one must assume the perspective of the people or of the prince, respectively. This observation suggests a phenomenological strain is central to our author's thought.

It lies within the power of after to destroy ego, or better yet ago, since a political figure exists by virtue of his reputation (38). For this reason, Machiavelli cites calumny as the worst civic sin, insisting that Florence was thereby ruined (39). Because of this conjunction between self and reputation exile, i.e., the forcible dissolution of the possibility for a man to associate with, and thereby exercise some control over the re-presentation, the nature of himself, is characterized as a radically violent action (40). So violent was exile believed to be that Niccolo insisted Cosimo dei Medici was by this experience transformed from a practically good man into one who was evil (41).

We now return to our theme via a further inspection of the distinctions offered by Professor Bossart, who asks how we must understand the metaproblematical (the issue self or personality for our author) : « the terms 'subjective' and 'objective' are commonly applied to different attitudes which we may take toward objects or events » (42).

Let us call these attitudes the 'pragmatic' and the 'scientific'. In the pragmatic attitude, objects are experiences as useful or useless for the pursuits of an individual or a group. Hence the object is seen through the veil of subjective need, and only those properties which interest the subject appear to have significance. In contract, the scientific attitude aims as total objectivity, for it seeks to grasp the object as it is in itself. Henceit requires the elimination of all subjective influence insofar as this is possible. Objectivity is attained when we have isolated those properties without which the object could not be what it is.

Metaphysical experience is distinguished from pragmatic and scientific experience by the fact that it is not an experience of a particular being. Yet it also shares certain characteristics of these experiences. It shares the objectivity of scientific experience, but, since we no longer speak of subject and object, let us speak instead of the content of the experience. But metaphysical experience also resembles pragmatic experience, for it

---

(37) *Ibid.*, p. 14 (4).
(38) *Ibid.*, pp. 64-93 (56-85) ; *Discorsi*, pp. 477-481 (509-513).
(39) *Ibid.*, pp. 149-152 (134-138).
(40) *Ibid.*
(41) *Istorie fiorentine, op. cit.*, p. 311. Part of the reason for Cosimo's becoming an evil man stemmed from the obligations which he acquired to his rescuers.
(42) BOSSART, *Metaphysical Experience, op. cit.*, p. 36.

is personal. In a sense, of course, it involves a depersonalization, for we never experience the metaproblematical when we are confronted with problems to be solved, when we are engaged in any sort of practical activity. Hence it is only when I am detached from the practical aspect of my self that the possibility of experiencing being becomes real. Yet since an experience of being is an experience of my own being as well, it also touches what is most real in me. Without the content of the metaproblematical, what I call my *personality* — those aspects of myself which have been shaped by and further shape my life in the world — would be fragmented and incoherent (43).

Elsewhere I have developed the outlines of our author's theory of obligation. Here I recount those aspects relevant to the argument that personality is the ground of metaphysical experience :

Nacquono queste variazioni de' governi a caso intra gli uomini : perché nel principio del mondo, sendo gli abitatori radi, vissono un tempo dispersi a similitudine delle bestie ; dipoi moltiplicando la generazione si ragunarono insieme, e per potersi meglio difendere cominciarono a riguardare infra loro quello che fusse piú robusto e di maggiore cuore, e fecionlo come capo e lo ubedivano. Da questo nacque la cognizione delle cose oneste e buone, differenti dalla perniziose e ree : perché, veggendo che se uno noceva al suo benificatore ne veniva odio e compassione intra gli uomini, biasimando gl'ingrati ed onorando quelli che fussero grati, e pensando ancora che quelle medesime ingiurie potevano essere fatte a loro, per fuggire simile male si riducevano a fare leggi, ordinare punizioni a chi contrafacessi : donde venne la cognizione della giustizia. La quale cose faceva che avendo dipoi a eleggere uno principe, non andavano dietro al piú gagliardo, ma a quello che fusse piú prudente et piú giusto (44).

For defense, men submitted to that one of their number who could best assist them to achieve their purpose. Second, it is implied that the primitive moral sentiments of these aboriginals were occasioned by the transgression of the obligation to demonstrate gratitude to whomever appeared as benefactor. Thirdly, men came to knowledge of the good and honest after noticing that hatred toward the ingrate and compassion

(43) *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37. It is important to realize the source of the word personality. It derives from *per-sonare* (for or by sounding or speaking through), and originally referred to the mask worn by the *histor* (the Etruscan wordfor actor) throughout his *histrionics*. It is from the Etruscan word *histrionics* that we have derived the word history. Thus, it may be argued, that when we speak of personality we refer to that aspect of the individual which is historical, i.e., imitable and exciting in character.

