

Interpretation

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“Deceived by the Glory of Caesar”: Humility and Machiavelli’s Founder

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I. INTRODUCTION

Leo Strauss notes that Machiavelli’s *Discourses on Livy* must reveal to modern men the possibility of appropriating ancient virtue for a modern context, though such men are inclined to dismiss “resplendent vices” for the sake of “the Biblical demands for humility and charity.”¹ The appropriation of the ancient virtues for the modern requires a lowering of sights. A part of appropriating this virtue for Machiavelli is accepting man’s fundamental desire to acquire. However, Machiavelli also tells us that the founder/refounder of new modes and orders must work for the “common benefit,”² a difficult claim to make in light of a politics based on acquisition as man’s primary drive. This tension, combined with the expectations placed on the discoverer of new modes and orders in the *Discourses*, forms the beginning of a puzzle about Machiavelli’s founder. While Machiavelli appears to rely on institutions and ethics built on self-interest alone, he relies on a transformed version of the virtue of humility which he seemingly rejects in order to prevent the problem posed by Caesar, the founder whose virtues are so great he devours the republic. Who is the man who seeks to found without wanting to dominate the republic, or worse, be its beloved?

¹ Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 86.

² Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), III.28. This work will henceforth be cited parenthetically as *DL*, followed by book and chapter number.

II. THE PROBLEM: ACQUISITIVE MEN AND LIMITED INSTITUTIONS

In *The Prince*, Machiavelli observes that “it is a very natural and ordinary thing to desire to acquire,” adding that the few desire to oppress and the many to escape oppression.³ But a careful reading of *The Prince* and the *Discourses*⁴ shows that the distinction is secondary to the fundamental fact that everyone, whether high or low, seeks to take what they can and is restrained only by inaccessibility. Humans break faith when it benefits them, and they offer promises of faith to gain favor (*P* 17). In *Discourses* I.15, titled “Where the Guard of Freedom May Be Settled More Securely, in the People or in the Great; and Which Has Greater Cause for Tumult, He Who Wishes to Acquire or He Who Wishes to Maintain,” Machiavelli claims that the many possess a “greater will to live free, being less able to hope to usurp” political power than the *grandi*.

For Machiavelli, then, men acquire when able, and if the plebeians’ circumstances alter, they become as dominating as the great.⁵ Citing the Roman plebeians’ desire to increase their power after the tribune’s establishment, Zuckert observes that the humors are not dichotomous, but rather points on a spectrum. When people feel insecure in their persons and future, they are satisfied in seeking their own security without oppressing others. When people are more secure, they desire more of both material goods and political honors.⁶

The increase in quality of life leads to greater rather than fewer demands in the many, and their desire to acquire morphs from a longing to escape oppression to a hunger for recognition, and later, domination. Possessing the same drive to acquire as the few, the many often ally with someone they believe will avenge slights against them. When the people’s acquisitiveness

³ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), chaps. 3 and 9. Henceforth cited parenthetically as *P*, followed by chapter number. Also see *DL*, I.5.

⁴ Interpreters who read *The Prince* and *Discourses* as relatively unified in intention include Erica Ben-ner, *Machiavelli’s Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Isaiah Berlin, “The Originality of Machiavelli,” in *Against the Current*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013); Mary G. Deitz, “Trapping the Prince: Machiavelli and the Politics of Deception,” *American Political Science Review* 80, no. 3 (1986): 777–99; John Langton and Mary G. Deitz, “Machiavelli’s Paradox: Trapping or Teaching the Prince,” *American Political Science Review* 81, no. 4 (1987): 1277–88; Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*; John T. Scott and Vickie B. Sullivan, “Patricide and the Plot of *The Prince*: Cesare Borgia and Machiavelli’s Italy,” *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 4 (1994): 887–900; Catherine Zuckert, *Machiavelli’s Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

⁵ See John P. McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) for an alternative.

⁶ Catherine Zuckert, *Machiavelli’s Politics*, 160.

meets one man’s ambition, the results are destructive of whatever “common benefit” exists in a republic. Such is the lesson Machiavelli finds in Decimvir Appius Claudius, from whom he learns that an easy path to tyranny is the giving of honor and power to a man who the people think will punish those they hate (*DL*, I.40). Similarly, though the few appear to possess security and are more emboldened by their well-being, their behavior is driven by a motive similar to that of the many. Though secure, they foresee a time they might not be. Understanding that the political universe is one of contingency, those who oppress should know they could soon be oppressed and therefore should cultivate every means of acquisition possible.⁷

Machiavellian politics appears, then, to be bound in a cycle of mutual cannibalization. However, Machiavelli’s vision is complete if the secure and insecure act to increase their stability in their own modes.⁸ The productive tumults of the Machiavellian republic are the “first cause of keeping Rome free” (*DL*, I.4). Machiavelli will not undertake the impossible task of constructing a politics that tries to re-educate those passions, or to change the citizen’s interior focus from the private good to the common good.⁹ Tumults and accusations are the healthy path for a republic; calumnies and sects destroy a free way of life and rely on modes of acquisition existing outside the institutions constructed by the city for healthy competition (*DL*, I.4 and I.8). Instead of seeking harmony, Machiavelli welcomes the conflict between the great and the many as the source of sound law, if the architects of the city have the wisdom to build the dikes and dams to harness self-interest in a fashion that avoids sectarian violence.

It is in the light of this that we come to Leo Strauss’s claim that Machiavelli is a “teacher of evil” and “lowerer of the sights” for politics, a man “immoral and irreligious.”¹⁰ Ambition having been unleashed by the embrace of selfishness, competitive elections are one way of restraining the ambition of men, because then competition occurs through valid institutional means, offsetting the threat of the tyrant who puts himself forward to rule without contestation (*DL*, I.46). Additionally, in *Discourses* I.49 Machiavelli suggests “reforms and

⁷ Markus Fischer, “Machiavelli’s Political Psychology,” *Review of Politics* 59, no. 4 (1997): 814.

⁸ Vickie Sullivan, *Machiavelli, Hobbes and the Formation of a Liberal Republicanism in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 11. Zuckert, *Machiavelli’s Politics*, 239, suggests that the many and the great are most fundamentally motivated by property (not honor, eros, or nobility).

⁹ Sullivan, *Machiavelli, Hobbes*, 11.

