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Niccolò Machiavelli
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BACKGROUNDS

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Machiavelli the Democrat

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI

From *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius*†

[In chapter II of *The Prince* Machiavelli says that he will not discuss republics in this present treatise “because I’ve talked of them at length on another occasion.” It is accepted that he is referring here to the *Discourses on Titus Livius*, or at least some of them—how much is still under earnest scholarly debate. Since we can be sure *The Prince* was written in 1513, it is clear also that after that date many of them were read to—and perhaps revised for—a group of intellectuals who made it a custom to meet from time to time informally in the Rucellai gardens known as the Orti Oricellari, off present via della Scala in Florence. Such clubs, academies, and informal gatherings were frequent in Renaissance Italy; not even the fact that the Medici were in power and many members of the group were known to share republican sentiments, limited the freedom of discussion. In the presence of people who shared his own interests, background, and social standing, Machiavelli was clearly free to speak at more liberty than in *The Prince*, and at greater length. Princes have short attention spans, and must be fed wisdom in capsule doses; people who live by ideas are more willing to hear them discussed fully. Without implying that Machiavelli was a hypocrite in *The Prince*, one can nevertheless sense that he must have expressed his mind more broadly in the *Discourses*.

The form of the book calls for some explanation. Titus Livius was a native of Padua and a contemporary of Augustus, who wrote his gigantic history of Rome from the first founding of the city; its customary title is just that: *Ab urbe condita* (“From the founding of the city”). It must have been an enormous book; what survives is only thirty-five books out of an original one hundred and forty-two, and this makes a substantial volume that we in English customarily refer to simply as “Livy.” Machiavelli had a special feeling for Livy in the first place because the historian, though he had lived under the empire and had to deal with emperors, was a vigorous admirer of the Roman republic. In addition, Machiavelli’s father had contributed

† The text is taken from *The Prince and the Discourses* (Modern Library, 1940); the translation, by Christian Edward Detmold, was originally published in Boston, in 1882. Foot-

notes are by the editor of this Norton Critical Edition, who has also made a few silent corrections in the Detmold translation.

an index to one of the very early printed editions of Livy and had been rewarded with a copy of the book; Machiavelli grew up with the volume, and imbibed from his early youth its strong assurance that practical lessons about human behavior could be learned by studying the historic past. Livy is the most warmly didactic of the Roman historians—more of the patrician than of the plebeian party, but above all an outspoken patriot, intent on learning from the glorious past what will help imperial Romans to deal with their dark present and even darker future.]

[*Book I*]

INTRODUCTION

Although the envious nature of men, so prompt to blame and so slow to praise, makes the discovery and introduction of any new principles and systems as dangerous almost as the exploration of unknown seas and continents, yet, animated by that natural desire which impels me to do what may prove for the common benefit of all, I have resolved to open a new route, which has not yet been followed by any one, and may prove difficult and troublesome, but may also bring me some reward in the approbation of those who will kindly consider the aim of my efforts.

And if my poor talents, my little experience of the present and insufficient study of the past, should make the result of my labors defective and of little utility, I shall at least have shown the way to others, who will carry out my views with greater ability, eloquence, and judgment, so that if I do not merit praise, I ought at least not to incur censure.

When we consider the general respect for antiquity, and how often—to say nothing of other examples—a great price is paid for some fragments of an antique statue, which we are anxious to possess to ornament our houses with, or to set before artists who strive to imitate them in their own works; and when we see, on the other hand, the wonderful examples which the history of ancient kingdoms and republics presents to us, the prodigies of virtue and of wisdom displayed by the kings, captains, citizens, and legislators who have sacrificed themselves for their country—when we see these, I say, more admired than imitated, or so much neglected that not the least trace of this ancient virtue remains, we cannot but be at the same time as much surprised as afflicted. The more so as in the differences which arise between citizens, or in the maladies to which they are subjected, we see these same people have recourse to the judgments and the remedies prescribed by the ancients. The civil laws are in fact nothing but decisions given by their jurisconsults, and which, reduced to a system, direct our modern jurists in their decisions. And what is the science of medicine, but the expe-

you will find neither prince, nor republic, nor captain, nor citizen, who has recourse to the examples of antiquity! This neglect, I am persuaded, is due less to the weakness to which the vices of our religion have reduced the world, than to the evils caused by the proud indolence which prevails in most of the Christian states, and to the lack of real knowledge of history, the true sense of which is not known, or the spirit of which they do not comprehend. Thus the majority of those who read it take pleasure only in the variety of the events which history relates, without ever thinking of imitating the noble actions, deeming that not only difficult, but impossible; as though heaven, the sun, the elements, and men had changed the order of their motions and power, and were different from what they were in ancient times.

Wishing, therefore, so far as in me lies, to draw mankind from this error, I have thought it proper to write upon those books of Titus Livius that have come to us entire despite the malice of time; touching upon all those matters which, after a comparison between the ancient and modern events, may seem to me necessary to facilitate their proper understanding. In this way those who read my remarks may derive those advantages which should be the aim of all study of history; and although the undertaking is difficult, yet, aided by those who have encouraged me in this attempt, I hope to carry it sufficiently far, so that but little may remain for others to carry it to its destined end.

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[*Book I, Chapter 2*]

OF THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF REPUBLICS, AND OF WHAT KIND THE
ROMAN REPUBLIC WAS

I will leave aside what might be said of cities which from their very birth have been subject to a foreign power, and will speak only of those whose origin has been independent, and which from the first governed themselves by their own laws, whether as republics or as principalities, and whose constitution and laws have differed as their origin. Some have had at the very beginning, or soon after, a legislator, who, like Lycurgus with the Lacedæmonians,¹ gave them by a single act all the laws they needed. Others have owed theirs to chance and to events, and have received their laws at different times, as Rome did. It is a great good fortune for a republic to have a legislator sufficiently wise to give her laws so regulated that, without the necessity of correcting them, they afford security to those who live under them. Sparta observed her laws

experiencing a single dangerous disturbance. Unhappy, on the contrary, is that republic which, not having at the beginning fallen into the hands of a sagacious and skillful legislator, is herself obliged to reform her laws. More unhappy still is that republic which from the first has diverged from a good constitution. And that republic is furthest from it whose vicious institutions impede her progress, and make her leave the right path that leads to a good end; for those who are in that condition can hardly ever be brought into the right road. Those republics, on the other hand, that started without having a perfect constitution, but made a fair beginning, and are capable of improvement,—such republics, I say, may perfect themselves by the aid of events. It is very true, however, that such reforms are never effected without danger, for the majority of men never willingly adopt any new law tending to change the constitution of the state, unless the necessity of the change is clearly demonstrated; and as such a necessity cannot make itself felt without being accompanied with danger, the republic may easily be destroyed before having perfected its constitution. That of Florence is a complete proof of this: reorganized after the revolt of Arezzo, in 1502, it was overthrown after the taking of Prato, in 1512.²

Having proposed to myself to treat of the kind of government established at Rome, and of the events that led to its perfection, I must at the beginning observe that some of the writers on politics distinguished three kinds of government, viz. the monarchical, the aristocratic, and the democratic; and maintain that the legislators of a people must choose from these three the one that seems to them most suitable. Other authors, wiser according to the opinion of many, count six kinds of governments, three of which are very bad, and three good in themselves, but so liable to be corrupted that they become absolutely bad. The three good ones are those which we have just named; the three bad ones result from the degradation of the other three, and each of them resembles its corresponding original, so that the transition from the one to the other is very easy. Thus monarchy becomes tyranny; aristocracy degenerates into oligarchy; and the popular government lapses readily into licentiousness. So that a legislator who gives to a state which he founds either of these three forms of government, constitutes it but for a brief time; for no precautions can prevent either one of the three that are reputed good, from degenerating into its opposite kind; so great are in these the attractions and resemblances between the good and the evil.

