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HOW ORIGINAL IS MACHIAVELLI?

A Consideration of Skinner's Interpretation of Virtue and Fortune

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MACHIAVELLI'S UNDERSTANDING OF virtue and fortune is central to his originality as a political philosopher, but the degree and character of that originality is a much debated question. In one of the most influential recent interpretations, Quentin Skinner argues that the context for Machiavelli's discussion of virtue and fortune is provided by the Italian humanists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Augustinian Christianity, Skinner argues, had viewed fortune as a lawlike force of divine necessity that left little or no room for human freedom.¹ According to Skinner, the humanists by contrast reverted to the "classical belief that the human predicament is best seen as a struggle between man's will and fortune's willfulness."² In this view, Skinner claims, fortune is no longer seen as the "inexorable force of providence," but as a "capricious power" of irrational happenstance. By exerting the "creative powers" of his will against this flux, man is "able to shape" and "control his own destiny," "mould his own fate," and "remake his social world to fit his own desires."³ Understanding the humanists' revival of this classical theme compels us, Skinner believes, to abandon the "textbook" view that Machiavelli's argument is entirely *sui generis*. But this will also enable us to see Machiavelli's originality more clearly, as when, for example, he departs from the "more orthodox defenders of republican liberty" by rejecting the "conventional Christian" meaning of virtue.⁴

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In what follows, I question Skinner's interpretation of the classical, Christian, and humanist understandings of virtue and fortune. As a consequence, I also question his interpretation of the light they shed on Machiavelli's comparative originality as a political thinker. The "creative" view of virtue as able to master the world's disorder and "remake" it (to use Skinner's terms) is certainly to be found in Machiavelli. The conquerors and statesmen of "outstanding virtue" described in *The Prince* receive no assistance from fortune in successfully founding new societies, and the belief that a supervening order of causes grounds man's hopes for peace and justice is squarely repudiated. Hence, Machiavelli argues, statesmen receive only the bare "occasion" from fortune for their daring and prowess, "which . . . they could then shape into whatever form they pleased."⁵ In my view, however, this conception of virtue is difficult if not impossible to reconcile with the classical view of the relation between human virtue and the transhuman word. In Part I, I argue that there is scant suggestion among Greek and Roman thinkers that virtue can be understood as the creative will to overcome a capricious fortune so as to shape it to human needs. Moreover, these authors do not equate fortune with the world external to or in opposition to man, but treat it as a subsidiary dimension within the complex of relations making up the order of causes. Because the classical writers believed the world to be rationally ordered—and hence the very opposite of a "capricious" or "willful" happenstance—they had a rather different way of conceiving the problem of human freedom *versus* the objective constraints placed upon it. In Part II, I argue that the humanists cited by Skinner in his discussion of the relation between virtue and fortune have a view of virtue that is also hard to reconcile with the creative one. Instead, they counsel a kind of forbearance against the reverses of fortune by accommodating oneself to the divine order of the universe, a blend of Christian precepts with the classical understanding as I interpret it.

Skinner does not wish to drive too large a wedge between Christianity and humanism, and assures the reader that Petrarch and his successors among the humanists were "unequivocally Christian"—as well as classical—in their espousal of such traditional virtues as justice, liberality, faith, and love.⁶ But he does wish to distinguish their variant of Christianity, which he believes made room for the "creative" view of virtue, from "conventional" or "orthodox" writers who shared the Augustinian assumption that man should not attempt to resist the dictates of providence. Obviously there were many variants and

shadings in Christian belief and in humanism during this period. But on the particular theme of virtue and fortune, I do not believe that Skinner adduces sufficient evidence for his way of distinguishing the conventional outlook from the "new attitude" he finds in Petrarch, Salutati, and their followers.⁷

If I am correct in my reading of the classical, Christian, and humanist conceptions of virtue and fortune, for the humanists to conceive of virtue as man's creative power, as Skinner puts it, to "mould his own fate," they must already have parted ways with any attachment to the traditional virtues. For the traditional virtues presuppose man's subordination to a natural or divine hierarchy of ends that prescribe his substantive duties and fulfillment. In this view, the world external to man cannot be seen as "capricious" and it is neither possible nor desirable to conceive of man as being able to stand apart from the world and impose his own "will" on it. The creative view of virtue cannot, in other words, be added to the traditional one, which it contradicts at every level. I will argue that the humanists accepted both the traditional account of virtue and the traditional view of man's place in the world, suitably adapted to Christianity. Whereas Skinner tends to range the humanists alongside the classics in opposition to orthodox, Augustinian Christianity, I will suggest that the humanists he sees as bearers of the "new attitude" about virtue were in fact much closer to the conventional view of it. What emerges from this reconsideration of Machiavelli's context, I shall suggest in conclusion, is a Machiavelli who conceives of virtue and fortune in a radically different way from classical, Christian, or humanist writers.⁸

I. VIRTUE AND FREEDOM WITHIN THE ORDER OF CAUSES

In Greek and Roman philosophy, man's responsibility to choose virtue over vice is examined in the light of the obstacles posed by objective reality to his freedom of action. This transhuman reality is distinguished according to its various aspects of fortune or accident, necessity and fate.⁹ Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*, for example, explore the possibility of reconciling man's freedom to choose virtue over vice with the rationality of a cosmic order that provides the objects of virtuous striving.¹⁰ It can be argued that Plato's endorsement of ethical

responsibility is, at bottom, irreconcilable with the determinism of his metaphysics and theology.¹¹ For if virtue is knowledge and vice the equivalent of an error about one's own advantage, there seems to be no need for the specifically ethical education of character that makes us choose virtue for its own sake or for the honor it bestows on loyal and law-abiding citizens. Aristotle responds to this dilemma by trying to preserve ethical and political *praxis* from the dictates of the apodictic "science" of royal rule outlined by Plato. Statesmen and citizens are responsible for grappling with the variable particulars of everyday politics guided by a prudence developed through experience rather than by philosophic knowledge. It may still be wondered, of course, whether Aristotle is more successful than Plato in preserving man's freedom and responsibility for his actions within a rationally ordered cosmos. His attempt to distinguish more precisely among the types of causes and his notion that final cause actualizes an immanent potentiality for growth within natural beings can be seen as an attempt to close, or at least narrow, the Platonic chasm between absolute Being and nature's self-movement.¹² Ultimately, however, it appears that Aristotle cannot find a place within this cosmology for fortune or accident as a genuinely spontaneous occurrence—an effect without a cause.¹³ His uneasiness about the place of spontaneity extends to politics as well, where he waffles between endorsing republican self-government where citizens are responsible for themselves and an absolute monarchy that rules according to reason and leaves no scope whatever for citizen participation.¹⁴