¹⁰ Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, 11–12.

popular trials” are the remedy to the failure of the Roman censors.¹¹ The institutions of competitive elections and popular trials are meant to prevent and frustrate the attempt by the ambitious to turn people into partisans through private favors like loans, intermarriages, and personal recommendations.¹²

While Machiavellian institutions harness men’s ambition, they are limited in their ability to curb ambition that exceeds its mark. The careful balance of plebian and noble ambition characterizing tumults is disturbed by a skilled man who bypasses institutions, or by imprudent legal or electoral procedures. What is needed, then, are both productive tumults and the submission of the ambitious to appropriate political forms. What the republic requires is not “one prince who governs prudently while he lives,” but an “individual who orders it so that it is also maintained when he dies” (*DL*, I.11). In order to do this well, I will argue, one needs a founder who does not seek to be a partisan, but who founds for the common benefit by creating institutions that will live beyond his memory. As we shall see, doing this necessarily means that the institutions must not be dependent upon his memory to continue.

Clearly, a statesman’s personal restraint can be externally enforced through the wise construction of dikes and dams comprising Machiavellian virtue (*P* 25). Self-interest can moderate the impulses of a potential tyrant, as Machiavelli learns from Aristotle’s *Politics* and Xenophon’s *Hiero*.¹³ We see an echo of this in Machiavelli’s admonition “to not be deceived by the glory of Caesar,” but Machiavelli adds lamely as justification that the glory of Caesar is false because historians were compelled to lie about him (*DL*, I.10). Indeed, human glory poses a fundamental problem for Machiavelli: “Some great historical figures receive more glory than they merit while others receive glory that they do not deserve at all.”¹⁴ Machiavelli tells potential rulers to resist Caesar’s temptation, but Caesar’s name and deeds are so splendid that in order for ambition to create tumults instead of factions, Machiavelli must train the heart of the acquisitive virtuous man to resist the long fame that accompanies the name of Rome’s destroyer. He needs men to desire to follow

¹¹ Zuckert, *Machiavelli’s Politics*, 166–68.

¹² Erica Benner, *Machiavelli’s Ethics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 379.

¹³ For Machiavelli’s connection to these thinkers, see Benner, *Machiavelli’s Ethics*; Giovanni Giorgini, “The Place of the Tyrant in Machiavelli’s Political Thought and the Literary Genre of *The Prince*,” *History of Political Thought* 29, no. 2 (2008): 230–56; and W. R. Newell, “Machiavelli and Xenophon on Princely Rule: A Double-Edged Encounter,” *Journal of Politics* 50, no. 1 (1988): 108–30.

¹⁴ Russell Price, “The Theme of *Gloria* in Machiavelli,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 30, no. 4 (1977): 594.

the path of Junius Brutus, whose name possesses less glory, but who is the “father of Roman liberty” (*DL*, III.1).

Another problem emerges when contemplating self-interest and the Machiavellian ruler. While one problem facing Machiavelli’s theory of leadership is the problem of the great man who understands his self-interest to lie along Caesar’s path, a great man might also see the risks of political life and decide that abstaining from politics is in his interest. Describing the political community’s ingratitude, with which Machiavelli himself is intimately acquainted, it is unclear why someone of quality would see the political as a place to acquire what they seek. In the twenty-sixth chapter of the first book of the *Discourses*, entitled “A New Prince Should Make Everything New in a City or Province Taken by Him,” Machiavelli suggests that the moral cost of founding is high. This view is in line with his advice in *The Prince*, where Machiavelli observes that it is necessary to exterminate a prince’s line when acquiring a principality (*P* 4). Machiavelli writes: “These modes are very cruel, and enemies to every way of life, not only Christian but human.... Any man whatever should flee them and wish to live in private rather than as king with so much ruin to men” (*DL*, I.26). If one wants to acquire securely, perhaps the most reasonable thing is to take what one can and retire from public life, avoiding the cruelty Machiavelli describes. But Machiavelli claims it is impossible for a qualified person to abstain from politics, nor is it ultimately in his self-interest to withdraw from the public life: “Nor is it enough to say ‘I do not care for anything...I wish to live quietly and without quarrel!’ For these excuses are heard and not accepted; nor can men who have quality choose to abstain even when they choose it truly and without any ambition, because it is not believed of them; so if they wish to abstain, they are not allowed by others to abstain” (*DL*, III.2).

And so we turn to the unusual Junius Brutus, whom Machiavelli depicts both as resisting Caesar’s glory and refraining from a retreat to the private life, even after his brother is killed by the Tarquins because of his virtue and family name.¹⁵ If Machiavelli must hope for a Brutus, how does a politics of acquisition suffice for him? Let us first turn to the subject of humility in order to understand.

¹⁵ Livy, *History of Rome* (New York: Dutton, 1912), 1.56.

III. HUMILITY CHRISTIAN AND MACHIAVELLIAN

Machiavelli's radical acceptance of self-interest appears little indebted to Christian humility. However, Pierre Manent reminds us that modernity is deeply touched by the memory of Christianity. Modern politics confronted a crisis of sorts, because there were "too many cities"—too many accounts of the natural order and politics to choose between and none with sufficient evidence for them. The modern thinkers, among them Machiavelli, created a political order that formed the source of stability for men and women, because nature itself was in disorder. In this sense, Machiavelli by necessity must focus on the concept of founding, because he must create an imitation of one, an imposition of force onto chaos, for which nature itself does not provide resources.¹⁶ Like Manent, I argue that this imitation of founding is indebted to the Christian city, among other cities. In particular I suggest a transformed conception of humility. To more clearly illuminate Machiavellian humility, some Thomistic insights will be helpful in showing Machiavelli's appropriation of this Christian virtue.

Machiavelli is obviously critical of Christian humility, claiming that it is not only ineffective, but vicious and politically destructive, because it "not only does not help but hurts, especially used with insolent men who, either by envy or by another cause, have conceived hatred for you" (*DL*, II.4). In *Discourses* II.2, he eviscerates the virtue of humility for teaching men that if "you have strength in yourself" it is a strength that "wishes you to be capable more of suffering than of doing something strong." Christian heroes are passive men who place the "highest good in humility, abjectness, and contempt of things human," and while saints like Dominic and Francis turn the other cheek, evil, prideful men conduct politics for the sake of their own benefit, "seeing that the collectivity of men, so as to go to paradise, think more of enduring their beatings than of avenging them." The Catholic Mass, elegant yet milquetoast, reinforces the passivity of humility in its participants, while the Romans' ferocious, active sacrifices once "rendered men similar" to their magnificent terribleness.