(44) *Principe, op. cit.*, p. 131 (112).

for the benefactor blossomed among them whenever someone injured his benefactor. Fourthly, men naturally, i.e., spontaneously, condemn ingrates and honor those demonstratively grateful for benefits received. Fifthly, man is a social being whose *essence* is both characterized and *realized* in association.

Laws are made after each man understands that he may suffer an injury similar to that of the aboriginal benefactor. Subjectively, each man intends to think well of himself ; he would be ashamed if convinced that his actions evidenced ingratitude. This suggests that laws are provoked by reflection, which is highly abstract and highly personal. Indeed, the argument appears to be this : man experiences a spontaneous compassion for a benefactor and a like hatred toward an ingrate (45). These sentiments originally express themselves as mere social approval or disapproval. When, however, men reflect upon the fact that one day they too may become the injured benefactor, they develop the art of government as a hedge against this eventuality. Laws, consequently government, result from the personalization and particularization of sentiments as unselfish as they are natural.

In the seventh place, men have characterized or personified others and have themselves been characterized or personified by others and by themselves in terms of the actions which they *intend.* Personality or human being is characterized by Machiavelli in such a manner that it can be comprehended only as the *essence* (the *esse* of things we must understand as their *intellige,* not their *percipi*) of a certain sort of relationship. He identified the self of an individual with his reputation for realizing his obligations to others, i.e., to the community (46).

He does not stop at condemning the ingrate. Those are condemned who suffer the development or persistence immorality. He means to hold princes to blame for the decadence of states (47) : for a prince, « l'onore consiste nel potere e sapere gastigarla, non nel potere con mille pericoli tenerla : perché quel principe che non gastinga chi erra, in modo che non possa piú errare, è tenuto o ignorante o vile » (48). While the honor of citizens is primarily *realized* in the gratitude which they manifest toward their benefactor (the political aspect of which is *obsequium*), the honor of a prince is *realized* by virtue of the punishment which he articulates in his successful efforts to marginalize ingratitude.

---

(45) See my « Machiavelli's Anthropology of Obligation : The Politics of Morality », *Polity,* IV (Summer 1972), pp. 159-178.

(46) See *principe, op. cit.,* pp. 72-75 (63-66) ; *Discorsi,* pp. 448, 477-481 (63-66, 472, 507-513).

(47) *Discorsi, op. cit.,* pp. 464, 448, 388-389 (495, 472, 408-409).

(48) *Ibid.,* p. 347 (360).

The power of a prince derives from his ability to promulgate the defense of the association of which he is an *integral* part. Because Machiavelli takes the guarantee of justice as the *conditio sine qua non* of a militia, there is neither logical nor operational distinction between the nature of a governor or a commander.

Thus, association is the ground of dread. For man is possessed or prepossessed of a personality. Inasmuch as his personality mediates his social success, personality is a metaphysical entity in the sense suggested. It embodies both pragmatic and scientific elements, yet it is not characterized by them. Hence, the disapprobation of one's peers is the most dreadful occurance. To be ignored is absolutely aweful. Thus, if we identify evil and immorality with dishonor, it is possible to suggest that man dreads nothing so much as to fall into disrepute ; to fall into disrepute is tantamount to being pushed out of existence.

— III —

Machiavelli's notion of personality or reputation suggests that he was a moral functionalist. According to this view, men are born or called to the performance of a function, to the duties of a station. There is a moral structure intrinsic to the human enterprise, and this structure obliges each and all in a rational pattern of differentiated and hierarchically organized roles (49).

Moral functionalism includes the Platonic notion that being, the *essence* of the universe, is identical with its end, i.e., the formal is identical with the final cause of things, as Aristotle put it. Insofar as a thing *realizes* its end we able to name it. Something is as we believe it to be only as it fulfills its function or attains its end. The logical realists believe the world to be a complex arrangement of means to ends and that, in consequence of this fact, it is obligatory to insist that all things exist, are present, endure, or « realize their idea » in proportion to their representation of the end or good for which they are especially adapted. Hence, the phenomenal world is actual or intelligible insofar as it concretizes the world of forms, ideas, or examples by virtue of whose appreciation we name and relate to the things and/or events, i.e., the meanings, with which we live.