Chance has given birth to these different kinds of governments amongst men; for at the beginning of the world the inhabitants were few in number, and lived for a time dispersed, like beasts. As the human race increased, the necessity for uniting themselves for defence made

most courageous from amongst themselves and placed him at their head, promising to obey him. Thence they began to know the good and the honest, and to distinguish them from the bad and vicious; for seeing a man injure his benefactor aroused at once two sentiments in every heart, hatred against the ingrate and love for the benefactor. They blamed the first, and on the contrary honored those the more who showed themselves grateful, for each felt that he in turn might be subject to a like wrong; and to prevent similar evils, they set to work to make laws, and to institute punishments for those who contravened them. Such was the origin of justice. This caused them, when they had afterwards to choose a prince, neither to look to the strongest nor bravest, but to the wisest and most just. But when they began to make sovereignty hereditary and non-elective, the children quickly degenerated from their fathers; and, so far from trying to equal their virtues, they considered that a prince had nothing else to do than to excel all the rest in luxury, indulgence, and every other variety of pleasure. The prince consequently soon drew upon himself the general hatred. An object of hatred, he naturally felt fear; fear in turn dictated to him precautions and wrongs, and thus tyranny quickly developed itself. Such were the beginning and causes of disorders, conspiracies, and plots against the sovereigns, set on foot, not by the feeble and timid, but by those citizens who, surpassing the others in grandeur of soul, in wealth, and in courage, could not submit to the outrages and excesses of their princes.

Under such powerful leaders the masses armed themselves against the tyrant, and, after having rid themselves of him, submitted to these chiefs as their liberators. These, abhorring the very name of prince, constituted themselves a new government; and at first, bearing in mind the past tyranny, they governed in strict accordance with the laws which they had established themselves; preferring public interests to their own, and to administer and protect with greatest care both public and private affairs. The children succeeded their fathers, and ignorant of the changes of fortune, having never experienced its reverses, and indisposed to remain content with this civil equality, they in turn gave themselves up to cupidity, ambition, libertinage, and violence, and soon caused the aristocratic government to degenerate into an oligarchic tyranny, regardless of all civil rights. They soon, however, experienced the same fate as the first tyrant; the people, disgusted with their government, placed themselves at the command of whoever was willing to attack them, and this disposition soon produced an avenger, who was sufficiently well seconded to destroy them. The memory of the prince and the wrongs committed by him being still fresh in their minds, and having overthrown the oligarchy, the people were not willing to return to the government

first looked up to with some degree of reverence, the popular state also maintained itself for a time, but not for long, lasting generally for about the lifetime of the generation that had established it; for it soon ran into that kind of license which inflicts injury upon public as well as private interests. Each individual only consulted his own passions, and a thousand acts of injustice were daily committed, so that, constrained by necessity, or directed by the counsels of some good man, or for the purpose of escaping from this anarchy, they returned anew to the government of a prince, and from this they generally lapsed again into anarchy, step by step, in the same manner and from the same causes as we have indicated.

Such is the circle which all republics are destined to run through. Seldom, however, do they come back to the original form of government, which results from the fact that their duration is not sufficiently long to be able to undergo these repeated changes and preserve their existence. But it may well happen that a republic lacking strength and good counsel in its difficulties becomes subject after a while to some neighboring state, that is better organized than itself; and if such is not the case, then they will be apt to revolve indefinitely in the circle of revolutions. I say, then, that all kinds of government are defective; those three which we have qualified as good because they are too short-lived, and the three bad ones because of their inherent viciousness. Thus sagacious legislators, knowing the vices of each of these systems of government by themselves, have chosen one that should partake of all of them, judging that to be the most stable and solid. In fact, when there is combined under the same constitution a prince, a nobility, and the power of the people, then these three powers will watch and keep each other reciprocally in check.

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[*Book I, Chapter 6*]

WHETHER IT WAS POSSIBLE TO ESTABLISH IN ROME A GOVERNMENT
CAPABLE OF PUTTING AN END TO THE ENMITIES EXISTING BETWEEN
THE NOBLES AND THE PEOPLE

We have discussed above the effects of the quarrels between the people and the senate. These same differences having continued to the time of the Gracchi,³ when they became the cause of the loss of liberty, one might wish that Rome had done the great things we have admired, without bearing within her bosom such cause of discords. It seems to

a government in Rome that could prevent all these misunderstandings; and to do this well, we must necessarily recur to those republics that have maintained their liberties without such enmities and disturbances; we must examine what the form of their government was, and whether that could have been introduced in Rome.

In Sparta we have an example amongst the ancients, and in Venice amongst the moderns; to both these states I have already referred above. Sparta had a king and a senate, few in number, to govern her; Venice did not admit these distinctions, and gave the name of gentlemen to all who were entitled to have a part in the administration of the government. It was chance rather than foresight which gave to the latter this form of government; for having taken refuge on those shallows where the city now is, for the reasons mentioned above, the inhabitants soon became sufficiently numerous to require a regular system of laws. They consequently established a government, and assembled frequently in council to discuss the interests of the city. When it seemed to them that they were sufficiently numerous to govern themselves, they barred the way to share in the government to the newly arrived who came to live amongst them; and finding in the course of time that the number of the latter increased sufficiently to give reputation to those who held the government in their hands, they designated the latter by the title of "gentlemen," and the others were called the popular class. This form of government had no difficulty in establishing and maintaining itself without disturbances; for at the moment of its origin all those who inhabited Venice had the right to participate in the government, so that no one had cause to complain. Those who afterwards came to live there, finding the government firmly established, had neither a pretext for, nor the means of, creating disturbances. They had no cause, for the reason that they had not been deprived of anything; and they lacked the means, because they were kept in check by those who held the government, and who did not employ them in any affairs that might tempt them to seize authority. Besides, the new-comers in Venice were not sufficiently numerous to have produced a disproportion between the governing and the governed, for the number of nobles equalled or exceeded that of the others; and thus for these reasons Venice could establish and preserve that form of government.

Sparta, as I have said, being governed by a king and a limited senate, could maintain itself also for a long time, because there were but few inhabitants, and strangers were not permitted to come in; besides, the laws of Lycurgus had obtained such influence that their observance prevented even the slightest pretext for trouble. It was also the easier for the citizens to live in union, as Lycurgus had established equality in

from them; and the nobles in the exercise of their functions did not treat the people sufficiently ill to excite in them the desire of exercising them themselves. This last advantage was due to the kings of Sparta; for being placed in this government, as it were, between the two orders, and living in the midst of the nobility, they had no better means of maintaining their authority than to protect the people against all injustice; whence these neither feared nor desired authority, and consequently there was no motive for any differences between them and the nobles, nor any cause for disturbances; and thus they could live for a long time united. Two principal causes, however, cemented this union: first, the inhabitants of Sparta were few in number, and therefore could be governed by a few; and the other was, that, by not permitting strangers to establish themselves in the republic, they had neither opportunity of becoming corrupt, nor of increasing their population to such a degree that the burden of government became difficult to the few who were charged with it.