Because it is sometimes argued that Cicero is more immediately important than Plato and Aristotle for furnishing the context of the humanists, we should consider how he examines the dilemma of freedom and necessity. Two of his dialogues—*On the Nature of the Gods* and *On Fate*—are crucial for our understanding of how the Stoic, Epicurean, Peripatetic, and Academic schools of philosophy had developed the problem beyond its Platonic and Aristotelian formulations. *On the Nature of the Gods* considers whether the gods are not completely indifferent to, or powerless to influence, human life—in which case it makes no sense to worship them or to live virtuously and piously. The opposing view is that the world is entirely "governed by the will and wisdom of the gods," which appears to leave no room for human freedom.¹⁵ The Peripatetic Cotta attacks Epicureanism as representative of the first view, and Stoicism as representative of the second. The Epicureans, Cotta claims, are really atheists who mount an

appearance of belief in gods “for the sake of avoiding unpopularity or punishment”:¹⁶

For what reason is there for your saying that men ought to worship the gods when the gods [in the Epicurean view] not only do not regard men but are entirely careless of everything and do absolutely nothing at all?¹⁷

As for the Stoics, Cotta argues, “the prosperity of the wicked destroys the idea of divine providence,” for how could omnipotent, omniscient gods tolerate this? On the other hand, although good men “sometimes” succeed, this cannot be proven conclusively to depend on the aid of the gods, as opposed to their own talent and effort.¹⁸ The Stoic Balbus declines to refute Cotta’s lengthy dissection of his philosophy, but simply observes that the falsity of Stoicism would mean the falsity of all religion and piety, which “defend Rome better than she is defended by her ramparts.” While the Epicurean Velleius is won over by Cotta’s demolition of both positions, Cicero depicts himself in the dialogue as deciding that Stoicism has “the greater probability.”¹⁹

St. Augustine’s interpretation of this dialogue in *The City of God* is of great interest for understanding how the terms of the classical debate about freedom and necessity were absorbed and altered by Christianity. If, as Skinner maintains, Augustinian Christianity was the main opponent of the humanist revival of the classical conceptions of virtue and fortune, it should help to clarify the relationships among all three bodies of belief. Not surprisingly, St. Augustine prefers Stoicism among the ancient schools to the Epicurean principle of pleasure. The Stoics believed the world to be governed by the rationality of the supreme being. Man brings himself more closely into accord with this divine rationality by living virtuously. In interpreting Cicero’s place in the debate, St. Augustine reasons as follows: If, as the Stoics correctly believed, God is “the Cause of all causes,” he must also have foreknowledge of the future. Cicero, however, believed that man cannot be free if God has this foreknowledge. For if everything we do is predestined, there is no point in holding people responsible for choosing virtue over vice. The laws, education, and political morality meant to encourage this choice would all be in vain. According to St. Augustine, this is why Cicero, in his treatise *On Divination*, denies that there can be knowledge of the future. For St. Augustine, this is tantamount to atheism: “Thus, to make men free, he made them give up God.” Why, then, does Cicero incline toward the Stoic view in *On the Nature of the*

Gods? For St. Augustine, this can only be explained as Cicero's fear of being seen too openly to embrace the impious view he actually holds (rather as Cotta says of the Epicureans in the dialogue). Instead, St. Augustine claims, Cicero places his real views in the mouth of Cotta.²⁰

This is an arresting interpretation, but it assumes that Cicero shared St. Augustine's view that the "order of causes" necessarily implies the foreknowledge of an interventionary supreme deity. But Cicero did not see the matter in quite these terms, as can be confirmed by examining another of his treatises, *On Fate*. Cicero uses the term "fate" (*fatum*) when he wishes to discuss the problem posed by rational causality for human freedom as a philosophical one strictly speaking, as opposed to what he regards as the deplorable superstitions associated with *Fortuna* and the other Roman cults. Here, he is explicitly concerned with finding a middle ground between the Stoic view, which can lead to a determinism in which human freedom and responsibility are impossible, and Epicureanism, which secures freedom at the expense of belief in the gods, or at least in gods willing and able to intervene justly in human affairs. Seemingly dry epistemological and cosmological debates prove, as Cicero analyses them, to have important consequences for freedom and morality. The Stoic Chrysippus, for example, is presented as maintaining that every proposition must be either true or false. Without this unambiguous correspondence between thought and truth, "it will be impossible to prove that everything is done in consequence of fate, and of the external causes of all future events." Epicurus, by contrast, denies this rather than "admit that everything happens through fate." For if propositions are true and false "from all eternity," human freedom is extinguished by the "necessity of fate" governing every possible occurrence. According to Cicero, Epicurus believed that his doctrine of the atoms avoided this supervening rational necessity. The "fortuitous" clashing of the atoms, Cicero says, amounts to "an effect without a cause." This is especially true, we may note, of the notorious "swerve" by which the atoms inexplicably cease being carried perpendicularly downward by gravity and clash to generate visible phenomena.²¹ In Cicero's presentation, Epicurus believed that to grant that these combinations of atoms are foreordained by "natural and necessary" causality would be "to deprive man of his liberty."²² If the atoms are not free to move spontaneously, in other words, neither are we.

At this point, Cicero sides with Epicurus as against Chrysippus, seeming to prove St. Augustine's view of him as an atheist.²³ But Cicero is careful to say that he agrees with Epicurus *only* rather than "grant that

fate governs all things." As the treatise goes on, it is clear that Cicero will not allow himself to be trapped between a notion of rational causality that makes freedom impossible by rendering all acts predestined and a notion that we can be free only if the world has emerged from an accidental concatenation of atoms. Finally he sides with Chrysippus, finding him to be "an honorary arbiter" who "holds the middle course" between these extremes. Following Chrysippus, he argues as follows: "Reason itself" does oblige us, after all, to grant "that there are things true from all eternity," and therefore that every proposition is either true or false.²⁴ But it does not follow from this that all things are "bound to eternal causes of necessity." Man's freedom is compatible with the "doctrine of fate" so long as fate is not *synonymous* with necessity.²⁵ Some things are indeed caused by "necessary and compulsory causes." But human perceptions, for example, have a more proximal cause that explains their precise content. An object "strikes our sense and conveys its image to our soul"—this is causal necessity. "Yet it leaves us free to form our specific sentiment concerning it." The proximal cause of these sentiments rests with man: "We have the moulding of their effects in our own power."²⁶

The preceding is not so important because it adequately resolves the problem of freedom and necessity as for the light it sheds on St. Augustine's critique of Cicero. It appears that for St. Augustine there can be no "middle course" between Epicureanism and the more deterministic version of Stoicism. Because Cicero clearly means to preserve man's freedom from divine necessity, St. Augustine concludes that he could not really have believed in the order of causes in *any* sense, and was therefore driven to dissimulate his views. As we have seen, however, not only does Cicero refuse to be bound by this dichotomy, but his middle course does not require grounding in an omnipotent interventionary deity. The distinction between fated and necessary causes is all that the Ciceronian solution requires. The absence of this activist deity from Cicero's understanding of a rationally ordered universe explains, in my view, St. Augustine's inability to enter the debate on Cicero's own terms. For, to a Christian theologian, no resolution of the problem is thinkable apart from such a supreme deity.

