

Machiavelli and the Modes of Terrorism

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OUR INTEREST IN terrorism is essentially practical. This is as it should be, for our interest is motivated by the desire to defend ourselves against it and to defeat it as often as possible. The only thing always clear about terrorism is that it is just to condemn it, even if we lack an understanding of its nature. It is indeed doubtful that such an understanding would make it any easier to prevent or defeat terrorism, or to change the many circumstances that give the particular seeds of terrorism their opportunities to grow. Nevertheless, it is worth seeking the nature of terrorism, which can corrupt us by badly confusing the crucial difference between two kinds of violence. One kind is that of patriots at war. Another kind is that of murderers. Terrorism is perplexing in its resemblance to both patriotic and murderous killing. Yet everyone knows that, whether or not killing in itself is ever right, patriots are not the same as murderers. Everyone, that is, makes the rational judgment that patriotic killing is at least more nearly right than terrorist killing. A search for the nature of terrorism, then, may strengthen our ability to keep sight of the difference between it and patriotism.

I believe that among the earliest thoughts that generate terrorism are three of Machiavelli's most striking and innovative teachings: on cruelty, fraud, and

conspiracy. Terrorism is the use of cruelty and fraud for political ends, and conspiracy is necessary for using them successfully. These three "modes" of terrorism did not originate with Machiavelli, but the transformation of them into political virtues is peculiar to modern terrorism and was first of all the work of Machiavelli.

I

MACHIAVELLI'S TEACHING THAT cruelty is a virtue has been rightly called a central part of his "humanism," his "unchristian charity," which liberates pity from the more severe demands of piety.¹ He reasons that because political life always or typically begins with bloody deeds of varying degrees, cruelty in the beginning is inevitable. It must, therefore, be understood in an effectual and useful way. This is what he teaches when he argues that Cesare Borgia's well-known cruelty was in truth a kind of pity: cruelty "well used" and "tempered by prudence and humanity" (P, 17).² The quality of cruel deeds, such as Borgia's macabre killing of his "cruel and efficient" agent in the Romagna (P, 7), is not to be constricted by any scruples or rules; but the quantity is to be carefully limited to the amount needed for success, and then no more (P, 8).

Borgia's moderate use of cruelty as an effective mode of securing his principate contains this much of justice: that it also brings order ("peace and unity") to the prince's state and to its people. Machiavelli greatly increases this little bit of justice and patriotism when he shows not only how cruelty rightly understood is effective in bringing order, but also in defending that order. Thus Machiavelli concludes (D, III, 22-23), when comparing the "harshness" of Manlius Torquatus and the "kindness" of Valerius Corvinus, that harshness (like the "inhuman cruelty" of Hannibal, in P, 8) is in fact "more praiseworthy" because "by proceeding like Manlius he benefits his country and sometimes injures himself." (This is so, he believes, even though Valerius's mode was favored by "those who write on how a prince ought to conduct himself," as Xenophon does in praising the kindness of Cyrus.)

Machiavelli's most comprehensive praise of cruelty is made in his maxim on the ultimate defense of "la patria":

When it is absolutely a question of the safety of one's country, there must be no consideration of just or unjust, of merciful ["piatoso"] or cruel, or praiseworthy or disgraceful; instead, setting aside every respect, one must follow to the utmost any plan that will save her life and maintain her liberty (D, III, 41).

Abstracted from its context, however, this hard but true teaching appears to be more true than it really is. Its context is Machiavelli's concern with fraud and glory and not (not "absolutely") with the defense of "la patria."³ The point, that is, is how to acquire glory and not how to save one's country from its enemies. The "patriotic" maxim comes in the middle of three chapters that begin with his opinion that while using fraud all the time is "detestable," it is "praiseworthy and glorious" in carrying on war, for "he who conquers the enemy by fraud is praised as much as he who conquers them by force" (D, III, 40).⁴ Machiavelli appears to qualify

this by saying that fame in "all one's actions" and, in particular, the fraud entailed in breaking one's promises, will "never bring you glory." This qualification, however, is only temporary, for by the third of these chapters (III, 42) on fraud and glory and by his reference there to "our treatise *On the Prince*" (chap. 18), he restores "glory" to promise-breaking, even if it results in a failure to defend one's country. Even defeat, it turns out, can be rescued from ignominy by disclaiming fault or by redeeming it with a subsequent victory. Though it may not be possible to be fraudulent all the time, it is possible, Machiavelli says, in reminding us that he has already said it, to acquire state and rule ("stato e regno") by fraud.