In a direct challenge to Christian heroes and sacrifices, Machiavelli deliberately subverts one of Christainity's greatest prayers of humility—the Magnificat, where Mary expresses her lowliness and dependency on a powerful God—by using a significant phrase of the text not as a praise for the Christian God who loves the humble Mary, but as a praise for the ferocious

¹⁶ Pierre Manent, *Metamorphoses of the City* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 153.

founder King David, “who filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty” (*DL*, I.26). Elsewhere, he critiques gonfalonier Pierro Soderini for his unwavering commitment to humility, since it had the result “that he together with his fatherland was ruined” (*DL*, III.9). Soderini, believing that he should be humble and not take on a prideful and law-breaking title for life, left himself and his country vulnerable to vicious men who, unlike Soderini, possessed no qualms about ruling for their own gratification.

Yet in the beginning of the devastating critique of the passivity of Christian humility in *Discourses* II.2, Machiavelli consciously brings up a positive example of restraining one’s private claim to power for the sake of the common benefit. Republican cities thrive because they are ruled by the common good rather than the private good. When the former is prioritized, particular private individuals may suffer but the majority of citizens flourish. By contrast, a princely ruler who seeks his own interest normally offends the interests of the city because “what suits him usually offends the city and what suits the city usually offends him.” In this context, Machiavelli writes, a spirited and armed “virtuous tyrant” can arise and work for his private good with a “result of no utility to the republic.” The tyrant suspects any other men of virtue because he cannot co-opt them into his attempts to secure his private good. Similarly, he makes subject cities weak through law and taxation because a strong city does not serve his private good. Rather, “it does suit him to keep the state disunited and have each town and each province acknowledge him. So he alone, and not his fatherland, profits from his acquisitions.”¹⁷

Skinner and Pettit find in the *Discourses* proof of Machiavelli’s commitment to nondomination, to the freedom of the citizen from the imposition of arbitrary rule.¹⁸ For Skinner, the *Discourses* establishes that “the body politic

¹⁷ *DL*, II.2. Importantly, Machiavelli turns for support here to an ancient text, Xenophon’s *On Tyranny*. Notably, in *On Tyranny*, the author attempts to move a tyrant away from hubris and *pleonexia* toward being able to regard citizen interests when also thinking of his own.

¹⁸ For more on Machiavelli as a theorist of nondomination, see the following: Philip Pettit, “The Republican Ideal of Political Liberty,” in *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, ed. Quentin Skinner, Maurizio Viroli, and Gisela Bock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Philip Pettit, *A Theory of Freedom: From the Psychology to the Politics of Agency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republic Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Quentin A. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 1, *The Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Quentin A. Skinner, “Machiavelli and the Maintenance of Liberty,” *Australian Journal of Political Science* 18, no. 2 (1983); Quentin A. Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Quentin A. Skinner, “Machiavelli’s *Discorsi* and the Pre-Humanist Origins of Republican Ideas,” in Skinner, Viroli, and Bock, *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, 121–41; Quentin

in question enjoys the capacity to act in pursuit of its own chosen ends, its actions being ‘under the control of its own will’ and in consequence directed to seeking the benefit of its members as a whole.... The life of liberty is a life not lived in subjection to the will of anyone else.”¹⁹ Republican communities are this way, Pettit suggests, because the people’s love of freedom comes from a desire to be left alone, and not a desire to dominate.²⁰ For Skinner, institutions play an important role in restraining the elites who compete in a republican system by restraining them from seeking a kind of liberty that leads to domination. Learning from Rome, Machiavelli tries to turn our inborn tendencies to corruption into productive virtues for the sake of the common good, yet if our ambition and leisure make this too difficult, wise institutions must limit these effects.²¹ Law’s coercive power, on Skinner’s interpretation of Machiavelli, not only forces people to mind one another’s freedom. It is also a tool to transform our nature, to make us less selfish and to genuinely invest us in the public interest, forcing us to be free.²²

Skinner’s and Pettit’s interpretations certainly note important resonances between the idea of liberty as nondomination and the idea of a republic’s privileging of the common good over the private good, but there are reasons to think that Machiavelli’s republicanism does not emerge out of a commitment to noninterference. There are several reasons why. For one, this sanitizes the violence and brutal domination of much of Machiavelli’s advice in the *Discourses*. Machiavelli’s heroic republican founders sacrifice the lives of their family members (Romulus and Brutus). His wise statesman is prepared to counter the problem of envy not only through productive checks and balances of ambition challenging ambition, but even through death, for “to conquer this envy, there is no remedy other than the death of those who have it” (*DL*, III.30). In fact the phrase “kill the sons of Brutus” comes to represent the need to act violently against freedom’s enemies, even when, as we see in *Discourses* III.I, the violence against those enemies may result from the manufacturing of a false accusation. Here Machiavelli offers the allegations against the Scipios as an example of the public accusations that keep the population from corruption, citing Livy’s text. But when one turns to Livy’s

A. Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, vol. 2, *Renaissance Virtues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

¹⁹ Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*, 150–51.

²⁰ Pettit, *A Theory of Freedom*, 28.

²¹ Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 2:165.

²² *Ibid.*, 177–78.

text, it is clear that the accusation stemmed from envy and stood “more on grounds of suspicion than by direct proof.”²³

Even more problematically for Skinner and Pettit, as I argued earlier, man’s fundamental desire to acquire does not permit us to conclude that republics are better because the men ruling in them are less selfish because they come from the “many.” The process of transforming men into characters committed to the public good from motivations of their own heart appears to be another pipe dream from imaginary republics, a sure way to ruin among so many who will never learn to be good and an impossibility in light of human nature (*P* 15). Men are “ungrateful, fickle, pretenders and dissemblers, evaders of danger, eager for gain,” and love is not a sound foundation for politics (*P* 17). The freedom of republics comes from the disunion of the great and the many who, mutually driven by a desire to acquire, produce laws in accord with public freedom through institutionalized conflict (*DL*, I.4).

Textually, this is the transmutation that occurs: the alchemy of tumults into freedom for the two acquisition-driven humors, not the remaking of man’s nature into something freed from a desire to acquire. It seems better to theorize that while Machiavelli understands the persistence of the drive to acquire, he looks for statesmen whose acquisition can be guided by the healthy institutional structures referred to by Pettit and Skinner: men who found for the common benefit apply the law equally to citizens of every status, and submit to institutions of checks and balances meant to stymie overwhelming ambition, such as the institution of public accusations discussed in *Discourses* III.1.

