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Only at a remove from life can the mental life exist, and truly engage the empirical. While thought relates to facts and moves by criticizing them, its movement depends no less on the maintenance of distance. It expresses exactly what is, precisely because what is is never quite as thought expresses it. Essential to it is an element of exaggeration, of over-shooting the object, of self-detachment from the weight of the factual, so that instead of merely reproducing being it can, at once rigorous and free, determine it.

—Theodor Adorno

What gods will be able to save us from all these ironies?

—Friedrich Schlegel[1]

MACHIAVELLI'S INNOVATION in the history of political thought, it is often argued, lies in his revision not only of scholastic but also of humanist notions of imitation and representation, a revision that is reflected in his own representation of the realm of politics. When humanism and scholasticism alike are seen as proposing an idealist or a priori notion of truth, this case is easily made. As many critics of *The Prince* have remarked, Machiavelli scandalizes his readers not because he advises the prince to act in ways previously unheard of, but because he refuses to cloak his advice in the pieties of scholastic or Christian humanist idealism. Instead, he insists that the prince acts in a world in which there are "no prefigured meanings, no implicit teleology,"[2] in which order and legibility are the products of human action rather than the a priori objects of human cognition. To recognize this, he argues, is to acknowledge the reality or truth of power, over against an idealist notion of truth conceived in terms of representation, as correspondence to some a priori standard of judgment or, more specifically, to some a priori moral ideal. Machiavelli accordingly declares his divergence from the idealist tradition of reflection on political affairs in the famous opening to chapter 15:

> Since I intend to write something useful [*utile*] to an understanding reader, it seemed better to go after the real truth [*la verità effettuale*] of the matter than to repeat what people have imagined. A great many men have imagined states and princedoms such as nobody ever saw or knew in the real world, for there's such a difference between the way we really live and the way we ought to live that the man who neglects the real to study the ideal will learn how to accomplish his ruin, not his preservation.[3]

It is important to see, however, that while Machiavelli criticizes the stoic and idealist moral philosophy of some humanists, he borrows from the more flexible pragmatism of others, according to whom truth is governed by an intrinsically ethical standard of decorum and consensus. Only when we recognize Machiavelli's imitation of and final divergence from this humanist tradition of pragmatism (and it is in this sense that the term *humanist* will most often be used in the following pages), will we be able to chart his innovation in political thought with any precision. I will argue that Machiavelli moves beyond the constraints of previous humanist reflection on the pragmatic nature of truth—which from his perspective offers yet another version of a mimetic, correspondence, or idealist theory—to a conception of truth as power, in which the pragmatic humanist version of truth itself becomes one weapon among others in the prince's strategic arsenal.

Imitation and Representation

From the very beginning of *The Prince* it is clear that Machiavelli is drawing on the resources of humanism, in particular its notion of imitation.[4] Like the humanists, he wants to educate his reader's practical judgment, the faculty of deliberation that allows for effective action within the contingent realm of fortune, and like them he recognizes that such education must therefore focus on particular examples rather than on the general precepts appropriate to theoretical reason. Furthermore, Machiavelli is concerned, as the humanists were, to criticize an unreflective relation to past examples that would take the form of slavish imitation, simple re-presentation, or a one-to-one correspondence. In fact, it is precisely in the absence of correspondence, of a mirror reflection of the exemplar, that the humanist prince or poet finds both the room to exercise his own will and the measure of his own achievement. Correct imitation accordingly involves imitating and realizing a flexible principle of prudential judgment or decorum. And this in turn gives rise to texts designed to dramatize and inculcate such judgment, whose rhetoric is, therefore, not ornamental but strategic.

Thus, in the prefatory letter to *The Prince,* Machiavelli justifies his gift of a text to Lorenzo de' Medici by suggesting that the latter will be a more effective ruler if he learns to imitate the double perspective, the reflective distance, offered in *The Prince:* "To know the people well one must be a prince, and to know princes well one must be, oneself, of the people" (3 [14]). And in chapter 14, "Military Duties of the Prince," Machiavelli makes the humanist claim for textual imitation even more forcefully by comparing skill in government to skill in reading, by making the ruler's landscape into a text and the text into a realm of forces. The prince is advised to learn to read the terrain *(imparare la natura de' siti)* and to "read history and reflect on the actions of great men." Here, to imitate great men means to imitate imitation, that is, to "take as a model of [one's] conduct some

great historical figure who achieved the highest praise and glory by constantly holding before himself the deeds and achievements of a predecessor" (43 [64]).

Machiavelli's defining truth pragmatically *(la verità effettuale)*, rather than ontologically or epistemologically as correspondence to a fixed or absolute origin, would also seem to be consonant with humanism. And yet, if Machiavelli's notion of imitation appears to be essentially humanist, his own pragmatic definition of truth is not; for Machiavelli preserves the humanists' strategic sense of rhetoric only to separate it from its presumed origin in (the author's) and goal of (the reader's) intrinsically ethical practices of imitation. In rejecting the Ciceronian and humanist equation between *honestas* and *utilitas*, the faith that practical reason or prudence is inseparable from moral virtue, Machiavalli thus turns prudence into what the humanists (and their detractors) always feared it would become—the amoral skill of *versutia* or mere cleverness, which in turn implies the ethically unrestrained use of force—in short, *virtù*. He thus opens up a gap between the political agent and the political actor—or rather he makes the agent an actor who is capable of (mis)representation: the prince must appear to be good, virtuous, and so on in order to satisfy his people and thus to maintain his power (chap. 15).[5]

This redefinition of representation as ruse and thus of mimesis as power is the aim of *The Prince* as a whole,[6] but it finds a particularly forceful articulation in chapter 18. Machiavelli begins this chapter by distinguishing between human law and bestial force, but he then abandons the first pole of his binary opposition and proceeds to locate the range of political invention within the single second term of bestiality. Imitation may be a specifically human quality requiring the exercise of judgment, but the objects of imitation are bestial craft and force. Furthermore, the imitation of (bestial) nature has as its goal not correspondence to some fixed, determinate reality but the appearance of (what is conventionally accepted as) truth.

Here illusion is being turned against itself in order to present a truth to the people that will at the same time be effective for the prince. If, in the age-old debate between rhetoric and philosophy, the humanists want a rhetoric that is grounded in the truth and also effective, Machiavelli takes the further radical step not of subordinating or compromising truth in the interests of power, as he has sometimes been charged with doing, but of mutually implicating representation and force. Representation no longer involves even the correspondence to a practical standard of truth but has instead become theatrical. Correct or successful imitation no longer demands the exercise of self-knowledge and moral discretion but has itself become a rhetorical topic of invention to be manipulated in the interests of power.[7] Conversely, power becomes in part, if not entirely, an effect of the representational illusion of truth.

