struggled mightily to do for the Spanish monarchy what he believed was in its best interests but who, instead, led it to near ruin.

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Machiavelli. *The Prince*. Edited by Quentin Skinner and translated by Russell Price. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. Pp. xxxv, 152. Two Appendices; Two Indices.

Quentin Skinner, Russell Price, and Cambridge University Press have all outdone themselves in developing this elegant translation and scholarly edition of Machiavelli's great classic. After commenting on their achievement I will use the new translation to make a point about some central themes in *The Prince*.

Quentin Skinner's fine introduction sets Machiavelli in his intellectual context, noting his rejection of the mirror of princes literature and his break with Cicero's and Seneca's utopian moralizing about power. Skinner also prepared the helpful bibliographical notes and a chronicle of Machiavelli's life. Price did the translation, annotations to the text, biographical notes on everyone mentioned in the text, and two appendices: one a selection of Machiavelli's letters, the other, superb explanations of the major Italian terms. All these aids, combined with the lucid, accurate translation make this a splendid edition (and the paperback a bargain).

Price's translation for example renders 'principato' as 'principality', not 'dominion' or 'despotism' (sic!), as in Rodd's 1955 effort (Chicago 1965). To show its quality the table below compares the original titles of Chapters VI and VII (in Latin) with the Price and Caponigri versions.

Machiavelli	Price	Rodd
VI De <i>principatibus novis</i> qui armis propiis et <i>virtute</i> acquiruntur	VI <i>New principalities</i> acquired by one's own arms and ability.	VI <i>The Rule of a Dominion</i> Conquered by Battle.
VII De <i>principatibus novis</i> qui alienis armis et <i>fortuna</i> acquiruntur.	VII <i>New principalities</i> acquired through the power of others and their <i>favour</i> .	VII <i>Rulers by the Grace</i> of Others.

In addition Price translates the title of the climactic Chapter XXVI, "Exhortatio ad capessendam Italiam in libertatemque a barbaris vindicandum", thus: "Exhortation to liberate Italy from the barbarian yoke". In contrast Caponigri termed it an 'Envoi', putting it after an appendix with the letter to Lorenzo de Medici. These chapters bracket the central themes of *The Prince*: *fortuna*, *virtu*, the foundation of

ordine and *liberta*. Given their ambiguity I will use all four words in the Italian; each term receives illuminating commentary in Prince's vocabulary notes.

Machiavelli's realistic approach to politics appeared modern on 'differing with the precepts offered by others' i.e. breaking with tradition: "The following facts may cause surprise," he remarked in a notable understatement (15). Later he laconically added a note of mild concern about the effect of his empirical and practical approach: "I fear that I may be thought presumptuous" (55). Machiavelli's attitude to tradition then was intelligently modern: don't simply accept it, learn from it.

This attitude underlies the historical approach in each chapter of *The Prince*. Each canvasses "good examples" from 'ancient history' and 'more recent events', usually in that order (18, 48, 45). The ruler "should read historical works especially for the light they shed on eminent men" (53), that is, on the "deeds and careers" of those "I have proposed as exemplars" (20, 88). History shows great rulers did not trust merely to "luck" or "favour" (i.e. *fortuna*), but saw events as "opportunities" (*Occasioni*) to exercise their "ability" and "skill" (*vertu*).

Vertu/*fortuna* constitute a polar set, a dialectic whose resolution Machiavelli could not discern. One of *vertu*'s main properties is to perceive the times, foresee the danger and minimize risks. Half the time *fortuna* rules over us, Machiavelli felt, adding "that lets us control the other half". Here "human freedom" has its chance (85). But one should not mindlessly trust to "luck" (34, 22f). Although tempestuously unpredictable, like the flow of a powerful river, *fortuna* can be controlled by the dikes and dams which human ingenuity devises (*vertu*). In such passages Machiavelli presents freedom as an understanding of necessity, a power exercised in space and time. Descartes' and Kant's subsequent attempts to flee history were in contrast not modern, but throwbacks to Platonic idealism. Machiavelli's approach is new and modern, and was echoed by Vico, Hegel, Marx and Heidegger, *inter alios*.