In examining now all these circumstances, we see that the legislators of Rome had to do one of two things to assure to their republic the same quiet as that enjoyed by the two republics of which we have spoken; namely, either not to employ the people in the armies, like the Venetians, or not to open the doors to strangers, as had been the case in Sparta. But the Romans in both took just the opposite course, which gave to the people greater power and infinite occasion for disturbances. But if the republic had been more tranquil, it would necessarily have resulted that she would have been more feeble, and that she would have lost with her energy also the ability of achieving that high degree of greatness to which she attained; so that to have removed the cause of trouble from Rome would have been to deprive her of her power of expansion. And thus it is seen in all human affairs, upon careful examination, that you cannot avoid one inconvenience without incurring another. If therefore you wish to make a people numerous and warlike, so as to create a great empire, you will have to constitute it in such manner as will cause you more difficulty in managing it; and if you keep it either small or unarmed, and you acquire other dominions, you will not be able to hold them, or you will become so feeble that you will fall a prey to whoever attacks you. And therefore in all our decisions we must consider well what presents the least inconveniences, and take that for the best, for we shall never find any course entirely free from objections. Rome then might, like Sparta, have created a king for life, and established a limited senate; but with her desire to become a great empire, she could not, like Sparta, limit the number of her citizens; and therefore a king for life and a limited senate would have been of

Rome, or whether he intends to confine her within narrow limits. In the first case, it will be necessary to organize her as Rome was, and submit to dissensions and troubles as best he may; for without a great number of men, and these well armed, no republic can ever increase or hold its new possessions. In the second case, he may organize her like Sparta and Venice; but as expansion is the poison of such republics, he must prevent her from making conquests, for such acquisitions by a feeble republic lead to ruin, as happened to both Sparta and Venice; the first of which, having subjected to her rule nearly all Greece, exposed its feeble foundations at the slightest accident, for when the rebellion of Thebes occurred, which was led by Pelopidas,⁴ the other cities of Greece also rose up and almost ruined Sparta.

In like manner, Venice, having obtained possession of a great part of Italy, and the most of it not by war, but by means of money and fraud, when occasion came for her to give proof of her strength, she lost everything in a single battle.⁵ I think, then, that to found a republic which should endure a long time it would be best to organize her internally like Sparta, or to locate her, like Venice, in some strong place; and to make her sufficiently powerful, so that no one could hope to overcome her readily, and yet on the other hand not so powerful as to make her formidable to her neighbors. In this wise she might long enjoy her independence. For there are but two motives for making war against a republic: one, the desire to subjugate her; the other, the apprehension of being subjugated by her. The two means which we have indicated remove, as it were, both these prettexts for war; for if the republic is difficult to be conquered, her defences being well organized, as I presuppose, then it will seldom or never happen that any one will venture upon the project of conquering her. If she remains quiet within her limits, and experience shows that she entertains no ambitious projects, the fear of her power will never prompt any one to attack her; and this would even be more certainly the case if her constitution and laws prohibited all aggrandizement. And I certainly think that if she could be kept in this equilibrium it would be the best political existence, and would insure to any state real tranquillity. But as all human things are kept in a perpetual movement, and can never remain stable, states naturally either rise or decline, and necessity compels them to many acts to which reason will not influence them; so that, having organized a republic competent to maintain herself without expanding, still, if forced by necessity to extend her territory, in such case we shall see her foundations give way and herself quickly brought to ruin. And thus, on the other hand, if Heaven favors her so as never to be involved in war, the continued tranquillity would enervate her, or provoke internal dis-

sensions, which together, or either of them separately, will be apt to prove her ruin. Seeing then the impossibility of establishing in this respect a perfect equilibrium, and that a precise middle course cannot be maintained, it is proper in the organization of a republic to select the most honorable course, and to constitute her so that, even if necessity should oblige her to expand, she may yet be able to preserve her acquisitions. To return now to our first argument, I believe it therefore necessary to take the constitution of Rome as a model rather than that of any other republic (for I do not believe that a middle course between the two can be found), and to tolerate the differences that will arise between the Senate and the people as an unavoidable inconvenience in achieving greatness like that of Rome.

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[Book I, Chapter 12]

THE IMPORTANCE OF GIVING RELIGION A PROMINENT INFLUENCE IN A STATE, AND HOW ITALY WAS RUINED BECAUSE SHE FAILED IN THIS RESPECT THROUGH THE CONDUCT OF THE CHURCH OF ROME.

Princes and republics who wish to maintain themselves free from corruption must above all things preserve the purity of all religious observances, and treat them with proper reverence; for there is no greater indication of the ruin of a country than to see religion contemned. And this is easily understood, when we know upon what the religion of a country is founded; for the essence of every religion is based upon some one main principle. The religion of the Gentiles had for its foundation the responses of the oracles, and the tenets of the augurs and aruspices; upon these alone depended all their ceremonies, rites, and sacrifices. For they readily believed that the Deity which could predict their future good or ill was also able to bestow it upon them. Thence arose their temples, their sacrifices, their supplications, and all the other ceremonies; for the oracle of Delos, the temple of Jupiter Ammon, and other celebrated oracles, kept the world in admiration and devoutness. But when these afterwards began to speak only in accordance with the wishes of the princes, and their falsity was discovered by the people, then men became incredulous, and disposed to disturb all good institutions. It is therefore the duty of princes and heads of republics to uphold the foundations of the religion of their countries, for then it is easy to keep their people religious, and consequently well conducted and united. And therefore everything that tends to favor religion (even though it were

the practice observed by sagacious men; which has given rise to the belief in the miracles that are celebrated in religions, however false they may be. For the sagacious rulers have given these miracles increased importance, no matter whence or how they originated; and their authority afterwards gave them credence with the people. Rome had many such miracles; and one of the most remarkable was that which occurred when the Roman soldiers sacked the city of Veii; some of them entered the temple of Juno, and, placing themselves in front of her statue, said to her, "Will you come to Rome?" Some imagined that they observed the statue make a sign of assent, and others pretended to have heard her reply, "Yes." Now these men, being very religious, as reported by Titus Livius, and having entered the temple quietly, they were filled with devotion and reverence, and might really have believed that they had heard a reply to their question, such as perhaps they could have presupposed. But this opinion and belief was favored and magnified by Camillus and the other Roman chiefs.⁶

And certainly, if the Christian religion had from the beginning been maintained according to the principles of its founder, the Christian states and republics would be much more united and happy than in fact they are. Nor can there be a greater proof of its decadence than to witness the fact that the nearer people are to the Church of Rome, which is the head of our religion, the less religious are they. And whoever examines the principles upon which that religion is founded, and sees how widely different from those principles its present practice and application are, will judge that her ruin or chastisement is near at hand. But as there are some of the opinion that the well-being of Italian affairs depends upon the Church of Rome, I will present such arguments against that opinion as occur to me; two of which are most important, and cannot according to my judgment be controverted. The first is, that the evil example of the court of Rome has destroyed all piety and religion in Italy, which brings in its train infinite improprieties and disorders; for as we may presuppose all good where religion prevails, so where it is wanting we have the right to suppose the very opposite. We Italians then owe to the Church of Rome and to her priests our having become irreligious and bad; but we owe her a still greater debt, and one that may cause our ruin, namely, that the Church has kept and still keeps our country divided. And certainly a country can never be united and happy, except when it obeys wholly one government, whether a republic or a monarchy, as is the case in France and in Spain; and the sole cause why Italy is not in the same condition, and is not governed by either one republic or one sovereign, is the Church; for having acquired and holding a temporal dominion, yet she has never had sufficient power