What he had already said on this (in D, II, 13) was that "men of small fortune" seldom if ever "come to high rank without force and without fraud" and that "force alone will [never] be enough, but fraud alone certainly will be enough." For what can fraud alone be enough? It is enough, he continues, to attain "either kingdom or very great empires." Fraud is enough for a private citizen (one who is not already a prince) to acquire or seize a state, to make it his principate. Republics also must use fraud, for "what princes are obliged to do when they begin to grow great, republics are also obliged to do until they have become powerful, and force alone is enough." Machiavelli concludes that fraud "has always been necessary for those to use who from little beginnings wish to climb to high places."⁵ Moreover, the more "covert" the fraud is, the less "vituperative" it is.

Machiavelli's thoughts on the virtue of using cruelty and of using fraud can be easily thought together. Cruelty is a matter of force: Machiavelli is not talking about cruel words. Fraud is also a matter of force, disguised or hidden force, so that force and fraud are not opposites, but different forms of the same thing. When force is used fraudulently, as under the cover of false appearances (apparent innocence until weapons are drawn) or false promises, it is cruel partly just because it is

fraudulent. (Infliction of pain and death in "unusual" ways is said with good reason to be "cruel.") In using terror against one's enemies, cruelty and fraud are virtually synonymous, as in surprise attacks upon bystanders and innocents. It is true that Machiavelli does not recommend or give examples of attacking innocent people (although Castruccio's assassination of the "old and peaceful" Stefano di Poggio is nearly such a case). However, Machiavelli's defense of cruelty and fraud admits in principle — as a matter of principle — no limitations except effectiveness, and dastardly attacks on the innocent can indeed be effective in achieving the ends for which Machiavelli justifies the modes of cruelty and fraud.⁶

These ends in truth have very little to do with "patriotism" in the sense of defending a country against external aggression. While Machiavelli teaches that an established country should be defended with no concern for moderation in its defense, he teaches more comprehensively that fraud (hence cruelty, too) is the cardinal virtue for establishing or acquiring a state, that is, for aggression itself. Looking to the "little beginnings" of every kind of founding, then, Machiavelli justifies the use of fraud for acquiring and of cruelty for defending what is acquired. To make virtues of cruelty and fraud obscures the distinction between acquisitive and defensive warfare that is essential to our making reasonable moral judgments about acts of violence. Obscuring this distinction at the same time contributes to the confused interplay between "domestic" and "international" politics that is now the stage for terrorism. Teaching that it is "very natural and ordinary to desire to acquire" state, or power, over others and that "when men who are able to do so do it, they are always praised or not blamed" (P, 3); and teaching that it is "impossible" for a republic to "stand still" because it is necessary for it to acquire or expand (D, II, 19), Machiavelli teaches that acts of terror, of cruelty and fraud, are natural, necessary, and praiseworthy whenever they are effective.

II

MACHIAVELLI'S DISCOURSE "On Conspiracies" (D, III, 6) completes the obliteration of the difference between defensive and acquisitive warfare that is so blurred in his pseudopatriotic defense of cruelty and fraud. In teaching not only how to defend against conspiracies to seize, but also how to conspire successfully to seize both the principate and a republic, Machiavelli repeats the argument of the Athenians at Melos that might makes right. His discourse differs from all earlier writings on conspiracies, however, in its directness and detail⁷ and in its refining and adjusting to circumstances the meaning of "might." Speaking for himself, Machiavelli improves on the Athenians' argument at Melos: the Athenians used no fraud, however atrocious their subsequent crimes against the Melians were.⁸ The Athenians' attempt to persuade the Melians of the natural right of the stronger and of the natural necessity of their aggression was not Machiavelli's way. His way is not to "show one's mind, but [to] try to get one's wish anyhow, because it is enough to demand the weapons without saying 'I wish to kill you with them.' For when you have the weapons in your hands, you can satisfy your appetite" (D, I, 44).