Machiavelli thus borrows—or imitates—the humanists' rhetorical strategies in order to educate his reader to an antihumanist conception of imitation and

practice. The following pages aim to clarify Machiavelli's similarity with and divergence from the humanists by taking a close look at what we might call, for heuristic purposes, the repertoire of figures in Machiavelli's strategic rhetoric. These heuristic figures should also help us to discover how Machiavelli's revision of the humanist notion of practical reason is at one and the same time the condition of *virtù* and the potential obstacle to its realization. As we will see, while Machiavelli's realistic analysis of the realm of politics avoids the ethical domestication of *virtù* on the one hand, it threatens to allegorize, reify, or demonize *virtù* on the other, thus finally undermining the flexible political skill that the strategic rhetoric of *The Prince* was designed to encourage.

Irony and Hyperbole

> *For hyperbole is a virtue* [virtus], *when the magnitude of the facts passes all words, and in such circumstances our language will be more effective if it goes beyond the truth than if it falls short of it.*
>
> —Quintilian[8]

Machiavelli's criticism of the humanist version of pragmatism follows from his recognition of the intrinsic irony of politics, or of action within the contingent realm of human affairs: "If you look at matters carefully, you will see that something resembling virtue, if you follow it, may be your ruin, while something resembling vice will lead, if you follow it, to your security and well-being" (45 [66]).[9] But this formulation also allows us to see that Machiavelli wants to control this irony, or rather that he conceives of the man of *virtù* as someone who can *use* the ironies of political action to achieve political stability. (The refusal to *act* in the face of such ironies Machiavelli called literature; see his *History of Florence*, book 5, chap. 1.)[10] This recognition of the irony of politics leads in turn to a revision of humanist argument *in utramque partem*. The humanists, following Aristotle, believed that it is necessary to be able to argue on both sides of a question, not so that one might actually defend a false position but so that one could anticipate and thereby more effectively rebut an opponent's arguments.[11] Machiavelli, however, argues that the prince will actually have to oppose what may appear to be good at a given moment. In fact, in Machiavelli's view, it is the humanists who are guilty of trying to accommodate at a single moment contrary qualities or arguments (e.g., in chaps. 16 and 17) when they claim that the good and the useful are always compatible. Knowledge *in utramque partem* is necessary according to Machiavelli because "the conditions of human life simply do not allow" one "to have and exercise" only morally good qualities (45 [65]; cf. chap. 18, 50 [73]).

It is precisely this intrinsic irony of politics—the gap or lack of a mimetic relation between intention and result—that both allows for and requires solutions

that seem extreme from the perspective of the humanist ideal of *mediocritas*.[12] Hence the place of hyperbole and exaggeration in Machiavelli's rhetoric. On the one hand, the examples of great men will always seem hyperbolic or excessive to—beyond the reach of—the imitator. On the other hand, Machiavelli argues, this hyperbole has a rhetorical and pedagogical function.

> Men almost always prefer to walk in paths marked out by others and pattern their actions through imitation. Even if he cannot follow other people's paths in every respect, or attain to the *virtù* of his originals, a prudent man should always follow the footsteps of the great and imitate those who have been supreme. His own *virtù* may not come up to theirs, but at least it will have a sniff of it. Thus he will resemble skilled archers who, seeing how far away the target lies, and knowing the *virtù* of their bow, aim much higher than the real target, not because they expect the arrow to fly that far, but to accomplish their real end by aiming beyond it. (16 [30])

In this view, hyperbolic examples do not correspond to things as they are but to what they might be; they are figures of action rather than perception, of desire rather than cognition or representation. Hyperbole as a mode of speech or behavior is thus the proper response to the irony of politics: it is predicated on a recognition of one's distance both from the situation as it stands and from the situation one would like to create, but it also involves the recognition that such distance—as in the epigraph from Adorno—is itself a precondition of considered action. Finally, hyperbolic action is often ironic according to the classical definition of irony (Quintilian *Institutio oratoria* 8.6.54; 9.2.44–47) because it involves saying or doing one thing in order to arrive at its opposite. In short, the world of Machiavellian politics is intrinsically ironic, and the most effective mode of behavior in such a world is theatrical and hyperbolic. An analysis of the example of Agathocles in chapter 8 will serve to illustrate this point. At the same time, it should also help us to see how Machiavelli's strategic practice as a writer imitates that of his ideal prince.

Strategic Style: The Example of Agathocles

In a world where a flexible faculty of judgment is constitutive of *virtù*, it is not surprising that Machiavelli should offer us no substantive definition of his terms. This is not simply a failing of analytical skill, as Sydney Anglo has complained,[13] but a sophisticated rhetorical strategy, the aim of which is to destabilize or dehypostatize our conception of political virtue, for only a destabilized *virtù* can be effective in the destabilized world of political reality.[14] In this context, the most effective critique of an idealist or mimetic notion of truth and of representation will be one that stages or dramatizes this lack of conceptual stability, rather than simply stating it as a fact. This rhetorical indirection would not in

itself differentiate Machiavelli from the humanists. What is important to see, however, is that Machiavelli uses humanist rhetoric theatrically for antihumanist purposes. Chapter 8 on Agathocles the Sicilian is an exemplary instance of how the Machiavellian critique of representation implicates the humanists' ethical pragmatism as well.

In chapter 8, Machiavelli presents Agathocles as an example of someone who rises to power not by *virtù* or fortune but by crime. Readers of *The Prince* have tended to interpret this example in one of two ways. In this narrative, some argue, Machiavelli registers his own discomfort with the notion of *virtù* that he has been elaborating: it does violence to his sense of morality as well as to that of the reader. J. H. Whitfield speaks of Machiavelli's condemnation of Agathocles, and Claude Lefort remarks on the "réserve troublante" that qualifies Machiavelli's admiration of this figure.[15] Others see the story as an illustration of a cruel but effective use of violence. The interpreters who fall into this camp then differ as to whether this use of violence is immoral or amoral.[16] But in neither case is Machiavelli's own interpretation of Agathocles as one who rose to power by means of crime subject to scrutiny.[17] Thus, while the proponents of the first interpretation make note of Machiavelli's qualifications of Agathocles' actions ("Non si può ancora chiamare virtù ammazzare li sua cittadini . . ."; 42), they read this qualification as a simple pun ("It certainly cannot be called 'virtue' to murder his fellow citizens"; 26) and so save Machiavelli from the charge of failing to make moral distinctions. The second group of interpreters, in accepting the story of Agathocles as an illustration of the uses of crime rather than of *virtù*, make an analogous moral distinction between the excessive cruelty of Agathocles and the politic restraint of the man of *virtù*. In both cases one would argue that this making of distinctions was precisely Machiavelli's intention. Following from the story of Cesare Borgia in chapter 7, the next chapter would serve, in these readings, to correct the reader who had begun to think *virtù* identical with crime. In chapter 8 Machiavelli would then reassure the reader by acknowledging that there is a difference between the two.