sole sovereign of all Italy. And on the other hand she has not been so feeble that the fear of losing her temporal power prevented her from calling in the aid of a foreign power to defend her against such others as had become too powerful in Italy; as was seen in former days by many sad experiences, when through the intervention of Charlemagne she drove out the Lombards, who were masters of nearly all Italy; and when in our times she crushed the power of the Venetians by the aid of France, and afterwards with the assistance of the Swiss drove out in turn the French.⁷ The Church, then, not having been powerful enough to be able to master all Italy, nor having permitted any other power to do so, has been the cause why Italy has never been able to unite under one head, but has always remained under a number of princes and lords, which occasioned her so many dissensions and so much weakness that she became a prey not only to the powerful barbarians, but to whoever chose to assail her. This we other Italians owe to the Church of Rome, and to none other. And any one, to be promptly convinced by experiment of the truth of all this, should have the power to transport the court of Rome to reside, with all the power it has in Italy, in the midst of the Swiss, who of all the peoples nowadays live most according to their ancient customs so far as religion and their military system are concerned; and he would see in a very little while that the evil habits of that court would create more confusion in that country than anything else that could ever happen there.

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[*Book I, Chapter 27*]

SHOWING THAT MEN ARE VERY RARELY EITHER ENTIRELY GOOD OR ENTIRELY BAD

When Pope Julius II went, in the year 1505, to Bologna to expel the Bentivogli from that state, the government of which they had held for a hundred years, he wanted also to remove Giovanpaolo Baglioni from Perugia, who had made himself the absolute master of that city; for it was the intention of Pope Julius to destroy all the petty tyrants that occupied the possessions of the Church. Having arrived at Perugia with that purpose, which was well known to everybody, he did not wait to enter the city with his army for protection, but went in almost alone, although Giovanpaolo had collected a large force within the city for his defense. And thus, with the customary impetuosity which characterized all his acts, Julius placed himself with only a small guard in the hands of his enemy Baglioni whom he nevertheless carried off with him.

the Church. Sagacious men who were with the pope observed his temerity and the cowardice of Baglioni, and could not understand why the latter had not by a single blow rid himself of his enemy, whereby he would have secured for himself eternal fame and rich booty, for the Pope was accompanied by all the cardinals with their valuables. Nor could they believe that he had refrained from doing this either from goodness or conscientious scruples; for no sentiment of piety or respect could enter the heart of a man of such vile character as Giovanpaolo, who had dishonored his sister, and murdered his nephews and cousins for the sake of obtaining possession of the state; but they concluded that mankind were neither utterly wicked nor perfectly good, and that when a crime has in itself some grandeur or magnanimity they will not know how to attempt it. Thus Giovanpaolo Baglioni, who did not mind open incest and parricide, knew not how to, or, more correctly speaking, dared not, attempt an act (although having a justifiable opportunity) for which everyone would have admired his courage, and which would have secured him eternal fame, as being the first to show these prelates how little esteem men merit who live and govern as they do. And he would have done an act the greatness of which would have overshadowed all the infamy and danger that could possibly result from it.

[*Book I, Chapter 28*]

WHY ROME WAS LESS UNGRATEFUL TO HER CITIZENS THAN ATHENS

In reading the history of republics we find in all of them a degree of ingratitude to their citizens; this, however, seems to have been the case to a less extent in Rome than in Athens, and perhaps less even than in any other republic. In seeking for the reason of this difference, so far as Rome and Athens are concerned, I believe it was because Rome had less cause for mistrusting her citizens than Athens. In fact, from the time of the expulsion of the kings until Sulla and Marius,⁸ no Roman citizen ever attempted to deprive his country of her liberty; so that, there being no occasion to suspect her citizens, there was consequently no cause for offending them unnecessarily. The very contrary happened in Athens, for Pisistratus had by fraud robbed her of her liberty at the very time of her highest prosperity; so soon as she afterwards recovered her freedom, remembering the injuries received and her past servitude, she resented with the utmost harshness, not only all faults, but the mere semblance of faults, on the part of her citizens. It was this that gave rise to the exile and death of so many of her illustrious men, and thence came the practice of ostracism and every other violence which that city

their liberty treat their citizens with greater severity than such as have never lost it. A careful consideration of what has been said on this subject will show that Athens is neither to be blamed, nor Rome to be praised, for their respective conduct, and that it necessarily resulted entirely from the difference of the events that occurred in those cities; for a penetrating observer will not fail to see that, if Rome had been deprived of her liberty in the manner Athens was, she would not have been more indulgent to her citizens than the latter. We may judge very correctly of this by her treatment of Collatinus and Publius Valerius after the expulsion of the kings; the first was exiled for no other reason than that he bore the name of the Tarquins, and the other was likewise sent into exile because he had excited suspicion by building a house on Mount Coelius.⁹ Seeing then how suspicious and severe Rome showed herself in these two cases, we may fairly judge that she would have been liable to the charge of ingratitude, the same as Athens, if she had been offended by her citizens in the beginning of her existence, before she had grown powerful. And so as not to be obliged to return to this subject of ingratitude, I shall continue what I have to say in relation to it in the next chapter.

[*Book I, Chapter 29*]

WHICH OF THE TWO IS MOST UNGRATEFUL, A PEOPLE OR A PRINCE

It seems to me proper here, in connection with the above subject, to examine whether the people or a prince is more liable to the charge of ingratitude; and by way of illustrating this question the better, I set out by saying that the vice of ingratitude springs either from avarice or fear. For when a people or a prince has sent a general on some important expedition where by his success he acquires great glory, the prince or people is in turn bound to reward him. But if instead of such reward they dishonor and wrong him, influenced thereto by avarice, then they are guilty of an inexcusable wrong, which will involve them in eternal infamy. And yet there are many princes who commit this wrong, for which fact Tacitus assigns the reason in the following sentence: "Men are more ready to repay an injury than a benefit, because gratitude is a burden and revenge a pleasure."¹ But when they fail to reward, or rather when they offend, not from avarice, but from suspicion and fear, then the people or the prince have some excuse for their ingratitude. We read of many instances of this kind; for the general who by his valor has conquered a state for his master, and won great glory for himself by his victory over the enemy, and has loaded his soldiers with rich booty,

enemy and with the subjects of the prince, so high a reputation, that his very victory may become distasteful and a cause for apprehension to his prince. For as the nature of men is ambitious as well as suspicious, and puts no limits to one's good fortune, it is not impossible that the suspicion that may suddenly be aroused in the mind of the prince by the victory of the general may have been aggravated by some haughty expressions or insolent acts on his part; so that the prince will naturally be made to think of securing himself against the ambition of the general. And to do this, the means that suggest themselves to him are either to have the general killed, or to deprive him of that reputation which he has acquired with the prince's army and the people, by using every means to prove that the general's victory was not due to his skill and courage, but to chance and the cowardice of the enemy, or to the sagacity of the other captains who were with him in that action.