Yet even Machiavelli’s theory of guiding the passion of acquisition through institutions that check the pursuit of the private good over the common good relies in part on a noble impulse of the statesman to sacrifice the chance to use his office to maximize his private good and jettison the checks that restrain him, and to instead put himself under the institutions that benefit everyone. Skinner and Pettit are right to suggest that such an impulse is in play here, but wrong to identify it as a product of the Machiavelian institutions themselves or a product of the general love of freedom of the many. Instead we find an odd and perhaps inconsistent resonance with Christianity, summed up best perhaps by Augustine, that purveyor of pitiful Christian sacrifices: the true act of sacrifice connects the humble spirit,

²³ Livy, *History of Rome* 38.51.

which acknowledges its limitations, to acts of clemency toward others.²⁴ The textual question is how this virtue comes into being for Machiavelli, given our fundamental drive to acquire, or what Augustine or Aquinas might call our sinfulness.

It is this echo or residue of the Christian tradition that forms the kernel of my insight. Machiavelli appropriates the Christian virtue of humility, a virtue that is not present in pagan Roman accounts of heroism, and secularizes it.²⁵ Though famously a critic of the virtue, and certainly one who does not continue the Chirsitan tradition's insights, in the *Discourses* Machiavelli presents us with a secularized version of the virtue "where the focus on talent rather than heredity, the preferential treatment of the poor, and the committing of violent deeds for the common good become expressions of humility reconceived as humanity."²⁶

All this becomes clearer by a turn to the Christian tradition and to Aquinas particularly. Most obviously, for Aquinas, humility is an important part of statesmanship because it allows the talented man to desire the common good. Humility "inclines the magnanimous person to take a serious interest in the welfare of all others, including the poor, the disadvantaged, and the apparently unexceptional."²⁷ Yet more than that, in *Summa Theologica* II-II, 162, 5, humility in particular makes our appetites yield to reason,²⁸ which reveals the goodness of God's created world, providing confidence in providence and in the divine omnipotence and omniscience.²⁹ Without humility, Aquinas claims, we may have difficulty controlling any desire "aiming at great things against right reason."³⁰ Humility, it turns out, helps us to understand the cosmological order, and consequently what human excellence means in the context of that order and our own personal capacities.

The picture is deepened by the fact that for Aquinas, magnanimity and humility are two sides of the same coin—they are *duplex virtus*. Magnanimity

²⁴ Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 10.3.

²⁵ Ashleen Menchaca-Bagnulo, "Humility and Humanity: Machiavelli's Rejection and Appropriation of a Christian Ideal," *European Journal of Political Theory* 17, no. 2 (2018): 131–51.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 132.

²⁷ Mary Keys, "Aquinas and Aristotelian Magnanimity," *History of Political Thought* 24, no. 1 (2003): 50.

²⁸ Mary Keys, "Humility and Greatness of Soul," *Perspectives on Political Science* 37, no. 4 (2008): 218–19.

²⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics, 1981), I-II, 22, 2.

³⁰ *ST* II-II, 161, 1.

emboldens men to dare to do what is great and difficult, in accord with the precepts of right reason. Similarly, humility calms the kind of pride that motivates a man capable of great and difficult things when they only seem to be honorable and outstanding but are not in truth.³¹

Though intimately related, the virtues of humility and magnanimity are distinct, the former falling under the cardinal virtue of temperance or moderation, for Aquinas, while the latter is related to fortitude.³² The political community requires that the best among us have a sense of our own capacities and aspire to great things for the sake of the common good, and magnanimity—granted clear sight by its sister, humility—is the virtue that enables a great man to perform great deeds without devouring his political community by aiming to make himself master of it. “Magnanimity, then is not the sheer and unregulated desire to do great things, or even to do morally great things, but one of a set of virtues which enable the mind to resist both pride and despair in the face of both the intense desire to do heroically virtuous deeds and the anxiety of failure.”³³

Two exemplars of the *duplex virtus* are particularly relevant for Machiavellian conceptions of glory: Cicero and Moses. In Aquinas’s reflections on Cicero in *Summa Theologica* II-II, Q. 128, Art. 1, 2, Aquinas agrees with Cicero that magnanimity allows the statesman to “hope in himself” but adds that he does so “under God.”³⁴ Similarly, Moses, one of Machiavelli’s favorite founders, and an example in the *Discourses* of the Founder who, like Romulus, must inflict terrible loss on the community to found well, is described in the Bible as “the humblest man on earth” in the book of Numbers.³⁵ Aquinas lists several ways Moses founded a regime based on cultivating humility in the king by guarding against common “temptations to tyranny.” Kries cites the *Summa* to emphasize Thomas’s analysis of the Mosaic king: “Thomas especially emphasizes that the precepts protected the character of the king by keeping him in something of an impoverished condition.... Furthermore, Thomas points out that the judicial precepts protected the character of the king by stipulating that he was to read and meditate on the Mosaic

³¹ Mary Keys, “Statesmanship, Humility, and Happiness: Reflections on Robert Faulkner’s *The Case for Greatness*,” *Perspectives on Political Science* 39, no. 4 (2010): 194–95.

³² J. Budziszewski, *Commentary on Thomas Aquinas’s Virtue Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 44; 63.

³³ *Ibid.*, 56.

³⁴ Cited in *ibid.*

³⁵ Numbers 12:3, cited in Keys, “Statesmanship, Humility, and Happiness,” 194–95.

law continually, and that he was to fear and obey God”—a fear and obedience that in the Hebraic tradition stems from a keen sense of the differences between man and God. Through awe-filled fear of God, man inclines toward obedience; the beginning of wisdom is the recognition of his superiority.³⁶

Finally, for Aquinas humility helps us to discover an ethical theory characterized by a unity of the virtues, crowned by the virtue of charity, the mother of the virtues.³⁷ We also rationally know that “every one of the hairs” on our head has been counted.³⁸ Rather than wisdom discovering the disappointment of imagined republics and the good’s unreliable nature, humility’s light shows that the ethical life is characterized by a unity of the virtues ordered to a final end that is for our true good as a species, and as individuals.

It is true, of course, that in Machiavelli’s account, Moses does not differ from the other three (pagan) founders cited in the sixth chapter of *The Prince*, or, in other words, that Moses, like them, invented God, and succeeded in his prophecy by dint of arms, not by dint of providence. In the Machiavellian universe, confidence in providence is delusional and a result not of reason, but of a hubristic hope that we might be loved by a God who provides for us. Virtù, that overcomer of fortune, takes the place of Christianity’s conception of the divine’s caring providence.³⁹ Instead of relying on a God who protects him, the man of virtù protects himself in response to the fact that we are alone in the world, and does not give in to a weakness for the allure of a God who made the universe intelligible. At the same time that giving in to this allure is a form of weakness, as Machiavelli points out in chapter 6 of *The Prince*, it is also a form of pridefulness. In *Discourses II.27*, Machiavelli claims that the prudent prince or republic is content to conquer, and searches for neither more nor less because in order to succeed men must put “limits on their hopes” by “measuring themselves.” The imagined republics composed by the ancients and medievals must be rejected for the truth that “all things of men are in motion and cannot stay steady, they must either rise or fall” (*DL*, I.6). In this atmosphere of instability and unreliable provision, the common

³⁶ *STI-II*, Q. 105, Art. 1, ad. 2, cited in Douglas Kries, “Thomas Aquinas and the Politics of Moses,” *Review of Politics* 52, no. 1 (1990): 93.