Naming is a dialectical process (50). It is not merely the calling of something by its usual name. To name something is, from the human

---

(49) John W. CHAPMAN, « The Moral Foundation of Political Obligation », *Political and Legal Obligation : Nomos XIII*, R.J. Pennock and J.W. Chapman (eds) (New York, Atherton Press, 1969), p. 7.

perspective, to create it ; to bestow an essence or countenance or meaning upon a thing or an event in terms of which those incapable of knowing or « intending » the thing or event itself will act. It is essential to name things or events according to the function which justifies or calls into question the legitimacy of their existence.

So, if the truth of something is comprehended in its end, and if its end is determined by the function it performs, then it can be claimed that society *ought* to be ordered according to the implications contained in the notion that the rights of anyone depend upon the function which they perform relative to the maintenance of that political constitution which proceeds according to the prescription : everyone do that for which he is by nature fitted.

Since duty is understood in terms of end or function, it is possible to substitute the notion of skill for the specifications of function. Hence, it can be argued that one's concrete obligations concern the optimal exercise of one's skill(s). I say optimal because Machiavelli was aware of the tragic circumstances under which men of virtue would be afforded no *occasione* to realize themselves. When there are no predicaments to be overcome so that one's country can be defended, sustained, and/or improved, or intended, men of virtue are obliged (but are unlikely) to languish lest they be reborn to the infamy and ultimate impotence of a Cesare.

Machiavelli was a moral functionalist in that he supposed the fabric of society to be woven from the reciprocal obligations occasioned by the mutual benefits which skill may guarantee its members. Membership in society is dependent upon one's relevence to those in terms of whose *essence* it is constituted. If an individual has no practical relevance for others, he is an outcast ; a mean thing bereft of the condition of human-being or personality-compassionate relationship.

— IV —

Marx's thought developed from his rejection of the Hegelian solution to the problem posed by Rousseau in his distinction between *homme* and *citoyen.* Marx praised Machiavelli's *Istorie fiorentine :* in this work he found the model of the proletariat. Machiavelli's comments upon the Ciompi put flesh on Marx's understanding of Feuerbach's notion of species-being. As early as the introduction to his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right,* Marx wrote : « For a popular revolution and

(50) To be noted is a Haggada to Genesis 2 : 19 (Genesis Rabba XVII. 5) in which it is said that God praised Adam before the angels for giving names to objects — the first truely human act.

the emancipation of particular class to coincide, for one class to stand for the whole society, another class must, on the other hand, concentrate in itself all the defects of society, must be the class of universal offense and the embodiment of universal limits » (51).

Central to this criticism in an attack upon Hegel's conception of the state *qua* monarch and of personality. Hegel, he says, conceives of society, family, etc., the artificial person in general, not as the realization of the actual, empirical person but as the *real* person, which, however, has the moment of personality in it only abstractly. Whence also come his notion that it is not actual persons who come to be a state but the state which must first come to be an actual person. Instead of the state being brought forth, therefore as the ultimate reality of the person, as the ultimate social reality of man, a single empirical man, an empirical person, is brought forth as the ultimate actuality of the state (52).

Marx insists that « if the modes of man's social existence ... are regarded as the actualization and objectification of man's essence, then, family, civil society, etc., appear as qualities inhering in subjects. Man then remains what is essential within these realities, while these then appear as his actualized universality, and hence also as something common to all men » (53). Moral or artificial persons, i.e., those who are exemplary, are a necessary condition for man's development as a human being. The exemplary is the stuff of society, the vehicle by virtue of which the individual can mediate his humanity. Therefore, society, family, community, etc., are « precisely those species-forms in which the actual person brings his actual content to existence, objectifies himself, and leaves behind the abstraction of 'person quand meme' » (54). The abstract person brings his personality to its real existence only in the artificial person, society, family, etc. » (55).