After Vespasian, while in Judæa, had been declared Emperor by his army, Antonius Primus, who was at the head of another army in Illyria, took sides with him, and marched straight into Italy against Vitellius, then Emperor in Rome, and in the most gallant manner routed two Vitellian armies, and made himself master of Rome; so that Mutianus, who had been sent there by Vespasian, found everything achieved and all difficulties overcome. The reward which Antonius received for this service was that Mutianus deprived him of the command of the army, and gradually reduced his authority in Rome to nothing; so that Antonius, indignant, went to see Vespasian, who was still in Asia, who received him in such manner that, being soon after deprived of all rank, he died almost in despair. History is full of similar examples.²

We have seen in our own day with how much courage and perseverance Gonsalvo de Cordoba conducted the war in Naples for King Ferdinand of Aragon against the French; how he defeated them, and conquered the kingdom of Ferdinand; and how he was rewarded by his king, who left Spain and came to Naples, and first deprived Gonsalvo of his command of the army, and then took the control of the strong places from him, and finally carried him off with him to Spain, where Gonsalvo soon after died in obscurity.³

Fear and suspicion are so natural to princes that they cannot defend themselves against them, and thus it is impossible for them to show gratitude to those who, by victories achieved under their banners, have made important conquests for them. If then a prince cannot prevent himself from committing such wrongs, it is surely no wonder, nor matter worthy of more consideration, if a people acts in a similar manner. For as a free city is generally influenced by two principal objects, the one

to aggrandize herself, and the other to preserve her liberties, it is natural that she should occasionally be betrayed into faults by excessive eagerness in the pursuit of either of these objects. As to the faults that result from the desire for aggrandizement, we shall speak in another place; and those resulting from the desire to preserve her liberty are amongst others the following, namely, to injure those citizens whom she should reward, and to suspect those in whom she should place the most confidence. And although the effects of such conduct occasion great evils in a republic that is already corrupt, and which often lead to despotism,—as was seen under Cæsar in Rome, who took for himself by force what ingratitude had refused him,—still, in a republic not yet entirely corrupt, they may be productive of great good in preserving her freedom for a greater length of time; as the dread of punishment will keep men better, and less ambitious.

It is true that, of all the people who have ever possessed a great empire, the Romans were the least ungrateful; for it may be said that no other instance of their ingratitude can be cited than that of Scipio; for Coriolanus and Camillus were both exiled on account of the outrages which they had committed upon the people. The one was never pardoned, because he always preserved an implacable hatred against the people; but the other was not only recalled from exile, but was for the entire remainder of his life honored like a prince. The ingratitude to Scipio arose from jealousy such as never before had been felt towards any one else, and which resulted from the greatness of the enemy whom Scipio had conquered, from the great reputation which his victory after so long and perilous a war had given him, for the rapidity of his actions and the popular favor which his youth, his prudence, and other remarkable virtues had won for him. All of these were so great that everybody in Rome, even the magistrates, feared his influence and authority, which offended the intelligent men of Rome as an unheard of thing. And his manner of life was such that Cato the elder, who was reputed a man of the purest character, was the first to complain of him, saying that no city could call herself free where a citizen was feared by the magistrates. So that if in this case the people of Rome followed the opinion of Cato, they are entitled to that excuse which, as I have said above, those peoples and princes may claim who are ungrateful from suspicion and fear. In concluding, then, this discourse, I say that, as the vice of ingratitude is usually the consequence of either avarice or fear, it will be seen that the people never fall into this error from avarice, and that fear also makes them less liable to it than princes, inasmuch as they have less reason for fear, as we shall show further on.

[Book I, Chapter 37]

WHAT TROUBLES RESULTED IN ROME FROM THE ENACTMENT OF THE AGRARIAN LAW, AND HOW VERY WRONG IT IS TO MAKE LAWS THAT ARE RETROSPECTIVE AND CONTRARY TO OLD ESTABLISHED CUSTOMS

It was a saying of ancient writers, that men afflict themselves in evil, and become weary of the good, and that both these dispositions produce the same effects. For when men are no longer obliged to fight from necessity, they fight from ambition, which passion is so powerful in the hearts of men that it never leaves them, no matter to what height they may rise. The reason of this is that nature has created men so that they desire everything, but are unable to attain it; desire being thus always greater than the faculty of acquiring, discontent with what they have and dissatisfaction with themselves result from it. This causes the changes in their fortunes; for as some men desire to have more, whilst others fear to lose what they have, enmities and war are the consequences; and this brings about the ruin of one province and the elevation of another. I have made these remarks because the Roman people were not content with having secured themselves against the nobles by the creation of the Tribunes, to which they had been driven by necessity. Having obtained this, they soon began to fight from ambition, and wanted to divide with the nobles their honors and possessions, being those things which men value most. Thence the frenzy that occasioned the contentions about the agrarian law, which finally caused the destruction of the Roman republic. Now, as in well-regulated republics the state ought to be rich and the citizens poor, it was evident that the agrarian law was in some respects defective; it was either in the beginning so made that it required constant modifications; or the change in it had been so long deferred that it became most obnoxious because it was retrospective in its action; or perhaps it had been good in the beginning and had afterwards become corrupted in its application. But whichever it may have been, this law could never be discussed in Rome without causing the most violent excitement in the city. There were two principal points in this law; one provided that no citizen could possess more than a certain number of acres of land, and the other that all the lands taken from their enemies should be divided amongst the Roman people. This affected the nobles disadvantageously in two ways; for those who had more land than the law allowed (which was the case with the greater part of the nobles) had to be deprived of it; and by dividing amongst the people the lands taken from the enemy, it took from the nobles the chance of enriching themselves thereby, as they had previously done. Now, as it was a powerful

nobles used all patience and every means in their power to gain time and delay action upon the subject, either by calling out an army, or by getting one tribune to oppose another who had proposed the law, or sometimes by yielding in part, or even by sending a colony to any place where lands were to be divided. This was done with the country of Antium, respecting which this law had caused a dispute; and therefore a colony drawn from amongst the citizens of Rome was sent there, to whom that country was assigned. In reference to this, Titus Livius makes the notable remark, that "it was difficult to find anyone in Rome willing to inscribe his name to go to that colony; so much more ready were the people to desire possessions in Rome than to go and have them in Antium."⁴

The troubles about this agrarian law continued to disturb Rome for some time, so that the Romans began to send their armies to the extreme ends of Italy, or even beyond; after which matters were seemingly calmed down, owing to the fact that the lands taken from the enemy were at a great distance from Rome, and remote from the eyes of the people, and were situated where it was not easy to cultivate them, and consequently they were less desirable. Besides this, the Romans became less disposed to deprive their vanquished enemies of their lands, as they had done before; and when they did so deprive any of them of their possessions, they sent colonies to occupy them; so that from these several causes the agrarian law lay, as it were, dormant until the time of the Gracchi, who, after having revived it, wholly destroyed the Roman republic. For the power of the adversaries of the law had increased twofold in the mean time, and its revival excited such feelings of hatred between the people and the Senate, that it led to violence and bloodshed beyond all bounds or precedent. So that, the magistrates being unable to check these disturbances, and neither party having any confidence in the public authorities, they both resorted to private expedients, and each of the factions began to look for a chief capable of defending them against the other. In these extreme troubles and disorders the people began to cast their eyes on Marius, on account of his reputation, which was so great that they had made him Consul four times in succession, and with such short intervals between these several consulates that he was enabled to nominate himself three times more for that office. The nobility, seeing no other remedy against these abuses, gave their favor to Sulla, and made him chief of their party. Thus civil war was provoked, and after much bloodshed and varied fortunes the nobility retained the upper hand. In the time of Cæsar and Pompey these troubles were revived, Cæsar placing himself at the head of the party of Marius, and Pompey upholding that of Sulla; conflicts of arms ensued, and Cæsar

remained master and became the first tyrant of Rome, so that that city never afterwards recovered her liberty.