This difference points to how much Christian theology altered classical thought about man's place within the order of the world even while adapting many of its categories and problematics. In Aristotle's physics, for example, all natural movements are set in motion by a final cause that is itself unmoved. The final cause is therefore not a willing

agency of any kind, which Aristotle would place under the heading of efficient cause. It is, rather, a perfection that solicits movement toward itself through efficient, material and formal causes.²⁷ For St. Augustine, by contrast, final cause is conflated with the efficient cause of an interventionary deity whose will creates and sustains all things.²⁸ In keeping with this elevation of God's will over all other kinds of causality, St. Augustine's own solution to the problem of freedom *versus* necessity is to assimilate both "fate" and "necessity" to God's direct and constant supervision of the universe. As for fortune or accident, he simply denies that it exists, especially in human affairs. "As for the causes which are called fortuitous," they merely appear so to our limited understanding; they too are "latent" in the will of God. How is human freedom compatible with a deity who wills all and knows all? St. Augustine's answer is that God gives us the power to choose good over evil, and the choices we freely make reenter the chain of causes foreknown by God. In other words, as the efficient cause of the universe including human voluntarism, God wills our wills:

In His will is the supreme power which helps the good choices of created spirits . . . [our] wills have no power save what He gave them.²⁹

Several contrasts emerge from the preceding analysis between the Christian and classical conceptions of virtue and fortune. For the Greek and Roman thinkers, the problem posed by the order of causes for human freedom admits of a number of more or less provisional solutions. We can summarize their general sense as follows: There is an eternal order of rational causality, but it does not fully determine every human thought and action. The play of nature's self-movement—and, therefore, of accident and contingency—leaves a wide latitude for prudent improvisation. There may be gods that provide an objective grounding for virtue, but this does not mean they constantly and reliably intervene in human affairs on behalf of the good, at least not without a matching effort by man. In sum, the classical thinkers try to find a place for fortune (albeit a severely circumscribed one) within the order of causes. For St. Augustine, on the other hand, fortune simply vanishes into the will of the Creator.

But if the classical understanding of the relation between virtue and fortune is different from the Christian one, still less does it resemble the idea of virtue described by Skinner as man's creative will exerting itself over capricious fortune so as to shape it to human desires. For the Greek

and Roman thinkers, virtue is a conditioning of the soul that brings one into closer proximity to eternal being. Cicero never questions that the objects of the virtues are prescribed for man by a rationally ordered cosmos; he works within this assumption even while resisting its more deterministic interpretation. Accordingly, the classical notion of virtue has no connotation of mastering fortune or the external world. Rather, by cultivating the virtues, one lessens one's desires, and therefore one's dependence on external goods. Because to be a slave of external goods is to be a slave of what is perishable, accidental, or less real, in this sense, virtue makes one less vulnerable to the reverses of fortune. But this way of coping with unpredictable or unmerited suffering is far more passive than masterful. If the reverses occur anyway, so the reasoning went, one can draw upon the steadfastness, dignity, and self-control achieved through the cultivation of virtue to sustain or console oneself against them. Plutarch, for example, is full of homilies to this effect. In chronicling the lives of great statesmen and generals, he wants his readers to understand

how far a noble nature, an honorable ancestry and a virtuous upbringing can fortify men against grief, and that although fate may defeat the efforts of virtue to avert misfortune, it cannot deprive us of the power to endure it with equanimity . . . [a] virtue which a man embraces on principle and which is genuinely a part of his nature can never be transformed into its opposite by any mere stroke of fortune.³⁰

By the same token, the classical thinkers do not identify the objective constraints on man's freedom with *fortuna* in the sense of an overwhelming force of irrational happenstance. Plato and Aristotle, for example, understand the world as being ordered by the intelligence that also provides human nature with its *telos*.³¹ Within this way of seeing things, fortune or accident is relegated to the secondary role of meaning the decline of perishable things from being into nonbeing. In keeping with this primacy of rationality over accident, the effects of sheer irrational happenstance—the whole gamut of natural disasters and human impulse—are relegated to a secondary role in politics and morality. This is reflected in the frequently noted lack of “realism” in classical political philosophy: the emphasis on transcending desire rather than acquiring the power to satisfy it; the emphasis on internal politics and military defense rather than on foreign policy and imperialism. As we have seen, what primarily concerned the philosophical schools of antiquity was, instead, how this concept of a rationally ordered cosmos affected the prospects for human freedom of

choice. Does the order of causes leave man responsible for developing his moral and intellectual excellence through the pursuit of virtue? Since the *telos* is eternally prescribed from a transhuman source, is there any room for man's contribution? Far from being—as in Skinner's depiction—too willful or capricious, too apt to spoil expectations of regularity and order, the world surrounding man may be entirely *too* rational, orderly, and good.

II. VIRTUE AND FORTUNE IN THE HUMANIST UNDERSTANDING

If we turn to the humanists of the *trecento* and *quattrocento* with the classical and Augustinian outlooks in mind, two features emerge. First, as Skinner observes, they are preoccupied with the power of fortune over human affairs. Rather than reverting to “the classical image of man's predicament,” as Skinner argues,³² it seems to me that they heighten this sense of vulnerability to fortune's reverses. In spite of this, however, the conception of virtue that the humanists invoke to deal with fortune remains almost entirely classical in the sense discussed in Part I above. It places far more emphasis on the need to submit and reconcile oneself to the divine or rational order that rules the universe than on man's capacity to “mould his fate” and to be “the architect . . . of his own character.”³³ This can be confirmed by examining the authors cited by Skinner as being important for furnishing the “ideological” context for Machiavelli's republicanism. These include the followers of Salutati—Bruno, Poggio, and Vergerio, who in turn influenced Alberti, Manetti, Valla, and Palmieri.³⁴ Skinner also argues for the importance of Petrarchan humanism as helping give rise to *quattrocento* humanism.³⁵ Skinner sees Petrarchan and civic humanism as entering a distinct stream from that of “Augustinian Christianity,” flowing into the republican ideology that flowered in the early sixteenth century.