In fact, however, there is hardly a less reassuring experience of reading in *The Prince* than that of chapter 8. And it is a chapter whose disturbing quality increases as we read further in the work: while in chapter 6 Machiavelli describes the relation of *virtù* and *fortuna* as a dialectical one, he goes further in chapter 25 when he claims that *fortuna* and *virtù* divide the world of events between them. How then, we wonder, could crime be a third term in Machiavelli's analysis of the way princes rise to power?

In spite of the title and the first paragraph of chapter 8, Machiavelli's introductory remarks about Agathocles seem to confirm the polar opposition of chapter 25: he tells us that Agathocles "joined to his villainies such *virtù* of mind and body that after enlisting in the army he rose through the ranks to become military governor of Syracuse" (25 [41]). And a little further on he reiterates that

Agathocles' success was due to *virtù:* "Considering the deeds and *virtù* of this man, one finds little or nothing that can be attributed to fortune" (26 [41]). But, then, anticipating his reader's objections, he quickly adds:

> Yet it certainly cannot be called *virtù* to murder his fellow citizens, betray his friends, to be devoid of truth, pity, or religion; a man may get power by means like these, but not glory. If we consider simply the *virtù* of Agathocles in facing and escaping from dangers, and the greatness of his soul in sustaining and overcoming adversity, it is hard to see why he should be considered inferior to the greatest of captains. Nonetheless, his fearful cruelty and inhumanity, along with his innumerable crimes, prevent us from placing him among the really excellent men. For we can scarcely attribute to either fortune or *virtù* a conquest [*quello*] which he owed to neither. (26 [42])

How are we to make sense of the vertiginous distinctions in this paragraph? Russell Price has suggested that Machiavelli is differentiating in this passage between the military *virtù* and glory [*gloria*] that apply to captains and the political *virtù* and glory that apply to "the really excellent men."[18] Of the former he writes:

> It seems that [Agathocles] . . . deserves credit for his martial spirit and deeds (that is, as a *capitano*) after he became ruler; what blackens his reputation is how he became ruler, because he treacherously slaughtered his friends and fellow citizens. Trickery and violence are to be condemned in a ruler or an aspiring ruler. . . . The stain he incurred by the way he seized power is indelible like original sin. (611)

Apart from the dubious appropriateness of an analogy with original sin for a writer of such rabid anti-Christian sentiment, this analysis fails to take account of the fact that Borgia also used trickery and violence to secure his power but is nevertheless not being offered as an example of one who rose to power by crime. Furthermore, although Borgia is not condemned by Machiavelli, neither is he called one of the really excellent men, a phrase that, as J. G. A. Pocock reminds us, refers to legislators rather than new princes.[19]

A more sophisticated version of Price's analysis is presented by Claude Lefort, who argues that the introduction of the theme of *gloria* in chapter 8 signals a turning point in the argument of *The Prince.* Whereas the earlier chapters were concerned with the necessary exercise of violence in the acquisition of power, the example of Agathocles introduces the necessity of *representing* oneself to the people in a certain way in order to hold on to the power one has acquired. While Machiavelli had previously emphasized the self-sufficiency of the prince, he now places the action of the prince in a social context in which it acquires its real significance (380–81). In this way, *virtù* itself is neither identical with nor exclusive of crime, but it does require glory, and it is this concern for glory that will induce the prince to moderate his violent behavior and take greater interest in the welfare of his people. According to this reading, in the sentence that begins "Yet it certainly cannot be called *virtù* to murder his fellow citizens . . . ," it is *called* that should be stressed: *virtù* is not *equal* to crime, though even a "virtuous" man

(Borgia, for example) may find it necessary on occasion to act criminally. Yet if Lefort is not as reassuring as those readers who claim that Machiavelli is asserting a clear-cut distinction between military and political (moral) *virtù*, he nevertheless claims that there is a distinction between Borgia and Agathocles, one that does not lie in the nature of their deeds, since both were guilty of criminal behavior, but rather in the fact that the deeds of the latter "were committed without justification, or without a pretext [*sans masque*], by a man whom nothing, except his ambition, destined to reign . . . a man—Machiavelli took the trouble to make clear—*di infima e abjetta fortuna,* the simple son of a potter *(nato d'uno figulo)*" (380; my translation).

It is not so much the crimes of Agathocles that constitute his original sin, according to Lefort, as his lowly birth. But this interpretation trivializes both the notion of representation and that of fortune in *The Prince,* neither of which, as Lefort elsewhere recognizes, is a static concept involving a one-to-one correspondence, according to which the bad fortune of lowly birth would forever restrict Agathocles' possibilities for representing himself in a favorable light. In fact, by the end of the chapter Agathocles is offered as an example of someone who used cruelty well rather than badly, and who was consequently "able to reassure people, and win them over to his side with benefits" (28 [44]). It would seem, then, that far from excluding Agathocles from the category of "representative men," Machiavelli goes out of his way to stress his inclusion.

As we have seen, most readings of chapter 8 respond to the pressure to make distinctions that is implicit in the apparently contradictory reiteration of *virtù.* But it is important to see that clear-cut or permanent distinctions are finally what cannot be made. Throughout *The Prince* Machiavelli sets up concepts in polar opposition to each other and then shows how the opposition is contained within each term so that the whole notion of opposition must be redefined.[20] Thus in chapter 25 he begins by telling the reader that "fortune governs one half of our actions, but that even so she leaves the other half more or less in our power to control." Fortune is then presented as a natural force, a torrential stream against which men can take countermeasures "while the weather is still fine." But this opposition is a generalization that undergoes startling revision when we come to "the particulars." For a man's ability to take countermeasures—his *virtù*—turns out to be a fact of (his) nature and thus a potential natural disaster over which he has no control:

> If a prince conducts himself with patience and caution, and the times and circumstances are favorable to those qualities, he will flourish; but if times and circumstances change, he will come to ruin unless he changes his method of proceeding. No man, however prudent, can adjust to such radical changes, not only because we cannot go against the inclination of nature, but also because when one has always prospered by following a particular course, he cannot be persuaded to leave it. (71 [100])

In this more particular view, human nature is itself a torrential stream that cannot redirect its course with dikes and restraining dams: the favorable constraints are instead introduced by fortune. The purely formal *virtù* that is the ability to "adjust one's behavior to the temper of the times"—and that is precisely *not* constancy of character—is not a quality that can be attributed once and for all: it is rather a generalization that designates only the fortunate coincidence of "nature's livery and fortune's star." Or, as Machiavelli writes of men of *virtù* in chapter 6: "Without the opportunity their *virtù* of mind would have been in vain, and without that *virtù* the opportunity would have been lost" (17 [31]).