Such was the beginning and the end of the agrarian law. And as I have demonstrated elsewhere that the differences between the Senate and the people had been instrumental in preserving the liberty in Rome, because they had given rise to the enactment of laws favorable to liberty, therefore the results of this agrarian law may seem in contradiction with that previous conclusion. But I do not on that account change my opinion, for the ambition of the nobles is so great, that, if it is not repressed by various ways and means in any city, it will quickly bring that city to ruin. So that if the contentions about the agrarian law needed three hundred years to bring Rome to a state of servitude, she would have been brought there much quicker if the people, by these laws and other means, had not for so great a length of time kept the ambition of the nobles in check. This shows us how much more people value riches than honor; for the Roman nobility always yielded to the people without serious difficulties in the matter of honors, but when it came to a question of property, then they resisted with so much pertinacity that the people, to satisfy their thirst for riches, resorted to the above-described extraordinary proceedings. The chief promoters of these disorders were the Gracchi, whose intentions in this matter were more praiseworthy than their prudence. For to attempt to eradicate an abuse that has grown up in a republic by the enactment of retrospective laws, is a most inconsiderate proceeding, and (as we have amply discussed above) only serves to accelerate the fatal results which the abuse tends to bring about; but by temporizing, the end will either be delayed, or the evil will exhaust itself before it attains that end.

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[Book I, Chapter 58]

THE PEOPLE ARE WISER AND MORE CONSTANT THAN PRINCES

Titus Livius as well as all other historians affirm that nothing is more uncertain and inconstant than the multitude; for it appears from what he relates of the actions of men, that in many instances the multitude, after having condemned a man to death, bitterly lamented it, and most earnestly wished him back. This was the case with the Roman people and Manlius Capitolinus, whom they had condemned to death and afterwards most earnestly desired him back, as our author says in the following words: "No sooner had they found out that they had nothing

death of Hieronymus, nephew of Hiero, he says: "It is the nature of the multitude either humbly to serve or insolently to dominate."⁵ I know not whether, in undertaking to defend a cause against the accusations of all writers, I do not assume a task so hard and so beset with difficulties as to oblige me to abandon it with shame, or to go on with it at the risk of being weighted down by it. Be that as it may, however, I think, and ever shall think, that it cannot be wrong to defend one's opinions with arguments founded upon reason, without employing force or authority.

I say, then, that individual men, and especially princes, may be charged with the same defects of which writers accuse the people; for whoever is not controlled by laws will commit the same errors as an unbridled multitude. This may easily be verified, for there have been and still are plenty of princes, and a few good and wise ones, such, I mean, as needed not the curb that controlled them. Amongst these, however, are not to be counted either the kings that lived in Egypt at that ancient period when that country was governed by laws, or those that arose in Sparta; neither such as are born in our day in France, for that country is more thoroughly regulated by laws than any other of which we have any knowledge in modern times. And those kings that arise under such constitutions are not to be classed amongst the number of those whose individual nature we have to consider, and see whether it resembles that of the people; but they should be compared with a people equally controlled by law as those kings were, and then we shall find in that multitude the same good qualities as in those kings, and we shall see that such a people neither obey with servility nor command with insolence. Such were the people of Rome, who, so long as that republic remained uncorrupted, neither obeyed basely nor ruled insolently, but rather held its rank honorably, supporting the laws and their magistrates. And when the unrighteous ambition of some noble made it necessary for them to rise up in self-defense, they did so, as in the case of Manlius, the Decemvirs, and others who attempted to oppress them; and so when the public good required them to obey the dictators and consuls, they promptly yielded obedience. And if the Roman people regretted Manlius Capitolinus after his death, it is not to be wondered at; for they regretted his virtues, which had been such that the remembrance of them filled every one with pity, and would have had the power to produce the same effect upon any prince; for all writers agree that virtue is to be admired and praised, even in one's enemies. And if intense desire could have restored Manlius to life, the Roman people would nevertheless have pronounced the same judgment against him as they did the first time, when they took him from prison and condemned him to death. And so we have seen princes that were esteemed wise,

deeply; such as Alexander the Great with regard to Clitus and other friends, and Herod with his wife Mariamne.⁶ But what our historian says of the character of the multitude does not apply to a people regulated by laws, as the Romans were, but to an unbridled multitude, such as the Syracusans; who committed all the excesses to which infuriated and unbridled men abandon themselves, as did Alexander the Great and Herod in the above-mentioned cases.

Therefore, the character of the people is not to be blamed any more than that of princes, for both alike are liable to err when they are without any control. Besides the examples already given, I could adduce numerous others from amongst the Roman emperors and other tyrants and princes, who have displayed as much inconstancy and recklessness as any populace ever did. Contrary to the general opinion, then, which maintains that the people, when they govern, are inconsistent, unstable, and ungrateful, I conclude and affirm that that these defects are not more natural to the people than they are to princes. To charge the people and princes equally with them may be the truth, but to except princes from them would be a great mistake. For a people that governs and is well regulated by laws will be stable, prudent, and grateful, as much so, and even more, according to my opinion, than a prince, although he be esteemed wise; and, on the other hand, a prince, freed from the restraints of the law, will be more ungrateful, inconstant, and imprudent than a people similarly situated. The difference in their conduct is not due to any difference in their nature (for that is the same, and if there be any difference for good, it is on the side of the people); but to the greater or less respect they have for the laws under which they respectively live. And whoever studies the Roman people will see that for four hundred years they have been haters of royalty, and lovers of the glory and common good of their country; and he will find any number of examples that will prove both the one and the other. And should any one allege the ingratitude which the Roman people displayed toward Scipio, I shall reply the same as I have said in another place on this subject, where I have demonstrated that the people are less ungrateful than princes. But as regards prudence and stability, I say that the people are more prudent and stable, and have better judgment than a prince; and it is not without good reason that it is said, "The voice of the people is the voice of God"; for we see popular opinion prognosticate events in such a wonderful manner that it would almost seem as if the people had some occult virtue, which enables them to foresee the good and the evil. As to the people's capacity of judging things, it is exceedingly rare that, when they hear two orators of equal talents advocate different measures, they do not decide in favor of the best of the two; which

asionally they are misled in matters involving questions of courage or seeming utility, (as has been said above), so is a prince also many times misled by his own passions, which are much greater than those of the people. We also see that in the election of their magistrates they make far better choice than princes; and no people will ever be persuaded to elect a man of infamous character and corrupt habits to any post of dignity, to which a prince is easily influenced in a thousand different ways. When we see a people take an aversion to anything, they persist in it for many centuries, which we never find to be the case with princes. Upon both these points the Roman people shall serve me as proof, who in the many elections of consuls and tribunes had to regret only four times the choice they had made. The Roman people held the name of king in such detestation, as we have said, that no extent of services rendered by any of its citizens who attempted to usurp that title could save him from his merited punishment. We furthermore see the cities where the people are masters make the greatest progress in the least possible time, and much greater than such as have always been governed by princes; as was the case with Rome after the expulsion of the kings, and with Athens after they rid themselves of Pisistratus; and this can be attributed to no other cause than that the governments of the people are better than those of princes.⁷

It would be useless to object to my opinion by referring to what our historian has said in the passages quoted above, and elsewhere; for if we compare the faults of a people with those of princes, as well as their respective good qualities, we shall find the people vastly superior in all that is good and glorious. And if princes show themselves superior in making laws, and in the forming of civil institutions and new statutes and ordinances, the people are superior in maintaining those institutions, laws, and ordinances, which certainly places them on a par with those who established them.