According to Skinner, Petrarch—in a theme on which Alberti, Manetti, and Pico della Mirandola made later elaborations—denies that fortune is the “inexorable force of providence,” seeing it rather as “nothing more than a capricious power.” Reverting to the classical view that “Augustine had tried to obliterate,” Skinner argues, Petrarch no longer emphasizes the view of man as “the possessor of an immortal soul” but as able to “control his own destiny.” In keeping with this,

Skinner notes Petrarch's admiration for Cicero, not merely as a contemplative sage but as a model for the life of action.³⁶ However, as we saw from our analysis of the classical view in general and Cicero's in particular, the fact that man possesses a free will and—as Pico della Mirandola writes—“many operations of intelligence” is not sufficient to establish Skinner's thesis that virtue is now viewed as man's “creative powers” to “remake his social world to fit his own desires.”³⁷ Certainly the classical thinkers attributed moral and intellectual qualities to man that made him fit for a life of civic responsibility. The strength of character to be a good citizen or ruler, however, was thought to come from the transcendence of desire—from avoiding, to the degree humanly possible, the pursuit of power and prestige. Thus it does not follow from the classical thinkers' attribution to human beings of free will and various kinds of talent that people are able, as Skinner infers, to reshape the world as they see fit to serve their own desires. Instead the problem as the classical thinkers saw it was whether the freedom and intelligence with which man was endowed in order to pursue virtue were overwhelmed or rendered superfluous by the supervening order of causes.

The difficulty with Skinner's interpretation is evident in his characterization of Petrarch's dialogue *On the Remedies of Good and Bad Fortune* as exemplifying the beginnings of the “new attitude” about virtue and fortune.³⁸ An examination of the dialogue reveals that Petrarch is very far from encouraging a bold and masterful stance toward fortune's caprices. On the contrary, Petrarch depicts Reason as delivering a withering admonition to the youthful exuberance and optimism of Joy and Hope. In celebrating the ascendant powers of youth, Reason warns:

You put your trust in a most treacherous thing. This “ascendancy” of which you speak is in reality a decline. This brief life is furtively, between play and dreams, soon dissolved by unstable time. Would that God would permit us to realize [this] in the beginning. . . . Nothing is closer to life than death.³⁹

The young should therefore abandon their hopes and follow “the straight and narrow path of virtue” before it is too late. Following this path requires a mixture of Christian and classical precepts:

The wise man will love God . . . he will love his neighbour, he will love virtue, his country, his parents, his brothers, his friends, and if he is really wise, he will also love his enemies—not for themselves . . . but for the sake of him who wishes us to do so.⁴⁰

According to Petrarch, the key to this way of life is to “learn once and for all” to “love” and “think of . . . eternal things,” turning away from “that which is transitory”: “If you love nothing but what is visible, you can love nothing that is great.”⁴¹ One should overcome the love of beautiful bodies, for example, for the love of beautiful souls.⁴² Cicero and Plato are cited to adduce the familiar classical notion that bodily love makes one dependent on transitory goods that cannot last and desires that cannot be satisfied. By loving the eternal, we rise above such “anxiety . . . coarse desires, sighs and . . . burning thoughts.”⁴³ As we can see from this, contrary to Skinner’s interpretation, Petrarch places a great deal of emphasis on man’s possession of an immortal soul. Of particular significance for our discussion of virtue and fortune is Petrarch’s argument that a wise man’s love for eternal things also frees him from the passion for fame, which is likewise a transient thing—not true virtue, but its “shadow.” In the form of praise for acquiring virtue, fame may help to educate a “generous and modest soul.” But pursued for its own sake, it “casts down foolish and presumptuous souls,” transforming prematurely celebrated young men into “unknown old men.”⁴⁴ The exceptional fame of great statesmen and generals praised through the ages is, according to Petrarch, especially to be avoided. Alexander the Great, the Scipios, Julius Caesar, and Augustus Caesar may have been “very fortunate,” yet

they nevertheless lived constantly in disquiet; they were constantly involved in turbulence and, therefore, never happy. Besides, death came to them prematurely

on the battlefield, through exile, or through murder.⁴⁵ Only those who acquire virtue by turning away from such “transient and uncertain” goods are truly happy.⁴⁶ They are also less vulnerable to fortune’s reverses, because they have no high station from which to fall and will not be conquered or betrayed by their rivals.

It is difficult to imagine anything further than this from Machiavelli’s view that fortune can be mastered by *virtus* of the kind displayed by Caesar, Alexander, and Scipio.⁴⁷ It certainly does not support Skinner’s argument that, whereas Augustinian Christianity commended the pursuit of blessedness and moral virtue, “Petrarch and his successors” understood virtue as the acquisition of “the greatest possible amount of honour, glory and worldly fame.”⁴⁸ Rather, Petrarch’s emphasis is on the classical notion of virtue discussed earlier: the correct education of the soul in accordance with virtues prescribed by a rationally ordered

universe. The goal is not to subdue fortune in the service of desire, but to transcend desire—desire being the chief way in which fortune undermines us. Thus one can minimize the reverses of fortune, not by trying to master the world, but precisely by *resisting* the passion to master it. Petrarch thoroughly dampens the youthful impetuosity that Machiavelli was later to praise as the best disposition for overcoming *Fortuna*.⁴⁹ In his dismissal of the fame won by the ancient statesmen and generals as a delusion compared with man's inescapable mortality, in his emphasis on the need to orient oneself by the eternal and invisible rather than by the perishable and worldly, Petrarch's tone owes even more to Augustinian Christianity than it does to the classics.⁵⁰

Although they can draw upon more Greek and Roman texts for illustrations and arguments, the *quattrocento* humanists do not appear to be any closer than Petrarch to advancing the conception of virtue described by Skinner as man's power to reshape the world according to his desires. In Manetti, Albertus, and Pico della Mirandola—three figures whom Skinner links with the Petrarchan view of virtue—we encounter the same mixture of Christian theology with classical moral philosophy and metaphysics. For example, Manetti's *On the Dignity and Excellence of Man* does not suggest, as Skinner argues, a commendation of man's creative powers to grapple with the world and subdue it to his needs.⁵¹ Instead, according to Manetti, the dignity and happiness proper to men are conferred on those who fully understand that the soul is immortal and of divine origin.⁵² By pursuing virtue, Manetti argues, we can approximate that transmundane purity more closely in our earthly lives. Kings and princes, far from being urged to use their talents for worldly success, prestige, and stability, are adjured to submit themselves to the divine order:

Your duties, as regards understanding and acting, you have in common with omnipotent God; consequently, by acquiring and cultivating virtue, you may attain the beatitude of a tranquil immortality.⁵³

Similarly, Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man* cannot really be said, as Skinner would have it, to possess as "a central theme . . . the individual's free and creative powers."⁵⁴ The teleology that Pico describes is incompatible with the primacy of the individual. According to it, God endows human beings with a hierarchy of "potentialities." At the bottom are those who live for their appetites and so resemble "plants" and "brutes." At the top is the philosopher—a type

who, having risen above his animal desires, is “a creature of heaven and not of earth.”⁵⁵ Statesmanship and other kinds of worldly political success do not even figure in this hierarchy. The “frenzies” of an ancient philosopher like Socrates to escape this fallen and impure world can, according to Pico, meet with more certain success in the pursuit of Christian philosophy. This will “enable us to reach such ecstasy that our intellect and our very being become one with God.”⁵⁶ Those who seek knowledge to be practically employed for the sake of gain or success, rather than purely for its own sake, are roundly condemned.⁵⁷

Clearest of all in this regard is Albertus’s dialogue on *Fate and Fortune*. As Skinner observes, fortune is presented here as a power engulfing human affairs, anticipating Machiavelli’s imagery in *The Prince*.⁵⁸ Albertus depicts fortune allegorically as a river carrying people along in its current, some of whom drown while others make it to shore. In the terms of the allegory, those who cling to “blown and pompous” skins to stay afloat are characterized by such vices as perfidiousness, shamelessness, cruelty, avarice, calculation, and gluttony.⁵⁹ Those who “trusting to their own strength . . . swim the whole course of Life” on their own fare much better. This appears to confirm Skinner’s interpretation of the humanists’ espousal of energetic self-reliance and willpower. But two points must be balanced against this. First, it is not the river current representing fortune, but “the gods” who have the final influence on how people fare in the allegory. Moreover, it is not the swimmers whom the gods think most highly of and are therefore most likely to reward with good fortune. In Albertus’s depiction, the self-reliant people have to pause to regain their strength for swimming by clinging to “little boats.” These boats carry along in perfect safety the most virtuous people of all. These are the “just, wise [and] honest,” who “never cease thinking worthy thoughts.” They “do good to others by offering a helping hand to those who are in difficulty.”

None among men who are struggling in the river is more welcome by the immortal gods than those who, in the little boats, look to faith, to simplicity, and to virtue.⁶⁰

There is no elevation here of Skinner’s interpretation of virtue. While the energetic and self-reliant people are given their fair due of commendation, they are clearly depicted as dependent on, and morally inferior to, those surpassingly good people in their modest little boats.

Turning to the other humanists cited by Skinner, we find further variations on the conception of virtue as a conditioning of the soul that

brings one into closer proximity to eternal truth and being.⁶¹ Castiglione maintains that virtue can overcome fortune—but by virtue, he means the moderation of the Golden Mean, and insists that power should never be pursued for its own sake or for selfish and merely practical ends.⁶² Valla illustrates especially clearly how close the humanists were to orthodox Christian formulations of virtue and fortune when he observes that Fortune or “the divine will” “condemns some and saves others” without our knowing why.⁶³ In contrast with Skinner’s view of how the humanists understood virtue, Valla argues that the appropriate response to this dilemma is not to rebel and assert our wills against fortune, but to submit even more thoroughly to its dictates. We must have faith that God’s will is good even if it is beyond our comprehension. We should not “request a guarantee” from Christ, but hold on to “faith, hope and love.” Here, the classical notion of virtue as a source of dignity and strength of soul amidst fortune’s reverses is radicalized into the Christian’s total faith in providence and disavowal of any need to account for God’s ways. Aristotle’s ambition for comprehensive knowledge of the order of the universe is accordingly dismissed as “proud and foolish,” echoing an Augustinian characterization of philosophy unilluminated by divine revelation.⁶⁴ “Nothing is more becoming to the Christian,” Villa concludes, “than humility.”⁶⁵

CONCLUSION

As we began by observing, Skinner links the humanists with what he takes to be the classical conception of virtue as man’s exertion of will against fortune’s willfulness, as opposed to the Augustinian view that man cannot and should not resist providence. Our analysis suggests a rather different conclusion. St. Augustine does represent a radicalization of the classical analysis of the several kinds of limitations on human freedom into a single, all-encompassing divine necessity grounded in the will of God. But the classical conception of the limitations on human freedom is still very much one of rational causality, and not, as Skinner would have it, a “capricious power.” Moreover, while the classical conception of virtue certainly provides more latitude than the Christian one for independent political judgment and improvisation, it is in no sense “creative” or able to “control destiny,” as Skinner argues, but has its place within the order of causes. We saw that the humanists, while

more preoccupied with the problems of fortune, shared this view of virtue. By employing a Machiavellian conception of virtue that is difficult to reconcile not only with Greek and Roman thought but with humanism as well, it seems to me that Skinner exaggerates the differences between Augustinian Christianity on the one hand and classicism and humanism on the other, while misconstruing the terms of the real differences existing among these three on the question of virtue and fortune.

As we saw, the classical thinkers were not primarily concerned with the problem of accident or fortuitous happenstance as an impediment to human freedom. They tended to identify accident with nonbeing, the failure of a thing to attain its end. Instead, they were concerned with how to account for man's freedom and responsibility given the rational order of causes. As Cicero's *On Fate* demonstrates, thoughtful Greeks and Romans had various teachings to choose among that gave more or less scope to man's freedom of action within this order. Christianity took over the classical conception of an ordered cosmos and interpreted it as the laws through which God's will operates on mundane reality. This led to a narrowing of the classical debate. What had before been more of an open question, typified by dialogues such as Cicero's, now hardens into orthodoxy. God's will explains and grounds everything, and while worldly virtues are not unimportant, they are of less significance than faith in and reliance on divine providence.