Marx insists that being is the « consequence » of intelligent human action. But such action involves only that activity which is i) successful and ii) universalizable in potentio-kinetic terms. Actions are exemplary when they embody the repertoire of man's « relationships » to other men and to the world at large which are *ceterus paribus* the vehicles of his humanity, i.e., his species-identity or personality. Thus, a man is said to be human insofar as he embodies or generates an imitable

---

(51) Karl MARX, *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's « Philosophy of Right »*, Joseph O'Malley (ed.) (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 140.
(52) *Ibid.*, p. 39. Cf *Supra*, pp. 14-15.
(53) *Ibid.*, p. 40.
(54) *Ibid.*, p. 27.
(55) *Ibid.*, p. 39.

personality, thereby constituting or sustaining a public realm or a realm of meaning.

Notice the implications of this characterization. Man is not human until he stands in concrete relationship to others. He is no more than a natural object until he contributes to or detracts from the welfare of his fellows. However, if he undertakes an activity having negative implications for the human (compassionate) -being of his fellows, they are compelled to tread him as something even less than a natural object. The one who would exploit his fellows is considered the embodiment of evil for two reasons : i) the man who exploits his fellows tacitly asserts the impotence of the human-being ; man appears as the slave of his natural condition. He is insisting that a) human freedom, i.e., the compassionate determination of the future, is an ontological impossibility and that b) no meaningful distinction can be made between nature and culture. Furthermore, ii) insofar as exploitation threatens the survival of the condition of humanity — ultimately man himself — the exploited, insofar as he has *realized* his potential for being human, is morally indignant at the degradation entailed by exploitation.

Mans as a species-form or personality is for Marx as he is for Bossart and Machiavelli. The pragmatic and scientific attitudes are subsummed in the notion of efficient human action, i.e., the *realization* of truth or of the exemplary. For this reason Machiavelli expected obligation to succeed from love, so long as the relationship was ontological in character, so long as it is mediated by the common concern for *persona,* or so long as someone is understood to embody a truth.

The reason for subrogating the morally imperative quality of love as a source of obligation is that, as decadent occasion demands, men will look to their own problematic interests as essential *(di propria utilita)* (56). Thus, if either love or dread must be missing from the relationship of a prince to his constituents, it is better to alienate love. This is the course open to the will of the prince, who favors dread to prevent the public consequences which follow from private motives. The Chancellor is not implying that dread be substituted for love. Rather, he suggests that a prince may make himself dreaded in a manner such as will occasion love (57).

If a prince be virtuous or prudent all he does will constitute dread, but it will only occasion love. For love is at the discretion of the lover.

---

(56) *Principe, op. cit.,* p. 70 (62). See above the discussion of the notion of «Country», pp. 38-39.

(57) *Ibid.* As defined above, love is the expected consequence of the performance of those deeds the disassociation of oneself from which would be aweful.

The lovee may only sponsor and sustain its conditions. Given that some men are constitutionally and other men are occasionally evil, it is necessary to secure civility by means other than love. Machiavelli thus uses the notion of love as an analog for *obsequium*. Since *obsequium* results from alter's appreciation of ago's *fides*, it follows that, as he forgets the relevance of ago to his own well-being, he will tend to act in an ungrateful manner. It is *essential* that a prince be able to punish the protential ingrate in a manner which, with lesser pain, preempts an action which might have calamatous consequences for the community.

An interesting implication may be drawn from this theme, if we look to another aspect of our author's argument. In *principe*. 21, where reputation is discussed, we discover the reason for Machiavelli's antipathy toward neutrality.

E li principi mal resoluti, per fuggire e' presenti periculi, seguono el più delle volte quella via neutrale, et il più delle volte rovinano. Ma, quando el principe si scuopre gagliardamente in favore d'una parte, se colui con chi tu ti aderisci vince, ancora che sia potente e che tu rimanga a sua discrezione, elli ha teco obligo, e vi è contratto l'amore ; *e li uomini non sono mai si disonesti, che con tanto esemplo di ingratitudine ti opprimessino. Di poi le vittorie non sono mai sì stiette, che il vincitore non abbi ad avere qualche respetto, e massime alla giustizia* (58).

Several matters may be noted. First, benefit constitutes obligation. It promulgates a covenant. Second, no man, even though he could, would act in so dishonest a manner as to oppress his benefactor. Third, no victory, and apparently no « mechanical » source of power, is potent that its implications for the quality of one's reputation can be disregarded. Fourth, justice is emphasized as the most important aspect of respect. Justice is minimally defined as the prohibition of the possibility that benefactors might be harmed. This prohibition prevents the self-hate evoked in an individual convinced of this ingratitude. In this sense, the instruments of justice are a projection of the mechanisms of individual moral consciousness into a behaviorally relevant space-time complex. Fifth, it is implied that justice is a synonym for love. Thus, we may define justice in terms of that which is fair (the condition of being free from any blemish), therefore pleasing, hence, beautiful, and in consequence of this fact, loved, i.e., praised, therefore, guaranteed to remain unharmed and/or unmodified.