If we now return to chapter 8, we can begin to see why Machiavelli cannot call Agathocles' crimes virtuous. In the light of chapter 25, it seems that we should place an even stronger emphasis on *called:* in the case of neither Borgia nor Agathocles can crime be called *virtù*, because *virtù* cannot be *called* any one thing. In short, once the temporal dimension of circumstance is introduced, the fact that crime cannot necessarily be called *virtù* means also that it can be called *virtù*. The danger of the preceding chapter 7 is not only that we might identify Borgia's murder and treachery with *virtù*, but also that we would identify *virtù* with any particular act—criminal or not. The aim of the passage, in short, is to dehypostatize *virtù*, to empty it of any specific meaning. For *virtù* is not a general rule of behavior that could be applied to a specific situation but rather, like prudence, a faculty of deliberation about particulars.

On one level, then, the conclusion of the paragraph concerning Agathocles' *virtù* ("For we can scarcely attribute to either fortune or *virtù* a conquest which he owed to neither") seems to reinforce the distinctions between *virtù*, fortune, and crime with which the chapter began—perhaps as an ironic concession to the reader's moral sensibility. On another level, it simply points up the incommensurability between the generalizations of *fortuna* and *virtù* and the specific instances that cannot be usefully subordinated to any (conceptual) generalization. How else is it possible to explain the end of chapter 8, where Machiavelli makes a distinction between two sorts of cruelty—between cruelty used well or badly—thereby placing the distinction between *fortuna* and *virtù* within cruelty itself: "Cruelty can be described as well used (if it's permissible to speak well about something that is evil in itself) when it is performed all at once, for reasons of self-preservation" (27–28 [44]). Once again the emphasis is on *chiamare* ("Bene usate si possono chiamare quelle [se del male è licito dire bene]"), but here the temporal dimension is explicit, as is the consequent and necessary making of distinctions within "cruelty." And once again, in the parenthetical remark Machiavelli speaks to the reader's moral sensibility—but he has answered the implied question even before it has been posed. Cruelty *can* be called "well used" because Machiavelli has just done so in the preceding clause. The adverbial *bene* then takes on some of the paronomastic color of the earlier paragraph on *virtù*.

The reader wonders if it is permissible to speak *good words (bene)* about evil, while Machiavelli replies by speaking *well (bene).*[21]

These lines are important because they contain in little Machiavelli's critique of humanism. The humanist's assumption that *honestas* is compatible with *utilitas*, reflected in the maxim that the good orator is necessarily a good man, is politically useless to Machiavelli, however it is interpreted. When the goodness of the orator is interpreted to mean in conformity with ethical goodness (*honestas;* see Cicero *De officiis* 3.3.11, 3.11.49), then the maxim is a stoic tautology and the question of the orator's effectiveness *(utilitas)* need not enter in. When the orator's goodness is interpreted to mean persuasiveness as well as moral rectitude, then the claim that the orator is a good man is a synthetic judgment that is also idealistic and unfounded. One has only to look to experience to see that many morally good men have been politically ineffective. Here the criterion of correct action is not moral goodness or the intrinsically moral judgment of prudence but the functional excellence or effectiveness of *virtù:* a *virtù* we might say, parodying Aristotle, that demonstrates its own excellence by being effective.[22] In speaking well rather than speaking good words, Machiavelli both dramatizes and thematizes this functional virtuosity. He shows that *virtù* is not a substance but a mode of action (not a noun, but an adverb) by speaking well about acting well.

The linguistic play of this paragraph and the earlier one on *virtù* are thus part of a rhetorical strategy to engage the reader in a critical activity that will allow him to discover not the content of "what should be" but the formality of what in any particular situation "can be."[23] Here, if the reader's "natural" disposition to make moral distinctions ("everyone agrees . . .") may be compared to the natural force of the river in chapter 25, which serves as a metaphor for fortune, Machiavelli's prose is the countermeasure that attempts to channel or redirect this course by introducing the element of reflection. In the rewriting of a metaphor from Quintilian (*Institutio oratoria* 9.4.7), Machiavelli proposes a style that is powerful precisely because it is rough and broken. He thus duplicates on the poetic level the practical problem of judgment that the prince will have to face—that of applying the rule of *virtù* to the particular situation at hand. Or, as Roland Barthes has written of Machiavelli's work, "The structure of the discourse attempts to reproduce the structure of the dilemmas actually faced by the protagonists. In this case reasoned argument predominates and the history [or discourse] is of a reflexive—one might say strategic—style."[24]

Theatricality

The suggestion that Machiavelli's style is strategic means not only that the prince may learn something about strategy by reflecting on Machiavelli's prose (the structure and vocabulary of his examples) but also that the actual strategies he recounts may tell us something about Machiavelli's strategy as a

writer. And this reciprocity in turn allows us to read the example of Agathocles in the light of Machiavelli's earlier remarks on Borgia. As a number of critics have remarked, Machiavelli's position as counselor is in some ways analogous to that of the new prince. Both are "student[s] of delegitimized politics,"[25] and for both the problem is how to impose a new form not only on matter but on an already informed matter. But Machiavelli's *virtù* as a writer is not simply, as some readers have suggested, to dramatize in the writing of *The Prince* the resourcefulness and inventiveness of the effective ruler but also to manipulate his audience in much the same way that the prince must manipulate his subjects. In the first case, imitation involves the cultivation of a purely formal flexibility of judgment or *disponibilità;* in the second, that judgment is tested by the appearances of the text itself. Thus in chapter 7 Machiavelli proposes Borgia's behavior in the Romagna as an example worthy of imitation, and in chapter 8 he imitates it in order to test whether the reader has learned the lesson of a chapter 7. In short, there are striking analogies not only between the careers of Borgia and Agathocles but also between the effect of Borgia's behavior on his subjects in the Romagna and Machiavelli's effect on the reader in chapter 8.