It is perhaps because the rigidity of the Christian doctrine seemed so inadequate to explain the tribulations of Italian politics that the humanists felt so much at the mercy of random circumstance. If God's will embodied reason, then the world around them, where God's will manifestly had not established peace and justice, was obviously a very unreasonable place. Nevertheless, given what may be this increased feeling of vulnerability to the blows of fortune, the striking thing is that the humanists retained the classical conception of virtue rather than elaborate a coherent stance of rebellion and mastery in the face of fortune's reverses. This confirms our impression that they could not entirely part ways with the orthodox Christian conception of virtue either, since the Augustinian and other Christian views drew upon the classical tradition just as they did. Skinner, it seems to me, much underrates the tenets that the humanists held in common with more conventional religious opinion, despite the greater erudition and suppleness of their argumentation. He writes as if only Augustinian Christianity subsumed fortune under a lawlike, rational necessity, while

the humanists understood the world in terms of chance. But this ignores the large element of the classical view that flowed into both the humanistic and the Christian understandings. All three share the view of virtue as a conditioning of the soul that brings one into closer proximity to eternal truth and being.⁶⁶

What Christianity and humanism shared in common with classicism makes us aware of how very different was Machiavelli's conception of virtue and fortune, a difference surpassing, in my view, the differences among the other three. For only here do we find the consistently elaborated view of fortune as an irrational flux that can be mastered by an anthropocentric, purposive, and calculating will. Plato and Aristotle saw the virtuous soul as embodying the rationality that orders the world as a whole. Machiavelli, however, treats man and fortune as opponents. He never examines fortune under its traditional rubric of a subsidiary dimension of the order of causes, but rather equates it with all conditions external to the human will. The classical distinctions between necessity, accident, and fate are thus collapsed into a single protean force of happenstance. The world does not supply man with his rationality and end. Instead, man imposes "modes and orders" on the world. In this way, the terms of the debate about the relation of virtue to fortune undergo a profound alteration of meaning. The classical view had been that virtue, by aiming at the rational and eternal, could overcome chance. Pedagogically, psychologically, and morally, this meant that overcoming desire made a human being less dependent on perishable things. Machiavelli, however, wishes to expose the belief in an ordered universe, with its reflections in the utopian "republics" of Greek and Roman political thought, as a delusion.⁶⁷ After reducing these (what he takes to be) imaginary standards to random chance, he opposes to it a conception of virtue as anthropocentric will that has no transcendental relation to the nonhuman world. Virtue overcomes fortune not by transcending chance through transcending desire. On the contrary, by yielding to our desires for glory, wealth, and power, as princes or as citizens of vigorous expansionist republics, we orient ourselves by the disorder that is at the heart of all existence.

Machiavelli's originality, it seems to me, lies in this paradoxical reliance on disorder. He is not merely arguing that fortune is unreliable, but that fortune's hindrances are in a strange way actually to be welcomed and are constitutive of sound psychology and statecraft. Machiavelli's use, for example, of the Polybian cycle of the rise and decline of states in the *Discourses* omits Polybius' concern with

transcending this temporal cycle in the direction of the eternal.⁶⁸ As Machiavelli puts it, “the aid of events”—in other words, chance—can “perfect” republics without any assistance from such transcendental sources.⁶⁹ Because there is no *nunc stans* or eternality of true being—because “everything is in perpetual movement”⁷⁰—“disunity” is a more reliable source of a republic’s power and freedom than a unity that is doomed by the flow of events.⁷¹ Moreover, the challenge of founding or reforming a state where people and conditions are unremittingly hostile adds glory to the ruler’s eventual success.⁷² A “wise prince,” seeing that overcoming fortune’s hostility increases one’s prestige, will imitate fortune by, for example, deliberately cultivating hostilities among his subjects and then stamping them out.⁷³ The correct employment of the lion and the fox—the belligerent and calculating aspects of human selfishness—depends on recognizing that disorder is indeed “the order of things.”⁷⁴ By being “impetuous”—that is, letting this disorder fuel one’s conduct—the prince can preempt the impetuosity of *Fortuna*.⁷⁵ By being willful in this way, Machiavelli suggests, we can tap fortune’s willfulness into our own calculations. We can be on guard against fortune’s caprices because we have liberated that capriciousness through our own selfish impulses.

NOTES

1. Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 1, *The Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 152.
2. Skinner, *The Foundations*, pp. 94, 96.
3. Skinner, *The Foundations*, pp. 97, 98.
4. Skinner, *The Foundations*, pp. 129, 131, 182.
5. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Mark Musa (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1964), pp. 41-43.
6. Skinner, *The Foundations*, p. 92.
7. Skinner, *The Foundations*, p. 97.
8. Hulliung has trenchantly formulated the distance between Machiavelli and the Stoic and Christian political morality of his predecessors (Mark Hulliung, *Citizen Machiavelli* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983], pp. x-xi, 216-17). Hulliung sees the humanists as being “Christian despite their admiration of pagan antiquity” (p. 245). He also argues that their humanism was (because of this partial pagan affinity) considerably more aggressive and warlike than the humanism we associate with the Enlightenment and later, but considerably less aggressive than Machiavelli’s recommendations (pp. 10-19). On his reading, therefore, Machiavelli should not be seen as simply following his predecessors’ admiration of pagan antiquity, nor indeed as completely

unrelated to them (although Hulliung tends more to the latter characterization), but as bringing to fruition a pagan "potential" that was implicit or half-realized in the humanist writings (p. 13). I agree with Hulliung that Machiavelli forthrightly rejects Christian and Stoic political values and, to the extent that they embraced them, the humanists as well. But I argue that, at least as regards the thematic treatment of virtue and fortune, pre-Machiavellian humanism contains less of this "pagan" potential than Hulliung sees in it. In my view, the humanists' stance toward political life cannot be divided so clearly into pagan (daring and aggressive) and Stoic or Christian (contemplative and inactive) components. The humanists analyzed here, it seems to me, derived their conceptions of citizenship and rule from the philosophical moralism they drew from ancient philosophy in larger measure than Hulliung indicates. The Stoics did not prohibit vigorous citizenship and military prowess. They derived these qualities from their transcendental conceptions of virtue, however, so that citizenship and rule emerged as suitably moderated but still supposed to be capable of inspiring the brave and rigorous performance of duty. I am arguing, therefore, that Machiavelli does not so much give birth to a pagan potentiality implicit in humanism as to transform the classical metaphysics of virtue in a way that reverses their traditional meanings. The humanists' departure from the Augustinian position I am inclined to see less as an anticipation of Machiavellian paganism and more of an attempt to stress the mundane applications of the transcendental conception of virtue to be found in the ancient authors as against the extreme otherworldliness and contempt for mundane success that St. Augustine derived from an encounter with the ancient authors that radicalized some of their precepts and rejected others. The humanists' quandaries about whether they could reconcile the more worldly dimension of the ancient philosophies with their adherence to Christianity are conditioned to a great degree by Christianity's highly ambivalent relationship to a classical heritage that it both wanted to assimilate and repudiate. By contrast, it seems to me, Machiavelli frees himself from the parameters of this debate and therefore from the humanists' quandaries.