Machiavelli's discourses on conspiracies is so complex — like *The Prince* and *The Discourses* themselves, it contains all he knows (or occurs to him to write) on the subject — that he gives it an "order." Its order is a two-part division into conspiracies against a prince and against "la patria." In this division, the discussion of conspiracies against a prince receives the lion's share of attention and conspiracies against one's fatherland only the smaller (fox's?) portion. Machiavelli also implies a twofold division between, in the "first part," those against whom conspiracies are made and, second, those who make conspiracies; but he does not in fact discuss this second part. The reason for this omission is related to the greater attention paid to conspiracies against a

prince. The most important cause of such conspiracies is "to be hated by the universality," from among whom private persons will come to make a conspiracy against the universally hated prince. Such hatred is of two kinds, general and private. (The latter, even if not avoided, will "make less war" for the prince: that is, a conspiracy may amount to a "war.")

The distinction practically collapses, however, when Machiavelli observes, first, that "general" hatred is in fact felt more strongly by the few who particularly desire revenge (cf. D, I, 16), and, second, that a "very great" cause of conspiracies against a prince is "the desire to liberate the fatherland" from a prince, or an "occupier," who has seized it. Machiavelli says that such princes or "occupiers" are "tyrants," who rarely give up their tyranny willingly and so come to a bad end. Taken together, these two observations about a very great cause and about the greatest cause of conspiracies against a tyrant say that conspiracies in the names of liberation from tyranny are always, in the beginning, conspiracies of a few who are particularly aggrieved at the established order. Moreover, because it is "very natural and ordinary" for a prince to "desire to acquire" and because it is impossible for republics "to stand still," there is little need to discuss those who make conspiracies. As private men learn to conspire against princes who either make themselves generally hated by the many or particularly hated by the few, or who are tyrannical occupiers of their countries, princes will learn to foil their conspiracies. Princes and private men alike will learn to see one another as they are and not as they ought to be, in a relation wherein, as Hobbes puts it, not moderation but "force and fraud are . . . the cardinal virtues."⁹

Four-fifths of the way through his discourse on conspiracies, Machiavelli considers conspiracies against one's own country made by private citizens who "aspire to the principate." Since conspiracies against a prince have been discussed by this point, conspiracies against the fatherland are really against

"republics," countries not yet occupied by a tyrant. To succeed in the aspiration to become a prince over a free people, Machiavelli recommends using "deceit and art" or "foreign forces," unless "your own forces are [already] enough." His examples of these two modes suggest that using fraud ("deceit and art") is in fact more effective than using foreign forces: by fraud (such as the lies of Pisistratus) one can persuade one's fellow countrymen to become "your own forces,"¹⁰ to join "The Movement" intended to establish one's own principate over one's own people.

At the beginning of this discourse on conspiracies, Machiavelli warns private men against conspiracies, against conspiring to free their country from its occupiers or aspiring to a principate over their own country. He does this because conspiracies are "so dangerous"; accordingly, he teaches all he knows about them so that private men will be "more cautious about entering into them."¹¹ His warning is even stronger than this, for he admonishes private men to "learn to be content to live under whatever rule chance ('sorte') provides": though they should "desire good princes," they should "endure those of any sort." If Machiavelli did not go on in this longest chapter of *The Discourses* to describe how at least conspiracies against "occupiers" or tyrants can be successful, he would not only be not very Machiavellian, but he would also be guilty of counselling pusillanimity. However, his extreme warning against conspiracies is accompanied by so many details of successful conspiracies that the reader is drawn conspiratorially into learning how to use fraud and cruelty in a conspiracy.

Machiavelli's warning against conspiracies is nevertheless truly serious, because conspiracies can aim at doing things far more important and glorious than the fraudulent or stealthy assassinations and coups d'état that are the typical examples of this discourse. Machiavelli indicates that much more is at stake in planning a conspiracy than petty assassinations, et cetera, by restating (in D, III, 35)

in a more categorical yet mysterious way the extreme difficulty and danger of conspiracies. At the beginning of this discourse, Machiavelli declares that "the dangers of acting as head of a new thing that concerns many, and the difficulty of dealing with and conducting it, and when conducted, of maintaining it, are matters too long and too exalted for discussion." He describes this too long and too lofty subject obscurely: "a new thing that concerns many" is vague. Whatever such a "new thing" is, it is like a conspiracy, in that both are superlatively difficult and dangerous; conspiracies, however, are not too long or too exalted to discuss, though indeed it takes a superlatively long discourse to do this.