³⁷ *STII-II* 23, 7, 8.

³⁸ *STI-II*, 22, 2.

³⁹ Thomas Flanagan, “Machiavelli and History: A Note on the Proemium to *Discourses II*,” *Renaissance and Reformation* 8, no. 2 (1971): 80.

good is the thing by which he judges human actions. Yet Machiavelli’s understanding of humility, while very different from Aquinas’s account, entails a similar explanation of the relationship between the virtue and the ability to view the world clearly and model ethical behavior on what reason tells us about the world. To depart from the hope Christianity offers for the possibilities of immortality, human morality, social order, and human knowledge requires a type of sobriety that allows one to abandon this vision for something less beautiful but perhaps truer. Consequently, Machiavelli embraces human limitations, describing “goodness and wickedness in terms of self-imposed ‘limits’ (usually termini) or lack thereof. What he calls ‘evil’ results from serious and avoidable failures of human self-regulation: a failure ...to set necessary limits on one’s actions.”⁴⁰

Therefore, Machiavellian humility, like Thomistic humility, is a species of moderation. For Machiavelli, however, the “humility” required in his founder is directed by the insight that “imagined republics and principalities” must be abandoned for an assessment of what is effectually true, especially because the virtues of imaginary regimes lead to ruin. Clear-sightedness is one of the signature traits of the humble soul, and for Machiavelli, it allows men to train their energies on the political, rather than the transcendent. It also helps men to realize that the unity of the virtuous life is not one that human conditions permit (*P* 15). Furthermore, Machiavelli himself is willing to rise to a prince’s perspective and to lower himself to the perspective of the people, a fluidity of vantage points requiring the humility of understanding and identifying with the interests of persons different from oneself (*DL*, Dedicatory Letter; *P*, Dedicatory Letter). Finally, Machiavellian humility helps virtuous men regulate their natural desire to acquire. If acquisitiveness is our most fundamental disposition, it is something that the Machiavellian founder/refounder must move beyond. Even if he eventually achieves earthly glory through new modes and orders, it is not clear that he will receive adulation in his lifetime. After all, Moses did not see the promised land, and Machiavelli, the unwanted advisor, saw little success in his lifetime. A founder’s path appears filled with sacrifices for the common good when one considers the material and psychological costs of founding in the public-spirited manner of Junius Brutus rather than the “private” manner of Caesar (*DL*, III.3, I.10, I.37).

⁴⁰ Benner, *Machiavelli’s Ethics*, 196.

IV. THE PRIDE OF LOVING AND BEING LOVED

Ultimately, Machiavellian humility requires that the man of virtue move away from particularly dangerous modes of the desire to acquire. What are these modes? Machiavelli views two human fantasies as particularly destructive to politics: the hope to be loved for one's own sake and the desire to be obeyed or emulated simply because of one's importance and virtue. The first pathology is remedied by a recognition that no human is lovable enough to escape men's fickleness, the second by a recognition that no human has a right to remake the world in his own image. We first turn to the former.

Machiavelli wants his ruler, particularly his founder, to understand that he cannot expect that people should love him. Sullivan reminds us that the problem Machiavelli repeatedly returns to in the *Discourses* is "the problem of Caesar's ascendancy,"⁴¹ for if a man can create partisans, his rule can be extended for an indefinite period of time. In fact, this problem of partisan devotion is perhaps best embodied by Christ, whose virtues allowed him to found an order lasting more than two thousand years, with multiple renewals.⁴²

Machiavelli's leader, though he possesses great virtues, must relax his confidence in his own lovability and regard the natural self-love of his subjects, and to accommodate his policies to his subjects' self-love. This advice is given in the context of several different political relationships throughout *The Prince*—the relationship between the prince and the great (*P* 7), the relationship between the prince and the people (*P* 9–10), the relationship between the prince and auxiliaries/mercenaries (*P* 12–13), and the relationship between the prince and his advisors (*P* 22–23).

In all these relationships, Machiavelli demonstrates that the love others profess is nothing more than a "chain of obligation, which, because men are wicked, is broken at every opportunity for their own utility," while also demonstrating the need to be guided by the insight that the happy identification of citizens' well-being with the prince's reign is the road to reliable interactions (*P* 17, 19).

An examination of a ruler's most primary political relationship reveals the structure of Machiavellian humility. With regard to the people, in moments of plenty and security "everyone runs, everyone promises, and each wants to

⁴¹ Vickie B. Sullivan, *Machiavelli's Three Romes: Religion, Human Liberty, and Politics Reformed* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996), 164.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 153.

die for” the prince. In harder times, these lovers are absent, because the love of the prince is not enough. “And so a wise prince must think of a way by which citizens, always and in every quality of time, have need of the state and of himself; and then they will always be faithful to him” (P 17). This is particularly true in that, while men flock to the obviously virtuous citizen and become his loving partisans, the appearance of great virtù in another citizen just as easily leads to hatred and jealousy, “because the reputation their virtue has given these individuals has aroused the envy of many citizens who wish to be seen not merely as equal but superior to the great.”⁴³

Lowering oneself to accept that citizens are motivated by interest rather than the affection inspired by one’s many virtues applies to the prince’s relationship with advisors as well. At first, it seems that Machiavelli argues that a prince can expect an advisor to love him and to think of him only: “When you see a minister thinking more of himself than of you, and in all actions looking for something useful to himself, one so made will never be a good minister...because he who has someone’s state in his hands should never think of himself but always of the prince” (P 22, emphasis added). However, we soon learn that a prudent prince “thinks of the minister so as to keep him good” with honor, riches, and the obligation of shared responsibilities, so that the advisor begins to realize that “he cannot stand without the prince.” Similarly, with a flatterer (one must wonder if for Machiavelli all that profess their love are simply flatterers), the prince must be able to see through the promises of devotion to realize that “men will always turn out bad for you unless they are made good by necessity” (P 23).

Consequently, the virtuous man must recognize the limitations of the claims his virtue places on others’ hearts, accepting instead that it is fitting for the high and low to think of themselves first. Not only should the prince accept this reality, but he should craft his policy around the insight that his true political interest overlaps with the demonstrable interest of the citizens. Appropriately understood, the flourishing of the prince is curtailed by what it takes for the subjects to also enjoy some modicum of fulfilled self-interest.