---

(58) *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92 (83-84). Italics added.

— V —

We come to our author's statement : « il timore e tenuto da una paura di pena che non ti abbandona mai. » It is usual to translate *pena* as punishment, implying some sort of corporeal and/or judicially insured suffering. This interpretation seems too narrow.

A more satisfactory expression of Machiavelli's notion occurs if the word employed is di-stressed — meaning to draw apart. Whenever an individual breaks faith, he is drawn apart from his fellows ; he is drawn apart from the ground of his being. Indeed, if we adopt the view of political power articulated by E. Abramson *et al.* (59), who define it in terms of the number of action alternatives enjoyed by an individual or a group in his or their attempt to achieve a specified goal, the dialectical relationship of reputation to power, and of power and reputation to success becomes manifest.

Dread is an experience grounded in the nature of human potential — the potential to be « somebody » ; that is, to represent in an efficient and admirable manner some high human value, the *realization* of which is ontologically dependent upon others. Given these stipulations, the magnitude of dread seems to be a function of the possibilities required, available, and/or challenged by virtue of which a man might become himself.

From this point of view, fear (*paura*) is that perhaps delicious apprehension experienced when one confronts his capacity to commit that sin whose promulgation is supposed to provoke the dreadful circumstance consequent to human or civil offense, i.e., ingratitude or treason. The overcoming of fear (which I take involve the sort of courage Machiavelli had in mind when he spoke in terms such as *virtú d'animo*) is not tantamount to the overcoming of dread. Rather, the exercise of courage illuminates the substance or nature of the dreadful. Courage represents a probing (considered retrospectively to have been insolent if it fails in its purpose, glorious if it succeeds) of the proclaimed rectitude and/or integrity of its target. Thus, while dread is never overcome, it remains true that it is reconstituted by virtue of the courageous actions of spirited individuals.

As luck would have it, *principe.* 18 is devoted to an analysis of « Quomondo fides a principibus sit servanda. » Here we discover information to illustrate the Chancellor's attitude toward *fede*. Its content

---

(59) E. ABRAMSON *et al.*, « Social Power and Commitment : A Theoretical Statement ». *The American Sociological Review,* XXIII (February 1958), pp. 15-22.

seems to reinforce our prejudices regarding Machiavelli : it would specify the conditions under which a prince may break faith. We are told : « non puo per tanto uno signore prudente, ne debbe, osservare la fede, quando tale osservanzia li torno contro, e che sono spente le cagione che la feciono promettere » (60). Why should a prudent man not keep faith ?

Our author addresses this question when he criticizes Piero Soderini for failing to insure his own reelection as Gonfalonieri. This election was judged, even by Soderini, essential for the preservation of the republic. Yet, rather than assume extraordinary powers, he chose to abide by the letter of Florentine law. This prompted the Secretary to observe that, while respect for the law is wise and good, *nondimeno e' non si debbe mai lasciare scorrere un male rispetto ad uno bene, quando quel bene facilmente possa essere da quel male appressato. E doveva credere che avendosi a giudicare l'opera sua e la intenzione sua dal fine (quando la fortuna e la vita l'avessi accompagnato) che poteva certificare ciascuno come quello aveva fatto era per salute della patria e non per ambizione sua ; a poteva regolare le cose in modo che uno suo seccessore non potesse fare per male quello che elli avessi fatto per bene* (61).

Frightened by his own shadow, Soderini « perdé insieme con la patria sua lo stato a la reputazione » (62). He failed to imitate the example of Lucius Brutus and save the republic, thereby occasioning a malignity the nature of which could be neither effoced by time nor placated by gifts (63).

His treatment of this event affords us insight into the workings of Machiavelli's mind. He was sensitive to the ontological pressures upon a prince. And he was aware that few who aspire to leadership have either the insight or the courage to perform those actions which generate and sustain the reputation required of such status. Indeed, this seems to be a primary motive for his writings : to reassure those of faint heart, but of proud position, that the former never won the fair lady Fortuna, which victory is the condition for maintaining the latter. « Lasci

---

(60) *Principe, op. cit.*, p. 72f (64).