When Borgia took over the Romagna he discovered that "the whole province was full of robbers, feuds, and lawlessness of every description" (22 [37]). His way of "establish[ing] peace and reduc[ing] the land to obedience" was to counter lawlessness with lawlessness: "He named Messer Remirro De Orco, a cruel and vigorous man, to whom he gave absolute powers. In short order this man pacified and unified the whole district, winning great renown" (22 [37]). But like Agathocles, Borgia knew that excessive authority can become odious,

> so he set up a civil court in the middle of the province, with an excellent judge and a representative from each city. And because he knew that the recent harshness had generated some hatred, in order to clear the minds of the people and gain them over to his cause completely, he determined to make plain that whatever cruelty had occurred had come, not from him, but from the brutal character of the minister. Taking a proper occasion, therefore, he had him placed on the public square of Cesena one morning, in two pieces, with a piece of wood beside him and a bloody knife. The ferocity of this scene left the people at once stunned and satisfied. (22 [37])

This story provides us with two examples of cruelty well used. The first is De Orco's, the second Borgia's. The function of the first is primarily destructive and repressive: to pacify his subjects; the function of the second is theatrical and cathartic: this too pacifies the subjects but by the theatrical display of violence rather than its direct application to the audience. The first example reestablishes justice from the perspective of the ruler; the second stages this reestablishment from the perspective of and for the ruled. As this theatrical display suggests, the story also provides us with two examples of representation well used. In the first case, there is an element of representation insofar as Borgia delegates his power, but this delegation is ultimately a way of concealing the fact of representation

(i.e., representation has become ruse) so that he can deny responsibility for De Orco's cruelty—as he does so effectively by means of (and this is the second example) his theatrical representation in the public square of Cesena.

The example of Agathocles in chapter 8 is just such a theatrical display on the part of Machiavelli. Like Borgia, Machiavelli is concerned to make a distinction between *virtù* and crime—not because they are mutually exclusive but because they are not identical. And like Borgia, he sets up a court with the reader as judge. "He determined to make plain that whatever cruelty had occurred [in the example of Agathocles] had come, not from him, but from the brutal character of his minister" (i.e., of his example). The reader is morally satisfied or reassured by Machiavelli's supposed condemnation of Agathocles, just as the people of the Romagna were by the dramatic and brutal disavowal of Remirro's brutality. But the reader who is taken in by this excuse is in the position of a subject rather than a prince—for Machiavelli has not presented the example of Agathocles in order to pacify his readers but rather to try them. In short, Agathocles is proposed as an example for the prince who might have need to follow him, and the ability to determine that necessity is also the *virtuous* ability to make discriminations about what constitutes *virtù* with respect to any given situation. The example of Agathocles is a test of *virtù*.

The Avoidance of Tautology

When we turn from the examples of Borgia and Agathocles to the rest of *The Prince*, we see that this work is filled with examples of such extreme, ironic, or hyperbolic situations and actions, the most extreme example of which is perhaps Machiavelli's advice that the best way to keep a city is to destroy it (see chap. 5, 14 [28]; and *Discourses* 2.23, 3.40). Many readers have thought that Machiavelli here and elsewhere could not possibly mean what he says, that he is ironic in the sense of unserious.[26] But the example of Agathocles has shown that what is mere exaggeration from the perspective of the conventional virtues may be simple pragmatic advice for the student of *virtù*. This advice will seem hyperbolic because it is beyond good and evil, because it involves the transgression of the conventional philosophical constraints on knowledge (knowledge as cognition of the truth) in the direction of knowledge defined as power.[27] But here precisely lies the problem. While Machiavelli argues in chapter 15 that *virtù* involves knowledge that is useful or effective, he does not want to claim that *virtù* guarantees success. To make this claim would be to fall into a version of the tautology of *honestas* and *utilitas* that he condemns in this same chapter. If there were such a skill as a *virtù* that always yields success, then there would be no fortune or contingency; but contingency is precisely what makes room for *virtù*—indeed, what makes *virtù* necessary in Machiavelli's eyes. Still, a *virtù* that never resulted in success would be patently absurd. Thus Machiavelli claims early in *The Prince*

that if we follow the examples of *virtù* that he presents, success will *usually* or most often result (11 [12]).

These ambiguities concerning the relation of *virtù* to success are reflected in Machiavelli's claim to be guided by the *verità effettuale della cosa.* On the one hand he means that he will approach politics realistically, rather than idealistically, by beginning with things as they are. In this view, as Felix Gilbert has argued, "the measure of worth of a political figure [is] . . . formed by his capacity to use the possibilities inherent in the political situations; politics [has] its own criteria to be derived from existing political opportunities."[28] On the other hand, implicit in the claim to be guided by the *verità effettuale* is the assumption that such an approach will prove to be *effective:* in short, that one does not simply imitate necessity but that one can manipulate it—effect it—to one's own advantage.

Machiavelli's vacillation is apparent throughout *The Prince.* Sometimes he equates *virtù* with successful political action; at other times he insists on distinguishing between the two.[29] In the first case *virtù* becomes the goal of technical deliberation, and Machiavelli sounds like a dispassionate political analyst, subordinating means to ends. (The danger here, of course, is to assume that anyone who succeeds demonstrates *virtù,* when in fact success might be due to chance rather than to the activity of the individual.) In the second case, *virtù* is a practical skill that may be an end in itself, and thus structurally (although not ethically) similar to the classical notion of prudence.[30] In this way Machiavelli's vacillation simply conflates in a single term, *virtù,* an amoral version of the structural problem inherent in the classical and humanist concept of prudence—the problem of the relation of means to ends, of prudential deliberation to virtue or, in Machiavelli's case, to *virtù.*

This ambiguity or uncertainty about the status of deliberative skill and its relation to success is also reflected in the nature and function of examples in Machiavelli's texts. As I have suggested, a teacher who subordinates practical judgment to theoretical reason has only to present the student with general precepts and the logical rules of deduction, but a teacher whose theory of action equates judgment with the exercise of practical reason or of decorum will have to educate such judgment through examples. Such examples will not have the status of mere illustrations of theory, as they would if they were subordinated to or subsumed under universally applicable abstract principles. They will not be expendable but necessary, since every judgment of decorum is a judgment of, and must conform to the exigencies of, a particular situation. On the other hand, if such judgment *merely* conformed to the particular, it would cancel itself out as a judgment, since it would involve no reference to a standard other than faithful re-presentation (imitation) of the particular case. Judgment requires distance, and examples that educate such judgment must contain within themselves or dramatize this distance. Thus, in the case of humanist texts, examples are to a certain extent problematizing since they are designed to provoke reflection. But

their pedagogical aim also demands a limit to such problematizing: for if excessive identification with the particular leads to the collapse of judgment, excessive difference (the reflection on and putting in question of all possible standards of judgment—whether the standard of virtue or *virtù*) does as well. While Machiavelli lacked the humanists' faith in the ethical criterion of practical reason, he was not usually skeptical about the possibility of deliberation and action. Indeed, he insisted that such possibility could only be realized in a world purged of idealism. Machiavelli thus shares with the humanists a rhetoric of problematizing examples, and like the humanists he needs also to limit such problematizing.[31]

The dilemma that Machiavelli faces is thus intrinsic to the problematic of imitation, but it is also tinged with a peculiarly Machiavellian irony insofar as the ethical claims for humanist imitation are a rhetorical topic contained within and thus ultimately undermined by the Machiavellian strategy of imitation. In this context, Agathocles' "overshooting" of morality is exemplary because, both in Machiavelli's strategy as author and Agathocles' as agent, it dramatizes and encourages the distanced reflection and thus the reflective imitation necessary to, if not sufficient for, success.