And finally to sum up this matter, I say that both governments of princes and of the people have lasted a long time, but both required to be regulated by laws. For a prince who knows no other control but his own will is like a madman, and a people that can do as it pleases will hardly be wise. If now we compare a prince who is controlled by laws, and a people that is untrammelled by them, we shall find more virtue in the people than in the prince; and if we compare them when both are freed from such control, we shall see that the people are guilty of fewer excesses than the prince, and that the errors of the people are of less importance, and therefore more easily remedied. For a licentious and mutinous people may easily be brought back to good conduct by the influence and persuasion of a good man, but an evil-minded prince

is not amenable to such influences, and therefore there is no other remedy against him but cold steel. We may judge then from this of the relative defects of the one and the other; if words suffice to correct those of the people, whilst those of the prince can only be remedied by violence, no one can fail to see that where the greater remedy is required, there also the defects must be greater. The follies which a people commits at the moment of its greatest license are not what is most to be feared; it is not the immediate evil that may result from them that inspires apprehension, but the fact that such general confusion might afford the opportunity for a tyrant to seize the government. But with evil-disposed princes the contrary is the case; it is the immediate present that causes fear, and there is hope only in the future; for men will persuade themselves that the termination of his wicked life may give them a chance of liberty. Thus we see the difference between the one and the other to be, that the one touches the present and the other the future. The excesses of the people are directed against those whom they suspect of interfering with the public good; whilst those of princes are against apprehended interference with their individual interests. The general prejudice against the people results from the fact that everybody can freely and fearlessly speak ill of them in mass, even whilst they are at the height of their power; but a prince can only be spoken of with the greatest circumspection and apprehension. And as the subject leads me to it, I deem it not amiss to examine in the following chapter whether alliances with a republic or with a prince are most to be trusted.

[Book I, Chapter 59]

LEAGUES AND ALLIANCES WITH REPUBLICS ARE MORE TO BE TRUSTED
THAN THOSE WITH PRINCES

As it is of daily occurrence that princes and republics contract leagues or friendships with each other, or that in like manner treaties and alliances are formed between a republic and a prince, it seems to me proper to examine whose faith is most constant and most to be relied upon, that of a republic or that of a prince. In examining the whole subject I believe that in many instances they are equal, but that in others there is a difference; and I believe, moreover, that agreements which are the result of force will no more be observed by a prince than by a republic, and where either the one or the other is apprehensive of losing their state, that to save it both will break their faith and be guilty of ingratitude. Demetrius, called the Conqueror of Cities, had conferred infinite benefits upon the Athenians. It happened that, having been

the loss of his men and the destruction of his army.⁸ Pompey, after his defeat by Cæsar in Thessaly, took refuge in Egypt with Ptolemy, whom on a former occasion he had reinstated in his kingdom, but was treacherously put to death by him.⁹ Both these instances are attributable to the same reasons; yet we see that the republic acted with more humanity and inflicted less injury than the prince. Wherever fear dominates, there we shall find equal want of faith in both, although the same influence may cause either a prince or a republic to keep faith at the risk of ruin. For it may well happen that the prince is the ally of some powerful potentate, who for the moment may not be able to assist him, but who, the prince may hope, will be able to reinstate him in his possessions; or he may believe that, having acted as his partisan, his powerful ally will make no treaties or alliances with his enemies. Such was the fate of those princes of the kingdom of Naples who adhered to the French party. And with regard to republics this occurred with Saguntum in Spain, which hazarded her own safety for the sake of adhering to the Roman party; and with Florence when in the year 1512 she followed the fortune of the French. Taking all things together now, I believe that in such cases which involve imminent peril there will be found somewhat more of stability in republics than in princes.

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[Book II, Chapter 13]

CUNNING AND DECEIT WILL SERVE A MAN BETTER THAN FORCE TO
RISE FROM A BASE CONDITION TO GREAT FORTUNE

I believe it to be most true that it seldom happens that men rise from low condition to high rank without employing either force or fraud, unless that rank should be attained either by gift or inheritance. Nor do I believe that force alone will ever be found to suffice, whilst it will often be the case that cunning alone serves the purpose; as is clearly seen by whoever reads the life of Philip of Macedon, or that of Agathocles the Sicilian, and many others, who from the lowest and most moderate condition have achieved thrones and great empires. Xenophon shows in his Life of Cyrus the necessity of deception to success: the first expedition of Cyrus against the king of Armenia is replete with fraud, and it was deceit alone, and not force, that enabled him to seize that kingdom. And Xenophon draws no other conclusion from it than that a prince who wishes to achieve great things must learn to deceive. Cyrus also practiced a variety of deceptions upon Cyaxares,¹ king of the Medes,

his maternal uncle; and Xenophon shows that without these frauds Cyrus would never have achieved the greatness which he did attain. Nor do I believe that there was ever a man who from obscure condition arrived at great power by merely employing open force; but there are many who have succeeded by fraud alone, as, for instance, Giovanni Galeazzo Visconti in taking the state and sovereignty of Lombardy from his uncle, Messer Bernabò.² And that which princes are obliged to do in the beginning of their rise, republics are equally obliged to practice until they have become powerful enough so that force alone suffices them. And as Rome employed every means, by chance or choice, to promote her aggrandizement, so she also did not hesitate to employ fraud; nor could she have practised a greater fraud than by taking the course we have explained above of making other people her allies and associates, and under that title making them slaves, as she did with the Latins and other neighboring nations. For first she availed of their arms to subdue their mutual neighbors, and thus to increase her state and reputation; and after having subdued these, her power increased to the degree that she could subjugate each people separately in turn. The Latins never became aware that they were wholly slaves until they had witnessed two defeats of the Samnites, and saw them obliged to accept the terms of peace dictated to them. As this victory greatly increased the reputation of the Romans with the more distant princes, who felt the weight of their name before experiencing that of their arms, so it excited envy and apprehension in those who had seen and felt their arms, amongst whom were the Latins. And this jealousy and fear were so powerful that not only the Latins, but also the colonies which the Romans had established in Latium, together with the Campanians, whose defence the Romans had but a short time previously undertaken, conspired together against the Romans. The Latins began the war in the way we have shown that most wars are begun, not by attacking the Romans, but by defending the Sidicini from the Samnites, against whom the latter were making war with the permission of the Romans. And that it is true that the Latins began the war because they had at last become aware of the bad faith of the Romans is demonstrated by Titus Livius, when at an assembly of the Latin people he puts the following words into the mouth of Annius Setinus, a Latin Prætor: "For if now we can bear servitude under the specious name of equal confederates," &c.³

We see therefore that the Romans in the early beginning of their power already employed fraud, which it has ever been necessary for those to practice who from small beginnings wish to rise to the highest

degree of power; and then it is the less censurable the more it is concealed, as was that practised by the Romans.

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[*Book III, Chapter 8*]

WHOEVER WISHES TO CHANGE THE GOVERNMENT OF A REPUBLIC
SHOULD FIRST CONSIDER WELL ITS EXISTING CONDITION

We have already shown that an evil-disposed citizen cannot effect any changes for the worse in a republic, unless it be already corrupt. Besides the reasons elsewhere given, this conclusion is confirmed by the examples of Spurius Cassius and Manlius Capitolinus.⁴ This Spurius, being an ambitious man and wishing to obtain the supreme power in Rome, endeavored to gain the favor of the people by numerous benefits, such as selling to them the lands taken from the Hernici. This opened the eyes of the senate to his ambitious projects, and he became suspected, even by the people, to that point that when he offered them the proceeds of the sale of the grain which the government had caused to be brought from Sicily, the people refused it altogether; for it seemed to them as though Spurius offered it as the price of their liberty. But if this people had been corrupt, they would, so far from refusing this offer, have accepted it, and thus have opened the way for Spurius to the tyranny which now they closed against him.