By way of contrast, a man of virtue could, like Caesar, demand that his virtues be met with citizens’ love and adulation. He could also cultivate dependency in a section of society, a strategy placing him at the head of a powerful political force that rejects the necessary self-interest of all of his subjects in order to found on the love of partisans. When Caesar made himself

⁴³ Zuckert, *Machiavelli’s Politics*, 277.

the plebian savior by making promises against senatorial orders, the tyrannical impulse to be loved threatened what was left of Rome's republican order. Caesar succumbed to a human temptation humility might have inoculated him against: he permitted his desire for love and praise to blind him to what good rule required of him—the recognition of the natural self-interest of all Rome's subjects, and the necessary conflict between its orders. He could have sought reform; instead he became “the first tyrant in Rome such that never again was that city set free” (*DL*, I.37).

Against Caesar's example, the founder of Rome's republic, Junius Brutus, did not seek fanatical love. In fact, he disguised his immense virtue, enduring derision and humiliation, until the right moment to rise against Tarquin. Brutus is the most unreservedly praised of Machiavelli's Romans, and Caesar's foil. “There was never anyone so prudent nor esteemed so wise for any eminent work of his than Junius Brutus deserves to be held in his emulation of stupidity.”⁴⁴ Emulating stupidity, to a man as intelligent and as proud of his intellect as Machiavelli, must require tremendous strength of character, even if it is for the sake of another good.

What is this other good? It is unclear if there is one. In Brutus, the reader truly begins to see the tremendous amount of nuance in Machiavelli's account of human motivation. While Livy attributes Brutus's feigned idiocy solely to the desire for survival,⁴⁵ Machiavelli maintains that when one considers the hero's “mode of proceeding...it can be believed that he also simulated this to be less observed to have more occasion for crushing the kings and freeing his own fatherland whenever opportunity be given him” (*DL*, III.2). As evidence, Machiavelli cites Brutus's sacrifice to Apollo under the cover of stupidity at Delphi, and his proximity to Lucretia at the time of her death. This proximity gave Brutus the long-desired opportunity to throw off the cloak of idiocy and free his people. To those who would say this is merely an example of

⁴⁴ *DL*, III.2. Pangle and Burns, however, suggest that pride and not humility lies behind Machiavelli's characterization of Brutus's embrace of stupidity. “Or could the prince Machiavelli is thinking of, above all, be a prince from whom it is believed impossible to hide, even in one's thoughts (*pensieri suoi*)? Could the prince whom Machiavelli has in mind, above all, be the biblical God? (Cf. 1.26: God is the example of the tyrant-prince.) Does Machiavelli in his Brutus present the avatar of a new human ‘prince’ whose philosophic longing for security for his private life of thinking and friendship requires him to ‘play the madman’ in eventually becoming (or inspiring) the essential overthrower of the threat posed by the apparent rule of the old purported prince who is believed to be the all-seeing biblical God?” See Thomas L. Pangle and Timothy W. Burns, *The Key Texts of Political Philosophy: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 190–95.

⁴⁵ Livy, *History* 1.56.

self-restraint for the sake of self-interest,⁴⁶ Machiavelli points out another aspect of Brutus’s humility by suggesting again that humility is not shown by proudly staying out of the public eye (*DL*, III.2). The needs of the community are constantly visible, and citizens will continually turn to whoever they believe can deliver them. So, the “common benefit of all” influences Brutus, at least in part. He certainly enjoys the benefit of survival, but survival alone cannot explain what Brutus risks by overthrowing the Tarquins. He gains the benefit of honor, but he endures dishonor for the sake of a hope that might never materialize.

Not only does Brutus give up the desire to be loved for the common benefit, but he gives up the ability to “love” what is most dear to him. To be a good political actor, and especially a founder, one must not only moderate one’s aspiration to admiration, but also give up a most natural and intimate love, the love of one’s own—in Brutus’s case, the love of his sons, and by extension, the love of his lineage.

Though men cannot be educated into forgetting their self-interest, prudence dictates the construction of institutions meant to moderate the destructive aspects of the drive for acquisition. One example of political prudence is the “sacrifice for the common good” required of those who desire to be elected. But because men are fundamentally acquisitive, the practice of self-sacrifice by the *grandi* is compelled by public accusations and jury trials “so that the people remain confident that individuals in high office have to obey the law or suffer punishment just the way the people do.”⁴⁷ Of the surviving Horatius brother, the hero who saved Rome from Alba yet killed his sister for mourning her slain Alban fiancé, Machiavelli says that he was rightly forced to submit to a trial, yet was freed in order to please his father rather than because of the claims of justice. Young Horatius’s freedom from accusation is corrupting, because “in a well-ordered city, faults are never paid for with merits” and “policies are never wise if one should or can doubt their observance” (*DL*, I.22). The elder Horatius, who lost his daughter in a homicide and two sons in the Alban war, should have submitted his only remaining child to the laws of Rome instead of interceding for him.

Though Mansfield argues, similarly to Zuckert, that killing the sons of Brutus represents “engag[ing] in acts of violence that make [legal or

⁴⁶ Augustine, *City of God* 2.17.

⁴⁷ Zuckert, *Machiavelli’s Politics*, 169.

extralegal] examples out of the enemies of freedom,”⁴⁸ this particular public expression of sacrifice for the common good primarily exemplifies the capacity to submit to the political community, even if it means killing what one most naturally loves.⁴⁹ This prevents the growth of partisanship by putting one at the head of a free party rather than a sect filled with devotees seeking special favor. What the “killing of the sons of Brutus” demonstrates is that leaders must not seek to escape the restraints and expectations that they use to rule their citizens.⁵⁰ But what makes such sacrifices worthwhile for the individual? If acting in such a way is so easy for the acquisitive man, why is killing the sons of Brutus so hard for Horatius’s father or for the gonfalonier Pierro Soderini, who “believed he would overcome with his patience and goodness the appetite that was in the sons of Brutus for returning to another government, and who deceived himself” (*DL*, III.3)?