Irony and Allegory

> *Irony descends from the low mimetic: it begins in realism and dispassionate observation. But as it does so, it moves steadily towards myth, and dim outlines of sacrificial rituals and dying gods begin to reappear in it.*
>
> —Northrop Frye[32]

As I have argued in the preceding pages, Machiavelli's reflection on the political uses of representation is tied to his revision of the humanist concept of prudential action. The prince is powerful to the extent that he diverges from a naive or moral concept of prudence, but he also maintains his power by "naively" imitating—or representing himself as faithfully reproducing—the conventional virtues. As in chapter 18, power is in part, if not entirely, the effect of the representational illusion of truth. But, as the case of Agathocles demonstrates, the exigency of representation, if representation is conceived of now as the means or the ability to generate the consensus and support of the people (chap. 8, 24 [44], chap. 18, 51 [74]; *Discourses* 2.23, 3.19–23), also finally proves to be a forceful constraint on the abuse of power. Cruelty will be well used if "it is performed all at once, for reasons of self-preservation; and when the acts are not repeated after that, but rather turned as much as possible to the advantage of the subjects" (8.27–28 [44]). The prince must in the long run please his audience if he is to maintain his rule. In the end, the rhetorical topic of truth proves to involve an ironic version of the ethical constraint that the humanists located in custom and consensus. This constraint also helps us to see how the analysis of power in *The*

Prince logically gives way to that of the *Discourses:* the prince, to be successful in the long run, must found a republic because republics are capable of greater longevity and *virtù* than principalities. The "understanding reader" will see that when representation and force are mutually implicated, when representation becomes a means of power, and thus finally when power is mitigated by the exigencies of persuasion, the short-lived individual self-aggrandizement gives way to communal glory, and the prince must of necessity become a fellow citizen.[33]

This is the optimistic way to read the self-destructing rhetoric of *The Prince.* But, as most readers have noted, there is a more radical way in which the analysis of *virtù* undermines itself and Machiavelli's pedagogy in this text. As Machiavelli tells us over and over again, there are no general rules for virtuous behavior (e.g., chap. 20, 59 [85]), and there is no guarantee that the skill one practices in the interpretation of particular examples will enable one to respond appropriately in the next situation. This is, of course, as it should be. As Machiavelli writes in chapter 21, "No leader should ever suppose he can invariably take the safe course, since all choice involves risks. In the nature of things [*nell'ordine delle cose*], you can never try to escape one danger without encountering another; but prudence consists in knowing how to recognize the nature of the different dangers and in accepting the least bad as good" (65 [92]). But the essential emptiness of the concept of *virtù* receives a rather different and finally devastating articulation in chapter 25, where the role of fortune in the individual's ability to act virtuously finally seems to deprive the individual of any initiative whatsoever. As we saw, Machiavelli begins this chapter by discussing the relation of fortune and *virtù* in general terms. On this level he gives fortune a certain allegorical stability, as though fortune were something external to *virtù* that the latter had only to resist. When he descends to particulars, however, fortune has no stability whatsoever. The irony of politics and human action becomes so great—the possibility of action (as opposed to mere passivity) so compromised—that the distance constitutive of reflection finally collapses altogether. To recognize which situations require which kinds of imitation finally necessitates that the prince imitate the absolute flexibility of fortune itself. But one's ability to learn is itself, finally, a function of the *fortune* of one's natural disposition, and is necessarily limited by it. In thus conflating the realm of necessity or nature with the agent of *virtù,* Machiavelli runs the risk of reducing *virtù* to the mere repetition—that is, the willed acceptance—of necessity: the mimetic representation of nature.[34] In so doing, he finally does substitute for the tautology of *honestas* and *utilitas* the tautology of *virtù* and success. It's not surprising, then, that Machiavelli should at this moment invoke the personified figure of Fortune as a woman in a desperate, inconsequential attempt to redeem the possibility of action by relocating it in an interpersonal context.[35]

A few remarks about the allegorical tendency of *The Prince* may help to clarify this point. According to Angus Fletcher, the allegorical hero confronts a world

of contingency, a world in which the individual has very little control over the consequences of his actions, and in which there often seems to be little causal connection between events.[36] Narrative sequence is threatened by parataxis but restored on the level of cosmic, often magical necessity.[37] As a result, the hero also seems to be not simply at the mercy of external events but in the control of some external power. In fact, the allegorical hero could be said to operate in a world of demonic powers, a world in which functions have been compartmentalized, personified. The result is that the hero himself becomes depersonalized, no longer a person but a mere personification of a function as well. In a world of Fortuna, in short, the hero becomes of necessity the embodiment of *Virtù*.

In such a world, then, the virtues no longer seem to be attributes of individual agents; rather, they recover their original sense of powers or forces, of *virtù*. As Fletcher remarks, "Like a Machiavellian prince, the allegorical hero can act free of the usual moral restraints, even when he is acting morally, since he is moral only in the interests of his power over other men" (68). To redefine virtue as *virtù* is thus "to rediscover a sense of the morally ambivalent power in action" (an advance, one might say, in the direction of "realism"), but it is also, ironically, to run the risk of doing away with free will. While the intention behind Machiavelli's various exempla of *virtù* is to help the reader understand the formal, innovative character of this faculty, and the role of free will in determining what constitutes *virtù* in any particular situation, the quasi-allegorical status of the man of *virtù*, or of the prince as a *personification* of *Virtù*, suggests that the individual is not at all in control of his behavior—a suggestion that, as we have seen, becomes explicit in chapter 25. The way Machiavelli chooses to combat this demonization or personification of the person is to repersonalize what was becoming an increasingly abstract and *unmanageable* concept of fortune by introducing the figure of Fortune as a woman. In a kind of parody of humanist rhetoric *in utramque partem*, allegory is used to fight the allegorization or reification of the prince's *virtù*.