In an Aristotelian vein Machiavelli treats *vertu* like "practical knowledge" "consummate prudence", wisdom or good judgment (86, 82; cf. "bon sens" in Montaigne). This requires the rare skill of discerning the changing dynamics of particular situations or circumstances and the times. Rulers have to learn history so that they can compare present situations to past analogues and try to foresee harbingers of future success or failure. Guicciardini echoed the sentiment: "In nearly all things one must make distinctions and exceptions because of ... circumstances. Nor can such distinctions and exceptions be found in books; they must be taught by discretion" (Ricordi, C. 42). Rulers also need to be good judges of people, notably their advisers (80f). In sum success in handling power comes when "methods match the circumstances" (86). *Vertu* means knowing when to act, when not.

A strong but flexible resolve goes some way to control *fortuna*. Renaissance thinkers like Justus Lipsius, Montaigne, Pierre Charron, and Descartes saw such neo-Stoic constancy as a major ethical value (cf Skinner's *Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, I.254; II.278). In unstable times a ruler of *vertu* must "pursue his aims steadfastly" (81). To be considered "inconstant" is to court contempt (64). The

Ruler, that is, must be 'hard like water', and the Chinese say. It is a form of courage in the face of *fortuna*. Such steadfastness is a mean between rigid "obstinacy", in Guicciardini's words, and a passive trust in luck. In the blood-ridden chaos of 16th century Europe where states and churches tumbled like ten pins this was not a cynical or immoral view.

The ruler's aim, to "maintain his power" ("mantenere lo stato"; 23,62), is not amoral. A ruler, he notes, must "be prepared" not only to trim his conduct to the "winds of fortune and changing circumstance [but also to] act immorally when necessary"; nonetheless "a ruler should not deviate from right conduct if possible" (55,62; cf 58,86,87). Guicciardini voiced a similar sentiment: "power cannot be wielded according to the dictates of good conscience ... except [inside] republics" (C. 48). Machiavelli was articulating the classic doctrine of the necessary evil. A harsh teaching perhaps, but in reality not far from Thomist casuistry, especially as applied to popes.

Indeed Machiavelli's teaching that the prince should be more concerned about image, reputation and perception than reality can hardly be protested in an era when the ruler of the largest democratic empire of the world was a lazy, senile third rate actor. Moreover I for one would prefer Machiavellian *virtu* to the present and militaristic fetish for more and 'better' nuclear missiles, which exemplifies little appreciation of necessity or evil.

Virtu's foresight and control of *fortuna* made it possible for the Ruler to 'mantenere lo stato'. "Lo stato", Price explains, also means government, the political community, the state; and "mantenere" implies that time is essential to the state. States require "strong ... secure and stable" foundations. *Lo Stato* goes beyond any one ruler's personal power or ambition – a point which *The Discourses* make clear. *The Prince* implies it through its orientation to the need to end the disorder and dependence of Italy.

Ordine, Machiavelli suggested, rests on "good laws, strong arms, reliable allies and exemplary conduct" (23, 83). *Liberta* meant self-government, and emancipation from external dominion. It is a profoundly democratic concept. Italy, *The Prince* taught, desperately needed both, *Ordine* and *Liberta*, unity and independence. This was to be the work of a great prince, someone like Cesare Borgia. Only such a virtuoso could free her from her enslavement to the papacy and threats of foreign invasion (Chs. XI,XXVI). He alone could make unstable, faction-ridden Italy over into a 'new principality' unify her and free. Hegel recognized the ethical import of Machiavelli's vision, partly because of its relevance to his own divided Germany (and, I would add, to Canada's federal/provincial bickering and colonial submissiveness to Washington). Given its historical setting, Hegel wrote, Machiavelli's vision appeared "as not merely justified but as an extremely great and true conception produced by a genuinely political head endowed with an intellect of the highest and noblest kind".

Machiavelli's grand underlying theme then sees *virtu* as what the times (*fortuna*) call for if Italy is ever to become a 'new principality' based on "ordine e liberta".

This is the theme *The Prince* adumbrated in Chapters VI and VII. It reaches its climax in Chapter XXVI's address to Italy. After four hundred and fifty years his words still ring true:

"Bearing in mind all the matters previously discussed, I ask myself whether ... there is matter that provides an opportunity for a far-seeing and able man to mould Italy into a form that will bring honour to him and benefit all its inhabitants ... so many things are propitious for a new ruler that I am not aware that there has ever been a more appropriate time than this" (87).

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