Although men forget the loss of a father more quickly than the loss of a patrimony (*P* 17), Machiavelli remarks on the virtue of those who are able to forget their children. One famous example is that of Katerina Sforza, who dramatically proves to her captors that she is not influenced by their threats to harm her young children if she fails to return to captivity.⁵¹ For our purposes, a more important example of killing one’s most natural loves is the execution of the sons of Junius Brutus at the republic’s founding. Of this execution, Machiavelli writes, tongue in cheek: “It is an example rare in all memory of things to see the father sit on the tribunals and not only condemn his sons to death but be present at their death” (*DL*, III.3). (Machiavelli knows this is not an example that is rare in all of history; it is an example that predominantly shapes his Christian society.) While Brutus may receive glory as the founder and executor of the orders, he must restrain himself from seeking the greater glory that comes with tyranny, and being the head of a sect. It is unclear, studying the life of Brutus, whether he was rewarded with much glory, much satisfaction. Instead, he killed his sons, and soon died on the battlefield. Not even Caesar could “kill the sons of Brutus.” Caesar failed to kill the beloved assassin Brutus, who represents for Caesarian politics

⁴⁸ Harvey Mansfield, introduction to *Machiavelli’s Discourses on Livy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1996), xxiv; Zuckert, *Machiavelli’s Politics*, 221.

⁴⁹ These positions are compatible.

⁵⁰ Zuckert, *Machiavelli’s Politics*, 211.

⁵¹ *DL*, III.6; Machiavelli, *Florentine Histories*, VIII.34. Zuckert reminds us that “Caterina did not succeed in securing her rule by sacrificing her children the way Brutus did, because she and her husband were so hated by the people” (*Machiavelli’s Politics*, 219).

“senatorial ascendance,” yet we still remember him as master of virtue.⁵² But while Caesar destroys Rome, Junius Brutus orders it.

V. THE PRIDE OF REMAKING POLITICS IN ONE’S IMAGE

Killing the sons of Brutus might be worthwhile for the sake of eternal memory, and this is where we turn to the final face of Machiavellian humility—the submission to institutions as opposed to the desire to create a politics of one’s own image.⁵³ This is a two-part process; one must found collaboratively, and then one must submit to what one founds.

A. FOUNDING COLLABORATIVELY

It is incorrect to call the Machiavellian founder “altruistic” in the sense that he founds for the end of the rule of princes.⁵⁴ It is also important to understand the tempting portrait Machiavelli draws of founding in *Discourses* I.9 and I.10: “If a prince seeks the glory of the world, he ought to desire to possess a corrupt city—not to spoil it entirely as did Caesar but to reorder it as did Romulus. And truly the heavens cannot give to men a greater opportunity for glory, nor can men desire any greater.” Those who “squander” the opportunity to found by practicing poor politics are among the “infamous and detestable”; “enemies of the virtues, of letters, and of every other art that brings utility and honor to the human race.” Not only is the successful founder guaranteed eternal honor; the failing founder deserves “sempiternal infamy” for his destruction of everything humanly good and useful. Though it is true that Machiavelli’s account of founding/refounding “harnesses the tyrannical impulses of leading men,”⁵⁵ any founder with the prudence to see “inconveniences from very far away” (*DL*, I.18) will not find the lure of the glory of founding well (and the disgrace of founding poorly) strong enough motivation alone.

Machiavelli’s most significant orders are established after the demise of kingly rule, and “this, Machiavelli stresses, was not the work of any one godlike man, but was publicly commemorated as the work of the entire

⁵² J. P. McCormick. “Machiavelli’s Inglorious Tyrants: On Agathocles, Scipio, and Unmerited Glory,” *History of Political Thought* 36 (2015): 50.

⁵³ Benner, *Machiavelli’s Ethics*, 449.

⁵⁴ Scott and Sullivan, “Patricide and the Plot of *The Prince*,” 897.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Roman people.”⁵⁶ This, however, appears to run contrary to the enticement of glory Machiavelli places before the potential founder. Instead of being commemorated as the godlike lawgiver, he must found so that the credit for the founding redounds to the entire commonwealth. Machiavelli, like Cato and Cicero, depicts founding and refounding as a collaborative endeavor, and the man who would (re-)found alone and for one’s self is the primary threat to a free way of life. Because such a man cannot live forever, “even if a single man using ‘extreme force’ brings a corrupt city back to some semblance of goodness, ‘as soon as such a one is dead’ the city will revert to its former bad habits.”⁵⁷ Thus, “it is the safety of a republic or a kingdom to have not one prince who governs prudently while he lives, but one individual who orders it so that it is also maintained when he dies” (*DL*, I.12). But if *sempiternal glory* is the founder’s reward, for an ambitious man, the hope of his living, glorious memory is a part of the reason he (re-)founds. Why, then, will he found to obtain glory for the collaborating republic?

To render concrete the psychology of Machiavelli’s founder, let us focus on two examples of statesmen: Romulus and Pierro Soderini. The former is an example of successful founding, and provides a framework for a healthy Machiavellian: decisive, solicitous of strong institutions, and protective of republican orders. The latter provides an example of an unsuccessful founding, of a pernicious form of humility: passive, uncertain, and unappreciative of man’s acquisitive nature.

Although brutal, Romulus’s founding is not tyrannical. Like the typical tyrant, he killed his rivals to ascend, but extended power to the senate once he obtained unilateral rule.⁵⁸ To Machiavelli, while Caesar is the “first tyrant in Rome,” Romulus, who killed his brother to rule, is no tyrant, but someone who risks his own power by creating a senate to share power with.⁵⁹ The senate eventually kills him. Romulus kills his brother to have the efficacy that exists only in “founding alone.” However, Machiavelli notes that Romulus does not unilaterally desire to make Rome in his own image and to control the legacy of its institutions. That “what he did was for the common good and not for his own ambition” is proved by the senate’s creation, “with which he took counsel and by whose opinion he decided” (*DL*, I.9). The senate’s

⁵⁶ Benner, *Machiavelli’s Ethics*, 421–22.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 434.

⁵⁸ J. Patrick Coby, *Machiavelli’s Romans: Liberty and Greatness in the “Discourses on Livy”* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 1998), 157.

⁵⁹ Livy, *History* 1.8.

creation is a risk. Romulus himself knows that power sharing often leads to death or exile. Certainly, Machiavelli’s portrait of Romulus, like his entire retelling of Roman history, is selective. However, what Machiavelli emphasizes in Romulus matters more than what Machiavelli knows the historical record says about him. The power-sharing founder risks danger from rivals, particularly when he begins to show willingness to “found for the common good” by including other decision makers.

By contrast, Florentine gonfalonier Pierro Soderini is hamstrung by a prideful false humility; consequently Soderini fails to found a republic. Like Savonarola, Soderini imprudently squanders the opportunity to found. Soderini’s politics offer him the reputation of a “lover of the freedom of the city,” yet he does not foresee the threat that the deposed Medici and their allies pose. “Whether because it was difficult for him to do so or because they were not honest to him,” Soderini was unable to control those who favored the Medici and their allies. With such favors Soderini’s enemies “beat him down and in the end ruined him” (*DL*, I.52).