(61) *Discorsi, op. cit.*, p. 387 (406).

(62) *Ibid.*

(63) Cf *principi, op. cit.*, p. 44 (34-35) where our author tells us that Agathocles was able to remedy his « situation » with God and man only partially ; by quickly dispensing with the cruelty required for his usurpation of power and, then, insofar as was consistent with his continued supremacy, benefiting his subjects.

l'opinione vostra Magnificenza, » the Secretary urged Giuliano, « e palpi e tocchi e giudichi a le mani e non agli occhi » (64).

This idea is repeated in the chapter to which I have suggested we turn our attention. Toward the end of *principe.* 18, our author says :

E li uomini in universali iudicano più alli occhi che alle mani : perché tocca a vedere a ognuno, a sentire a pochi. Ognuno vede quello che tu pari, poche sentono quello che tu se' ; e quelli pochi non ardiscano opporsi alla opinione di molti, che abbino la maestà dello stato che li difenda ; e nelle azione di tutti li uomini, e massime de' principe, dove non è iudizio da reclamare, si guarda al fine (65).

What is meant by this assertion can be garnered from a neglected passage from the *Istorie fiorentine :*

E se to dicessi che la giusta cagione che ci muove accrescerebbe a noi credito e a loro lo torrebbe, ti rispondo che questa giustizia conviene che sia intesa e creduta da altri come do noi ; il che è tutto il contrario : perche la cagione che ci muove è tutta fondata in su il sospetto che non si faccia principe di questa città. Se questo sospetta noi lo abbiamo, non lo hanno gli altri ; anzi, che è peggio, accusono noi di quello che noi accusiamo lui. L'opere di Cosimo che ce lo fanno sospetto sono : perché gli serve de' suoi danari ciascuno, e non solamente i privati ma il publico, e non solo i Fiorentini ma i condottieri : perché favorisce quello e guell'altro cittadino che ha bisogno de' magistrati ; perché e' tira con la benivolenzia che gli ha nello universale questo e guell'altro suo amico a maggiori gradi di onori. Adunque converrebbe addure le cagioni del cacciarlo, perché gli è piatoso, officioso, liberale, e amato da ciascuno (66).

These comments are attributed to Niccolò da Uzano who hoped to save the republic from the domination of either Cosimo or Rinaldo degli Albizzi. He goes on to comment :

E benché sieno modi tutti che tirono gli uomini volando al principato, nondimeno e' non sono creduti cosé, né noi siano sufficienti a dargli ad intendere, perché i modi nostri ci hanno tolta la fede, e la città che naturalmente è partigiana e, per essere sempre vivuta in parte, corrotta, non può prestare gli orecchi a simili accuse (67).

---

(64) Niccolò MACHIAVELLI, « A Giuliano di Lorenzo de' Medici », in *Il teatro e tutti gli scritti letterari,* a cura di Franco Gaeta (Milano, Feltrinelli Editore, 1965), p. 364.

(65) *Principe, op. cit.,* p. 74 (66).

(66) *Istorie fiorentine, op. cit.,* p. 311.

(67) *Ibid.*

The party of Uzano had behaved in a manner which undermined its reputation *(hanno tolta la fede)* so severely that its credibility was hopelessly insufficient to support its proffered charges ; despite the fact that Cosimo assumed the manner of a man bent upon destroying the sort of equality among citizens which was a necessary condition of a republic.

Recall that it was out of fear of eroding his reputation that Soderini refused to assume the extraordinary powers required to deal with insurgents.

La quale cose, ancora che dipoi non fosse da lui usata tirannicamente, arebbe tanto sbigottito l'universale che non sarebbe mai poi concorso dopo la morte di quello a rifare un gonfalonieri a vita ; il quale ordine egli giudicava fosse bene augumentare e mantenere (68).

There would have been nothing reprehensible about Soderini's refusing to undertake those actions which would negatively affect the popular attitude toward an office he deemed essential. But he forgot that his action and his intention would be rightly judged by their result *(a giudicare l'opere sue e la intenzione sua dal fine)* (69).

Both deed *and* intention are judged from the perspective of their outcome. This implies that inadequate or inappropriate technique impugns *a*) one's knowledge, *b*) one's skill, and *c*) one's character.