The example of Manlius is even more forcible, and proves how this evil ambition to rule cancels the noblest qualities of mind and body, and the most important services rendered to a state. We see that this ambition had its origin with Manlius in his jealousy of the honors bestowed upon Camillus; and so blinded was he by it, that regardless of the manners and customs of Rome, and without examining the condition of the state, which was not yet prepared to accept a vicious form of government, he set to work to stir up disturbances in Rome against the senate and the institutions of his country. Here we recognize the perfection of the constitution of Rome, and the excellent character of its population; for on the occasion of the fall of Manlius, not one of the nobility (so ardent generally in their mutual support and defence) made the slightest effort in his favor; nor did any of his relatives make any attempt to support him. And whilst the families of others accused were in the habit of showing themselves near them, all covered with dust and

in deep mourning and sadness, for the purpose of exciting the commiseration of the people for the accused, not one of the family of Manlius appeared near him. The tribunes of the people, so accustomed always to favor every measure that seemed for the advantage of the people, and the more so in proportion as it was adverse to the interests of the nobility, in this instance united with the nobles for the purpose of suppressing a common enemy. And finally the people of Rome, ever most jealous of its own interests, and eagerly in favor of everything that was adverse to the nobles, had at first shown themselves well disposed toward Manlius; but the moment the tribunes summoned him and brought his case before them, the same people, having now from defenders become judges, condemned him, without regard to his former services, to suffer the death penalty. I therefore think that there is no fact in history that more effectually shows the excellence of the Roman constitution than this example, where not a single person in the whole city stirred to defend a citizen gifted with the best qualities, and who had rendered the most signal services to the public, as well as to private individuals. For the love of country had more power over them than any other sentiment; and they thought so much more of its present dangers, to which the ambition of Manlius exposed them, than of his past services, that they saw no other way of relieving themselves of those dangers than by his death. And Titus Livius says: "Thus ended the career of this man, who would have been memorable had he not been born in a free community."

This brings us to two important considerations: the first, that the means of attaining glory are different in a republic that is corrupt from what they are in a republic that still preserves its institutions pure; and the second (which is in a measure comprised in the first), that men in their conduct, and especially in their most prominent actions, should well consider and conform to the times in which they live. And those who, from an evil choice or from natural inclination, do not conform to the times in which they live, will in most instances live unhappily, and their undertakings will come to a bad end; whilst, on the contrary, success attends those who conform to the times. And doubtless we may conclude from the words of our historian that, if Manlius had been born in the times of Marius and Sulla, when the people were already corrupt, and when he could have moulded them according to his ambition, he would have achieved the same results and successes as Marius and Sulla, and the others who after them aspired to the tyranny. And in the same way, if Sulla and Marius had lived in the times of Manlius, they would have been crushed in their first attempt. For a man may well by his conduct

that by length of time he should succeed, the natural impatience of the people, which cannot brook delay in the indulgence of their passion, would prove an obstacle to his success, so that by too much haste, or from error he would be led to engage in his attempt at the wrong time, and thus end in failure.

To usurp supreme and absolute authority, then, in a free state, and subject it to tyranny, the people must already have become corrupt by gradual steps from generation to generation. And all states necessarily come to this, unless (as we have shown above) they are frequently reinvigorated by good examples, and brought back by good laws to their first principles. Manlius thus would have been regarded as a rare and memorable man if he had lived in a corrupt republic. And therefore all such as desire to make a change in the government of a republic, whether in favor of liberty or in favor of tyranny, must well examine the condition of things, and from that judge of the difficulties of their undertaking. For it is as difficult to make a people free that is resolved to live in servitude, as it is to subject a people to servitude that is determined to be free. Having argued above that in many such attempts men should well consider the state of the times and govern themselves accordingly, I will develop this subject more fully in the next chapter.

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[Book III, Chapter 9]

WHOEVER DESIRES CONSTANT SUCCESS MUST CHANGE HIS CONDUCT
WITH THE TIMES

I have often reflected that the causes of the success or failure of men depend upon their manner of suiting their conduct to the times. We see one man proceed in his actions with passion, another warily; and as in both the one and the other case men are apt to exceed the proper limits, not being able always to observe the just middle course, they are apt to err in both. But he errs least and will be most favored by fortune who suits his proceedings to the times, as I have said above, and always follows the impulses of his nature. Every one knows how Fabius Maximus conducted the war against Hannibal with extreme caution and circumspection, and with an utter absence of all impetuosity or Roman audacity.⁵ It was his good fortune that this mode of proceeding accorded perfectly with the times and circumstances. For Hannibal had arrived in Rome whilst still young and with his fortunes fresh; he had already

twice routed the Romans, so that the republic was as it were deprived of her best troops, and greatly discouraged by her reverses. Rome could not therefore have been more favored by fortune, than to have a commander who by his extreme caution and the slowness of his movements kept the enemy at bay. At the same time, Fabius could not have found circumstances more favorable for his character and genius, to which fact he was indebted for his success and glory. And that this mode of proceeding was the result of his character and nature, and not a matter of choice, was shown on the occasion when Scipio wanted to take the same troops to Africa for the purpose of promptly terminating the war. Fabius most earnestly opposed this, like a man incapable of breaking from his accustomed ways and habits; so that, if he had been master, Hannibal would have remained in Italy, because Fabius failed to perceive that the times were changed, and strategies would change as well. And if Fabius had been king of Rome, he might easily have lost the war, because he would never have been able to change his methods to suit the changing times. But Rome was a republic that produced citizens of various characters and dispositions, such as Fabius, who was excellent at the time when it was desirable to protract the war, and Scipio, when it became necessary to terminate it. It is this which assures to republics greater vitality and more enduring success than monarchies have; for the diversity of the genius of her citizens enables the republic better to accommodate herself to the changes of the times than can be done by a prince. For any man accustomed to a certain mode of proceeding will never change it, as we have said, and consequently when time and circumstances change, so that his ways are no longer in harmony with them, he must of necessity succumb. Piero Soderini, whom we have mentioned several times already, was in all his actions governed by humanity and patience. He and his country prospered so long as the times favored this mode of proceeding; but when afterwards circumstances arose that demanded a course of conduct the opposite to that of patience and humanity, he was unfit for the occasion, and his own and his country's ruin were the consequence. Pope Julius II acted throughout the whole period of his pontificate with the impetuosity and passion natural to his character; and as the times and circumstances well accorded with this, he was successful in all his undertakings. But if the times had changed so that different counsels would have been required, he would unquestionably have been ruined, for he could not have changed his character or mode of action.

That we cannot thus change at will is due to two causes; the one is the impossibility of resisting the natural bent of our characters; and the other is the difficulty of persuading ourselves, after having been accus-

the times change, but he does not change his mode of proceeding. The ruin of states is caused in like manner, as we have fully shown above, because they do not modify their institutions to suit the changes of the times. And such changes are more difficult and tardy in republics; for necessarily circumstances will occur that will unsettle the whole state, and when the change of proceeding of one man will not suffice for the occasion.

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