Machiavelli also notes Soderini’s flawed mercy, arguing that he commits two errors stemming from a false understanding of humility. Soderini believed “he could extinguish ill humors with patience and goodness and wear away some of the enmity to himself to rewards.” He failed to relinquish the pride inherent in being loved and incorrectly thought men might see his “patience and goodness” in his treatment of his enemies. Soderini made another mistake owing to false humility. His only recourse to preserve the republic from the Medici was “to strike his opponents vigorously and to beat down his adversaries” by confidently seizing “extraordinary authority,” dealing a blow to “civil equality together with the laws” (*DL*, III.3). He surmised that the use of extraordinary authority would lead to his being judged a tyrant and to the demise of the office of gonfalonier-for-life. Unlike Romulus, who does what is necessary to found in spite of potential accusations of tyranny, Soderini permits “an evil to run loose out of respect for a good” when that good “could easily be crushed by that evil,” not understanding that “when the deed accuses him, the effect excuses him” (*DL*, I.9). However, “not knowing how to be like Brutus, he lost not only his fatherland but his state and his reputation” (*DL*, III.3).

When compared to Machiavelli’s Romulus and Brutus, Soderini comes to sight as one whose unwillingness to betray his principle is informed by a fear of rendering himself and his office hypocritical in truth and in appearance. He makes himself the center of the institutions, believing they depend

on him and his goodness alone. For love of his own goodness, he shrinks from the necessity of engaging in hypocrisy while simultaneously concealing said hypocrisy from the people.⁶⁰ Consequently, he cannot break faith when necessary or kill the sons of Brutus, leaving Florence exposed to the Medici for the sake of his reputation. It is apparent from a review of the cases of Romulus and Soderini that the good founder shares power in a collaborative setting, diluting the identification of his virtue with the republic's virtue. Institutions cannot love him, being neither children nor partisans, and the warring humors animating these institutions are citizens engaged in productive tumults, not the founder's devotees.

B. CREATING AND SUBMITTING TO INSTITUTIONS.

Submitting to institutions is perhaps the crowning virtue of the man undeceived by Caesar's glory. Machiavelli describes the orders that draw a "republic back toward its beginning": public accusations in the form of "a law that often overlooks the accounts for men who are in that body," such as the accusation of Coriolanus in a public trial noted in *Discourses* I.8, and the virtue of one man "who with his examples and his virtuous works produces the same effect as the order" (*DL*, III.1). The former prevents the problem of Horatius, whose pardon corrupted the city. It also strikes fear into those who would transgress, or risk transgressing, laws promoting a politics of tumults, because the violator of such orders faces not merely public accusation but "execution." It is an incentive for acquisitive men to act for the common rather than the private benefit, albeit through fear.

The second way to renew a republic emerges from "the simple virtue of one man." But as Caesar teaches us, public homage for the heroic man is dangerous. However, under the threat of accusation and execution presented by "the order overlooking accounts," a great man's virtue is somewhat institutionally harnessed. It is even more securely harnessed when lone men of virtue are "of such reputation and so much example that good men desire to imitate them and the wicked are ashamed to hold to a life contrary to them." The great man aspires to join a community of heroes, not to become the principle of the republic itself.

But in order for these institutions to work, the statesmen must have the humility to submit to them. In the design of the institutions themselves

⁶⁰ See *P* 12 for Machiavelli's claim that hypocrisy is loathsome to the people and so the *appearance* of hypocrisy must be avoided, though hypocrisy itself is permitted as long as it is concealed.

incentives guide men to want to found like Brutus rather than Caesar, but first a great man must be induced to create them collaboratively and for the sake of this goal; and second, future great men must bow before them. “What Machiavelli seems to have in mind is that the people—be they Athenians, Romans, or French—become more famous than any of the individuals who serve or rule them (if for no other reason than that the people reproduce themselves and thus last longer).”⁶¹ Ultimately, Machiavelli hopes for the founder and ruler who possesses the humility to let the people rule.

VI. CONCLUSION

By the end of the *Discourses*, it is apparent that the problem facing the self-interested statesman is that “the people do not reward individual leaders with reputation or ‘glory’ so much for their public service as for their extraordinary deeds.”⁶² Caesar receives undeserved glory, but it is certainly more intoxicating, a kind Machiavelli cannot argue against in terms of self-interest alone because of its immediate and long-term blessings. Unlike Agathocles, Caesar is remembered with awe for his deeds and enough residual glory that men of virtue must be persuaded from his partisan path by Machiavelli. When we speak of Rome, do we remember Junius Brutus, or Caesar? Don’t we mistake Junius Brutus for his descendant, Caesar’s assassin?

The case for resisting the glory of Caesar is a difficult one to make. The reign of the emperors, begun with Caesar, expands across the world and redounds to their eternal glory, though Machiavelli attempts to educate us by focusing on Brutus and Romulus as his exemplars in contrast to the overall tendency in the West to first remember Caesar. The reign of Christ, another ancient figure filled with virtue and beloved by partisans, gives rise to orders that cause much of what is corrupt in politics in Machiavelli’s time. While the status of empire in Machiavelli is difficult to discern (it is worth noting that in *The Prince* 8, he observes that Agathocles achieved empire rather than glory), we can at least say this. When a founder is advised to establish new modes and orders (note the title of *Discourses* I.26, “A New Prince Should Make Everything New in a City or Province Taken by Him”), he is also advised against the temptation to make everything that is new obviously indebted to him as its author or pinnacle. Instead he must retain “at least the shadow of its ancient modes” (*DL*, I.25).

⁶¹ Zuckert, *Machiavelli’s Politics*, 173.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 249.

Like Thomistic humility, Machiavellian humility helps a founder do three things. It helps him understand and accept the true nature of the cosmological order, it helps him realistically moderate what his virtues should seek to achieve, and it keeps him from an excessive desire for praise and an excessive self-love that prevents him from seeing the needs of others. In turn, these limitations enable him to found in a less glorious way, and to establish or submit to institutions that show him no partiality. The logic of Machiavellian humility is quite different from that of Christian humility, because the Machiavellian cosmological order (or disorder), and the resulting meaning of human virtue, greatly differ. But the need for a founder to resist the temptation of using politics for the sake of his desire to acquire glory is one Machiavelli knows his teaching requires. Machiavellian *umilita* bears a structural similarity to the theological virtue exhibited with perfection by the successful unarmed prophet and founder of lasting modes and orders, Christ.