This characterization of an adequate basis for evaluating a man's undertakings suggests that error is the product of egotism. If such is the case, the observation that « è cosa veramente molto naturale et ordinaria desiderare di acquistare ; e sempre, quando li uomini lo fanno che possono, saranno laudati, o non biastimati ; ma, quando non possono, e vogliono farlo *in ogni modo,* qui è l'errore et il biasimo » (70), is to be seen in a rather different light than has heretofore been the case.

The crucial phrase in the foregoing quote is *« in ogni modo »*. Implied is a limit on the manner in which acquisitions can be gained without blame being attached to an actor on account of his accomplishment. What is that limit ? When an acquisition diminishes rather than increases one's power, one's reputation, an error has been made, avarice has over-shadowed even prudence (71). Thus, to manifest *fides* it is essential that a prince never be caught with the shorter of the two ends of any one stick. To be so trapped is to be made the fool before those from whom a prince seeks *obsequium.*

---

(68) *Discorsi, op. cit.,* p. 386 (405-406).
(69) *Ibid.,* p. 387 (406).
(70) *Principe, op. cit.,* p. 23f (13).
(71) *Ibid.*

Any acquisition, any predispositioning of power, is attended by one of three evaluative consequences : a prince is either praised or blamed, of course. There is also a middling circumstance in which he is neither praised nor blamed. This outcome finds a corelative in the distinction drawn in *principe.* 17, where we are told that the actions of a prince can make of him an object of love, fear or hatred.

To analyze this distinction is to discover that fear is sometimes mediated. A prince may be feared in a manner provocative of awe or hate (72). The optimal condition obtains when the prince is both loved and feared ; that is, whenever he is perceived to be aweful or dreadful. These observations provide a four-old distinction regarding the possible affect-orientations which a people might entertain toward their governors : love, fear, hate, awe.

The critical variable in evaluating the relevance of these four possible affect-orientations is control : « a wise prince necessarily relies upon what is within his own power, and not upon whatever is in the power of others » (73). Because love (or gratitude) is within the perview of alter, the prince may not depend upon love to sustain himself. He must rely upon a fear of punishment which never fails. From this perspective we can appreciate the observation : « E l'onore consiste nel potere e sapere gastigarla, non nel potere con mille pericoli tenerla : perché quel principe che non gastiga chi erra, in modo che non possa piú errare, è tentuo o ignorante o vile » (74).

It is possible for a prince to secure dread or awe and to avoid hatred, if he sustains or generates grand projects, and if in doing so he abstains from the property and from the women of his citizens or subjects (75). Indeed, our author insists that men forget more rapidly the death of a father than they do the loss of their patrimony (76).

This statement is usually taken as illustrative of the cynicism of the Chancellor. Let us take a somewhat closer look at its implications. In his *Istorie fiorentine,* our author informs us of the nature of this patrimony whose memory is more salient than the recollection of paternity. From a speech awarded to Albizzi, we learn, « that country alone is desirable in which property and friends may be safely enjoyed, not one where they may easily be taken from us, and where friends, from fear of losing their property are compelled to abandon each other

(72) *Ibid.*, p. 70 (62).
(73) *Ibid.*, p. 71 (63).
(74) *Discorsi, op. cit.*, p. 347 (360).
(75) *Principe, op. cit.*, p. 70 (62).
(76) *Ibid.*

in their greatest need » (77). To have lost one's patrimony is best evidence that a more fundamental loss has been sustained : a loss encompassing the conditions by virtue of which human relationships are sustained — justice.

A prince, then, is feared when, like Agathocles, he supplants previous governors by means of violence, promulgating by this act neither hateful offense nor obliging benefit. He is merely loved when appearing as the nebish ; as a benefactor who has neither the will nor the way to insure the *obsequium* which is his due from lesser spirits. A prince is hated whenever he renders the immediate circumstances under which a people lives inhospitable to the burgeoning of that mutual trust which encourages them to productive endeavor and which enables them to form the friendships which make life worth living. A prince is awesome as he associates himself with the good fortune of his commonwealth, and is therefore perceived to play an incomparable role in securing and enhancing the benefits of « country » (78).

⁂

I wish to thank the Faculty Research Committee of Miami for their support during the completion of the manuscript of which this essay is a part.

---

(77) *Istorie fiorentine, op. cit.*, p. 323f.
(78) *Discorsi, op. cit.*, pp. 156-159 (141-145).

★