In light of these remarks, one can also see how the allegorical tendency of Machiavelli's "realism" is manifest in the sublime rhetoric of his concluding chapter.[38] Fletcher calls our attention to the structural similarity between allegory and the sublime. Simply stated, the experience of the sublime involves the inability of the imagination to comprehend sensuous experience, which leads to an awareness of the higher faculty of reason and to "reflection on man's higher destiny" (249). This discrepancy between sensuous experience and the higher claims of reason is analogous to the separation of sensuous representation and allegorical signified in the allegorical text. Furthermore, as Longinus reminds us, allegory is not only analogous to the sublime but can itself have a sublime effect, an ideological (249) or epideictic force when it "incites to action" (246). But, as the epigraph to this section suggests, the structural incommensurability in the allegorical sublime can also have an ironic effect, by suggesting that the principle of

authority or meaning (reason, God) is infinitely removed from the world of sensuous immediacy.[39]

Machiavelli obviously intends the sublime or divine rhetoric of his concluding chapter to function as the best of all hyperboles: to incite the Medici to action. Consider the following claim:

> There is no figure presently in sight in whom she [Italy] can better trust than your illustrious house, which, with its fortune and its *virtù*, favored by God and the Church of which it is now the head, can take the lead in this process of redemption. (73 [102])

In these lines, Machiavelli conflates the fortune of the Medici with divine providence and the Church, and thus simultaneously debases religion and confers a certain grandeur upon the rulers of Florence.[40] In this light necessity, too, takes on a different and more positive appearance: it is no longer the necessity of fortune or of contingency or of (one's own) nature that resists *virtù* (as in chapter 25); rather, necessity is now the "providential necessity" that justifies the actions of the Medici. Describing men of *virtù*, he writes:

> Their cause was no more just than the present one, nor any easier, and God was no more favorable to them than to you. Your cause is just: "for war is justified when it is necessary, and arms are pious when without them there would be no hope at all." (73 [103])

In its divine justification of the Medici as the redeemers of Italy, chapter 26 would be the final, brilliant example of Machiavelli's theatrical overshooting of the mark, of a rhetoric of representation that is neither constrained by logic to represent the truth nor guided by practical reason in its achievement of decorum but that aims rather to produce the effect of truth—or to effect it. Yet the obvious alternative reading of the lines quoted above is that providential justification is conflated with the material realm of necessity. In this way, the collapse of the distance and difference necessary for action in chapter 25 turns out to anticipate the rhetoric of chapter 26, a rhetoric that, paradoxically, seems designed precisely to recoup the losses of the preceding chapter. In the end, exaggeration cannot free itself "from the weight of the factual, so that instead of merely reproducing being it can, at once rigorous and free, determine it" (Adorno; see epigraph). In a final ironic twist, Machiavelli's providential rhetoric can then be seen to suggest (no doubt against the free will he assumes he exercises; see chapter 25), that, to answer Schlegel's question, only (the hyperbolic figure of) God can save us from such ironies.

Notes

1. Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia,* trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London, 1978), 126–27; Friedrich Schlegel, "Über die Unverständlichkeit," *Kritische Schriften* (Munich, 1964), 538 (my translation). I am grateful to Charles Trinkaus for his helpful criticism of an earlier draft of this essay.
2. Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision* (Boston, 1960), 224.
3. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince,* trans. and ed. Robert M. Adams (New York, 1977), 44. Throughout, I have substituted *virtù* for the various English translations Adams provides. References to the Italian text are taken from Machiavelli, *Il Principe e discorsi,* ed. Sergio Bertelli (Milan, 1977), and will be given in the text in brackets following English references, as here: 44 [65].
4. Recent interpretations of *The Prince* in the context of the humanist notion of imitation include Mark Hulliung, *Citizen Machiavelli* (Princeton, N.J., 1983), esp. 130–67; Hannah Pitkin, *Fortune Is a Woman* (Berkeley, 1983), 268ff.; and Thomas M. Greene, "The End of Discourse in Machiavelli's 'Prince,' " in *Concepts of Closure,* ed. David F. Hult, *Yale French Studies* 67 (1984): 57–71. Gennaro Sasso also discusses Machiavelli's notion of imitation in *Niccolò Machiavelli: Storia del suo pensiero politico* (Naples, 1958), 381–89. For earlier treatments of Machiavelli in the context of humanism see Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth-Century Florence* (Princeton, N.J., 1965), and "The Humanist Concept of the Prince and the 'Prince' of Machiavelli," *Journal of Modern History* 11 (1939): 449–83; as well as Allan H. Gilbert, *Machiavelli's Prince and Its Forerunners* (Durham, N.C., 1938). In considering Machiavelli's rhetoric, I have also benefited from Eugene Garver, "Machiavelli's *The Prince:* A Neglected Rhetorical Classic," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 13 (1980): 99–120; and "Machiavelli and the Politics of Rhetorical Invention," paper given at the third biennial conference of the International Society for the History of Rhetoric, Madison, Wis. (April 1981); as well as from Nancy Struever's unpublished paper, "Machiavelli and the Critique of the Available Languages of Morality in the Sixteenth Century."
5. Machiavelli's division of the political agent from the political actor anticipates Hobbes in chapter 16 of the *Leviathan.* On the distinction between cleverness or *versutia* and prudence, see Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* (henceforth *NE*) 1144a.25–1144b.
6. See the discussion by Pierre Manent, *Naissances de la politique moderne: Machiavel, Hobbes, Rousseau* (Paris, 1977), 19: "If ruse is, in Machiavelli's eyes, the principal resource of political action, that is because ruse responds to the essence of the political situation" (my translation).
7. Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven, 1982), 142, 172, 184.
8. This slightly altered translation is taken from *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian,* trans. H. E. Butler, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass., 1976), 8.6.7.
9. Wolin discusses Machiavelli's view of the intrinsic irony of politics in *Politics and Vision,* 227.
10. Cited by Hulliung, *Citizen Machiavelli,* 137.
11. Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1355a.20–1355b.5.
12. As Hulliung (*Citizen Machiavelli,* 158–59) and Sydney Anglo (*Machiavelli* [New York, 1969], 244–49) have remarked, Machiavelli's rejection of *mediocritas* or the middle way is also reflected in his antithetical, either/or style of arguing.