9. The precise meanings of these terms vary a good deal among authors and texts. *Fortuna* is the Latin translation of the Greek *tyche*. In the following discussion, I will emphasize its philosophical meaning as a spontaneous event—an effect without a cause. Thus I translate it mainly as "chance" and "accident" (see note 13 below).

10. See, for example, Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 439d-91c, 484-86d; and Plato, *The Laws*, trans. R. G. Bury, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967-1968), 893b, 907d.

11. W.K.C. Guthrie, *Socrates* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 139-42.

12. Aristotle, *Physics*, trans. P. H. Wickstead and F. M. Cornford, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980, 1968), 194a25-95a10; Aristotle, *Magna Moralia*, trans. H. Tredennick and G. C. Armstrong (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 1182b5-83b20.

13. Rather than admit that any occurrence can be caused by nothing, Aristotle treats fortune (*tyche*) as a kind of accident (*symbebekos*) in which an agent brings about the fulfillment of an action prescribed by final cause without intending to do so. Aristotle denies that an event can take place purely accidentally, altogether bereft of purpose. This, he argues, is unintelligible and cannot even be a subject for rational inquiry (Aristotle, *Physics*, 195b30-98b10; Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. H. Tredennick and G. C. Armstrong, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980, 1977), 1026a35-26b30; 1065a30-65b5).

14. See, e.g., Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 1140b1-10, 1141a15-42b30; Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 1251a1-17, 1253b14-23; Plato, *The Statesman*, trans. J. B. Skemp (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), 300d-302b; J. B. Skemp, "Introductory Essays" to *The Statesman*, pp. 47-48, 59-60); P. A. Vander Waert, "Kingship and Philosophy in Aristotle's Best Regime," *Phronesis* (1985); Sir David Ross, *Aristotle* (London: Methuen, 1960), p. 255.
15. Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods; On Divination; On Fate; On the Republic; On the Laws*, trans. C. D. Yonge (London: George Bell, 1907), pp. 2-3.
16. Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods*, p. 106.
17. Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods*, p. 41.
18. Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods*, p. 137.
19. Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods*, p. 140.
20. St. Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Gerald G. Walsh (New York: Image Books, 1958), pp. 102-5.
21. See Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, trans. W.H.D. Rouse (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 2: 216-293.
22. Cicero, *On Fate*, p. 273.
23. Cicero, *On Fate*, p. 272.
24. Cicero, *On Fate*, p. 279.
25. Cicero, *On Fate*, p. 280.
26. Cicero, *On Fate*, p. 281.
27. Aristotle, *Physics*, 194b20-95a15, 258b10-59b20; *Metaphysics*, 1071b10-73a15.
28. St. Augustine, *The City of God*, pp. 103, 107-8. Compare St. Thomas Aquinas, who represents Aristotelian causality, not in its original sense as perspectives on a thing, but as successive stages of the divine artisan's operations on material reality. Whereas Aristotle treats natural causality as analogous to art—that is, like art in some respects, unlike it in others—Thomas is confident that "nature is nothing but a certain kind of art, that is, the divine art, impressed upon things, by which these things are moved to a determinate end" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's "Physics"*, trans. Richard J. Blackwell and Richard J. Spath [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1963], p. 124).
29. St. Augustine, *The City of God*, pp. 107-8.
30. Plutarch, *Makers of Rome*, trans. Ian Scott-Kilvert (Baltimore: Penguin, 1968), pp. 193, 204.
31. See, e.g., Plato, *Laws*, 892-900; Aristotle, *Physics*, 256b20-58b10; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1142a25-30; 1143b1-5.
32. Skinner, *The Foundations*, p. 96.
33. Skinner, *The Foundations*, pp. 97-98.
34. Skinner, *The Foundations*, p. 69.
35. Skinner, *The Foundations*, p. 71.
36. Skinner, *The Foundations*, p. 87. Baron, though, takes a very different view. Although Petrarch admired Cicero as a philosopher, Baron argues, "Cicero's civic spirit was to him nothing but an offense against all the traditions of the Middle Ages" (Hans Baron, "Cicero and the Roman Civic Spirit in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance," *The John Rylands Library Bulletin* 22 [1938]: 72-97). As described by Hulliung, Machiavelli's opinion of Cicero is just the opposite of this (Hulliung, *Citizen Machiavelli*, p. 132).

37. Skinner, *The Foundations*, pp. 94, 98.
38. Skinner, *The Foundations*, p. 97.
39. Francesco Petrarca, "On the Remedies of Good and Bad Fortune," *Renaissance Philosophy*, vol. 1, *The Italian Philosophers*, ed. and trans. A. B. Fallico and Herman Shapiro (New York: Modern Library, 1967), pp. 4-5.
40. Petrarca, "On the Remedies of Good and Bad Fortune," p. 16.
41. Petrarca, "On the Remedies of Good and Bad Fortune," p. 14.
42. Petrarca, "On the Remedies of Good and Bad Fortune," p. 10.
43. Petrarca, "On the Remedies of Good and Bad Fortune," p. 17.
44. Petrarca, "On the Remedies of Good and Bad Fortune," p. 22.
45. Petrarca, "On the Remedies of Good and Bad Fortune," pp. 23-24.
46. Petrarca, "On the Remedies of Good and Bad Fortune," p. 25.
47. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, pp. 125-35.
48. Skinner, *The Foundations*, p. 100.
49. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 215.
50. As Nachod observes: "As a faithful son of the church, [Petrarch] was fully satisfied with her teachings and did not need another guide in the labyrinth of this life, in this respect particularly under the spell of his great model Augustine" (Hans Nachod, "Francesco Petrarca: Introduction," *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, ed. Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and John Herman Randall [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948], p. 24). See also Kristeller, who points out that, for Petrarch, Augustinian Christianity was very much a part of his rediscovery of classical literature—not, as Skinner implies, a foil for it (Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters* [Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1969], pp. 361-63). On the general importance for the humanists of neo-Platonism as it was filtered through Augustinian theology, see Paul Oskar Kristeller and John Herman Randall, "General Introduction," *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, Cassirer, Kristeller, and Randall, eds., pp. 6-7.
51. Skinner, *The Foundations*, p. 97.
52. Gianozzo Manetti, "On the Dignity and Excellence of Man," *Renaissance Philosophy*, Fallico and Shapiro, eds., pp. 83-84.
53. Manetti, "Dignity and Excellence of Man," p. 100.
54. Skinner, *The Foundations*, p. 97.
55. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, "Oration on the Dignity of Man," *Renaissance Philosophy*, Fallico and Shapiro, eds., pp. 144-45.
56. Pico della Mirandola, "Dignity of Man," p. 152.
57. Pico della Mirandola, "Dignity of Man," p. 156. Pocock regards Pico's *Oration* as an example of neo-Platonism that forsook the *virtù* needed for civic community in favor of "an illumined communion with the cosmos." Pico's failure to find a bridge between philosophy and the requirements of political life helps to explain, in Pocock's view, his attraction to the "holy community" preached by Savanarola (J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975], pp. 98-99; see also Kristeller, *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters*, pp. 268-69).
58. Skinner, *The Foundations*, p. 96; Machiavelli, *The Prince*, pp. 209-11.
59. Leon Battista Alberti, "Three Dialogues," *Renaissance Philosophy*, Fallico and Shapiro, eds., pp. 35-38.
60. Alberti, "Three Dialogues," p. 36.
61. Salutati's remedy for Italian tyranny is "obedience to the just commands of a virtuous prince" whose monarchical beneficence replicates God's rule over the universe

(Coluccio Salutati, "De Tyranno," *Humanism and Tyranny: Studies in the Italian Trecento*, ed. Ephraim Emerton [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1925], p. 108). In accordance with this political teleology (and in opposition to the views later propounded by Machiavelli), Salutati is unwilling to relax the distinction between monarchy and tyranny no matter how successful the latter may be in achieving power, stability, and prosperity for the state. All such "hidden" or successful tyrannies must be exposed as illegitimate (Salutati, "De Tyranno," 148 ff.). Vergerius stresses the need for liberal education to ennoble men and help them attain "virtue and wisdom" (Pier Paolo Vergerio, "Concerning Liberal Studies," *Vittorino da Feltre and Other Humanist Educators*, ed. W. H. Woodward [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897], p. 102). Citing Aristotle, he argues that education should also develop one "as a citizen, as an active member of the state," because one who is entirely devoted to "speculative thought" may be too "self-regarding" and "useless . . . as a citizen or prince" (Vergerio, "Concerning Liberal Studies," p. 110). This partially confirms Skinner's thesis that the humanists rejected a passive, contemplative version of virtue for one that was politically more engaged or worldly. While this view may differ in some measure from Augustinian Christianity, however—although St. Augustine also argued that Christians should be loyal and public-spirited citizens—it is not sufficient to establish the creative conception of virtue. Although the useful citizen should not lose himself altogether in philosophy, Vergerius is clear that philosophy is indispensable to a life of virtuous citizenship. Scipio and Cato are cited as exemplars of successful statesmen who were able periodically to withdraw from the hubbub of politics for guidance and refreshment from "the companionship of books" (Vergerio, "Concerning Liberal Studies," p. 105). This is very unlike Machiavelli who, despite his own love of this companionship, depicts statesmen like Scipio who are guided by the works of the ancient philosophers as less likely to succeed—and demonstrate *virtus*—than untutored foxes and lions like Hannibal or Septimius Severus (Machiavelli, *The Prince*, pp. 125, 141, 163-65). Also unlike Machiavelli, who is credited with one of the first empirical, inductive approaches to the study of political history, Vergerius uncritically adopts the Aristotelian view according to which history is a secondary enterprise that merely fleshes out with real-life examples the "precepts of philosophy" (Vergerio, "Concerning Liberal Studies," p. 106). Bruni accords high praise to Cicero "among classical authors." In advising readers on how to acquire an education in letters, however, he says they will "naturally turn first to Christian writers," including Lactantius, Chrysostom—and St. Augustine (L. Bruni, "Concerning the Study of Literature," *Vittorino da Feltre and Other Humanist Educators*, ed. W. H. Woodward [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897], p. 125).

62. Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of The Courtier*, trans. Charles S. Singleton (New York: Anchor Books, 1959), pp. 14-15, 323-24; J. R. Woodhouse, *Baldesar Castiglione: A Reassessment of "The Courtier"* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1978), pp. 65-67, 150-60.

63. Lorenzo Valla, "On Free Will," *Renaissance Philosophy*, Fallico and Shapiro, eds., p. 63.

64. Valla was highly skeptical of prospects for the synthesis of classical learning with Christian revelation (Charles Edward Trinkaus, "Lorenzo Valla: Introduction," *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, Cassirer, Kristeller, and Randall, eds., p. 149).

65. Valla, "On Free Will," p. 64.

66. Felix Gilbert observes: "Machiavelli did not merely refute the idealist enterprise in politics in general but . . . wrote with the conscious aim of discrediting the idealized

conception of the prince as contained in the (humanists') catalogues of the virtues" (Felix Gilbert, "The Humanist Concept of the Prince and *The Prince* of Machiavelli," *The Journal of Modern History*, December 1939, pp. 478-80). In Hulliung's view, Machiavelli inhabits the forms of the humanistic "mirror of princes" the more effectively to undermine their Christian and Stoic substance (Hulliung, *Citizen Machiavelli*, pp. 11-19, 24-25, 245).

67. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 127.

68. Cf. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, p. 189.

69. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince and the Discourses*, trans. Luigi Ricci (New York: Modern Library, 1950), p. 111.

70. Machiavelli, *The Prince and the Discourses*, p. 129.

71. Machiavelli, *The Prince and the Discourses*, p. 118. See Mansfield, who draws a connection between Machiavelli's use of the term "first cause" to describe the disorder underlying Rome's freedom and his use of the term "humours" (that is, bodily conditions) to describe the factions in Roman politics. I take him to mean that Machiavelli here converts the classical meaning of "first cause" into its opposite—into subrational chance—and, that, in keeping with this reversal, political discourse in the Aristotelian sense is converted from the rational deliberation upon ends grounded in the first cause of the visible cosmos into the random clash of impulses or interests (Harvey C. Mansfield, *Machiavelli's New Modes and Orders* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979], pp. 42-43).

72. Machiavelli, *The Prince and the Discourses*, p. 145; *The Prince*, pp. 43-47.

73. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 179.

74. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, pp. 145, 147, 163, 191.

75. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 215. Pitkin suggests that the Machiavellian prince, by imitating the impetuosity of Fortune, risks losing his freedom of will and becoming the pawn of random forces. In this view, the personification of fortune as a woman is Machiavelli's strategy to compensate for this loss of control by giving princely virtue a reified opponent to identify and try to subdue (Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *Fortune Is a Woman* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984], pp. 292-94).

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