13. Anglo, *Machiavelli,* 209.
14. Nancy Struever has an interesting discussion of the dereification of *virtù* in her unpublished paper, "Machiavelli and the Available Languages of Morality."
15. J. H. Whitfield, *Machiavelli* (Oxford, 1947), 80 and 108; Claude Lefort, *Le Travail de l'oeuvre Machiavel* (Paris, 1972), 376. See below for further discussion of Lefort's position. Another representative of this first position is Jerrold Seigel, "*Virtù* in and Since the Renaissance," in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas,* vol. 4 (New York, 1968), 476–86.
16. See Gennaro Sasso, *Niccolò Machiavelli,* 296ff.; Gabriele Pepe, *La politica dei Borgia* (Naples, 1945), 281–82; and Ugo Dotti, *Niccolò Machiavelli: La fenomenologia del potere* (Milan, 1979), 179ff., for the first position; for the second, see J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton, N.J., 1975), 152 and 167.
17. Greene, "The End of Discourse in Machiavelli's 'Prince,' " notes the tenuousness of the distinction between Borgia and Agathocles (65), but sees this as evidence of a breakdown in the concept of *virtù* rather than a deliberate strategy on the part of Machiavelli. Manent, *Naissances de la politique,* 16, however, sees the distinction as deliberately false.
18. Russell Price, "The Theme of *Gloria* in Machiavelli," *Renaissance Quarterly* 30 (1977): 588–631.
19. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment,* 168.
20. See chapter 12 on the pseudo-distinction between laws and arms, as well as chapter 19 on arms and friends.
21. Struever also discusses the general conflation of the ethical *good* and the amoral *well* in *The Prince;* "Machiavelli and the Available Languages of Morality."
22. Aristotle writes: "It is this kind of deliberation which is good deliberation, a correctness that attains what is good" (*NE* 1141b.20; trans. Martin Ostwald [New York, 1962]). My definition of *virtù* as functional excellence is taken from Hulliung's discussion of the similarity between *virtù* and *aretē:* "Since the Latin word *virtus* meant almost exactly what *aretē* had meant in popular Greek usage, simply to use the Latin language as it had always been used had the effect, whether intended or unintended, of undoing the Platonic and Aristotelian effort of reworking and philosophizing pagan values. Once again, 'excellence' was synonomous with all that is heroic, noble, warlike, great"; *Citizen Machiavelli,* 136–37. See also pp. 195ff., 253, and passim on Machiavelli's critique of stoicism.
23. This phrase is taken from Whitfield, *Machiavelli,* 117.
24. Roland Barthes, "Le Discours de l'histoire," *Social Science Information* 6 (1967), 72. In a book that came to my attention after the completion of this essay, Michael McCanles proposes a reading of chapter 8 similar to the one I am offering here. See "The Discourse of 'Il Principe,' " in *Humana Civilitas,* Studies and Sources Relating to the Middle Ages and Renaissance, vol. 8 (Malibu, Calif., 1983). He tends, however, to maintain a strict opposition between Christian virtue and *virtù* even as he denies any substantive definition of the latter. That is, although he argues throughout his book for the dialectical understanding of *virtù* as necessarily including its opposite, he suggests here that what is evil from a Christian point of view will necessarily be good from a political point of view and vice versa (see p. 63). He also does not discuss Agathocles' conversion to representation at the end of chapter 8 (see pp. 59–65).
25. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment,* 163.
26. See Adams's remarks on this example in his edition of *The Prince,* 14. See also Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Chicago, 1958), 82; and Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini,* 165–66.

27. On Machiavelli's anticipation of Nietzsche, see Hulliung, *Citizen Machiavelli,* 30.
28. Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini,* 120.
29. *Virtù* is equated with success in chaps. 8 (28 [44]), 19 (59 [84]), and perhaps 25 (71 [100]), where Machiavelli equates the good with what is effective; cf. the end of this chapter where failure is equated with inaction. *Virtù* is differentiated from success in chaps. 4 (14 [28]), 6 (16 [30]), and 7 (20 [34–35]). In the *Discourses* (3.35), Machiavelli remarks on the superficiality of judging by the result, as he does in *The History of Florence,* book 4, chap. 7, and book 8, chap. 22. On this problem of the relation of *virtù* to success, see Alkis Kontos, "Success and Knowledge in Machiavelli," in *The Political Calculus: Essays on Machiavelli's Philosophy,* ed. Anthony Parel (Toronto, 1972), 83–100.
30. I borrow the distinction between *technical* and *prudential* from Aristotle *(NE),* who argues that *technē* is concerned with production (the end results), whereas prudential deliberation is a process, and an end in itself. Those many critics who argue that *virtù* is technical skill are right if they mean that the prince is concerned with results, but wrong if they equate *virtù* with the result rather than deliberative skill and energy in action. *Virtù* is not completely technical because technical skill must result in a product (however much that product may reflect a compromise with one's original conception of the object), while *virtù* does not have to produce something else in order to be *virtù.* Or, as Ostwald observes (*NE,* 154, n. 20), "Practical wisdom is itself a complete virtue or excellence while the excellence of art depends on the goodness or badness of the product." Again, I am arguing only for the *structural* identity or homology of *virtù* and prudence or practical reason.
31. On problematizing examples, see Karlheinz Stierle, "L'Exemple comme histoire, l'histoire comme exemple," *Poétique* 10 (1972): 176–98. While Machiavelli was capable of using the same examples to illustrate different points (e.g., Giacomini's loss of favor in the *Discourses* 1.53 and 3.16; cited in Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini,* 167), he needed, if his work was to have any practical effect, to stop short of the radical skepticism of a Montaigne, for whom examples could be used to illustrate almost anything. For if this is the case, then one has departed from the realm of *verità effettuale* and entered the realm of the unconstrained imagination, the realm of fiction.
32. Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, N.J., 1957), 42.
33. Hulliung makes this point in *Citizen Machiavelli,* 56, 82, 231. See also Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli,* 288–89; Manent, *Naissances,* 19–25; and *The Prince,* chap. 19, 53–54 [77–78], for Machiavelli's remarks on the origin of the French parliament. Nancy Struever has some interesting remarks about constraint in *The Prince* in her unpublished essay. She argues that Machiavelli wants to oppose the unproblematic constraints of the humanist tradition (ritual, ceremony, the tautological equation of ethical behavior with good results) to the problematic and problematizing constraints on the prince and the reader of *The Prince.* These latter take the form of 1) a narrow lexicon of political analysis (e.g., *virtù, fortuna*); and 2) difficult and ambiguous examples that force readers to judge and to recognize the moral opacity of the "domain of artifice" in which they act. For Struever, all of this amounts to the greater "realism" of Machiavelli's political analysis, a claim that I address below.
34. See Manent, *Naissances,* 9–10, 35–39, for a more positive reading of the willing of necessity in *The Prince.*
35. Pitkin makes this point in *Fortune Is a Woman,* 292.
36. See Angus Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1964). All page references will be given in the body of my text.

37. On parataxis in *The Prince,* see Fredi Chiappelli, *Studi sul linguaggio del Machiavelli* (Florence, 1952), 40–42 (cited by McCanles, *The Discourse of 'Il Principe,'* 13). See also McCanles, ibid., 13–15.
38. For some provocative interpretations of this concluding chapter, see Greene, "The End of Discourse in Machiavelli's 'Prince' "; and Sasso, *Niccolò Machiavelli,* 278–80.
39. Fletcher quotes Schiller: "For the sublime, in the strict sense of the word, cannot be contained in any sensuous form, but rather concerns ideas of reason, which, although no adequate representation of them is possible, may be excited and called into the mind by that very inadequacy itself which does admit of sensuous presentation"; *Allegory,* 251–52. See also Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* trans. J. H. Bernard (New York, 1951), 88, 101 (paragraphs 25 and 28).
40. Pocock makes a similar point in *The Machiavellian Moment,* 171: "We must not say that divine inspiration is being lowered to the level of *realpolitik* without adding that *realpolitik* is being raised to the level of divine inspiration."