In another place, *The Prince* (chap. 6), Machiavelli observes the same superlative degree of danger and difficulty in the deeds of the greatest and most virtuous princes. In this observation, it is much clearer what "a new thing that concerns many" might be. He says that "there is nothing more difficult or more dangerous or more uncertain of success or more dangerous to carry out" than what these princes (Romulus, Cyrus, Theseus) through their own virtue and not through fortune attempted: "to introduce new orders and modes." New orders, a new way of living brought to or imposed upon a people by new modes, are surely a "new thing that concerns many." Machiavelli teaches that to introduce, manage, and maintain wholly new orders requires the most dangerous and difficult thing, a conspiracy, tantamount to a war, against a prince who may rightly be called a tyrant or against a "corrupt" but unoccupied republic. Moreover, if a conspiracy does not have a generally hated "occupier" to conspire against, Machiavelli still knows a way in which a conspiracy can successfully proceed. This way is to conspire against one's country when it has become corrupt (D, III, 8). It will be corrupt "when its matter is already injured by time." Although the corruption of its "matter" (which is its people) requires time, "a man can indeed with his modes and bad measures begin

corrupting the people of a city," but one man cannot live long enough to reap the fruits of his corrupting measures.

Machiavelli offers an alternative to conspiracies against the fatherland when one is not "in harmony with the times" (D, III, 8 and 9), and when it is still soon enough to reap the fruits of his efforts to do something new that concerns many. Instead of conspiring against his country to become its prince, one can carry its order back to its beginnings and renew it (D, III, 1). To do this is not to corrupt it, Machiavelli says, but to save it from corruption, to "cure" the corruption that has come about in the "goodness" that gained it its "first reputation" and "first growth." While he does not say that a renewal is of superlative difficulty or danger, he does say that it is of superlative necessity, for "nothing is more necessary" in anything with "a common life" than to give it back its first reputation. However, taking an order back to its beginnings and curing its corruption is the same thing as "maintaining" it, so that a renewal is indeed as different and dangerous as a founding.

Machiavelli says that two "accidents," both "intrinsic" to any order, must arise for a renewal to occur.¹² They may arise either from a law or from the birth of a man whose example and virtuous works have the same effect as the law (which Machiavelli amends to "order"). Renewal of the order by the law and order itself does not resemble a conspiracy, which aims to change the order by steel or poison, by force or fraud; it resembles, rather, the defense of "la patria." Certainly a domestic or "intrinsic" renewal of an order and a defense of it so as to acquire glory resemble one another in the modes they employ. Like the defense of "la patria," which has no respect for justice, pity, or honor (D, III, 41), a renewal of an order by law and order is accomplished when one citizen brings life to the laws by "spiritedly" executing them "against the power of those who violate them" (D, III, 1). Machiavelli's examples of such spirited, "excessive and notable" executions include fifteen Roman ones, though he in-

vents the ten executions of the “decemviri” (cf. *Livy*, III, 53). In the case of Florence from 1434 to 1494, Machiavelli says, the renewal was effected when those who managed the government found it necessary to “retake the state” every five years. They did this by “putting that terror and that fear in men which they had put when, first taking the state, they had beaten those who, according to that way of living, had done wrong.” The effective use of “excessive” executions, of “terror” and “fear,” that is, of terrorism, is not, then, confined to founding or acquiring the state, but extends to “counter-terrorism,” to renewing its way of life for the sake of which its bloody founding was first made.

The other kind of “intrinsic” accident which can take anything with “a common life” back to its beginnings is by the “simple virtue of one man” who is not dependent upon any law that “stimulates you to any execution.” Even without the example or stimulus of law, such excellent purifiers of a corrupt order inspire good men to imitate them and shame bad ones from living contrary to their ways. It is necessary to ignore the fourteen Roman executions Machiavelli gives as examples of this, because none of them in fact succeeded in renewing Rome,¹³ and to recall instead the truly successful men of *The Prince* (chap. 6). One of these most excellent men — Moses — is not mentioned earlier; Machiavelli says that Moses should not be mentioned (or “reasoned about”), because he was merely God’s “executor.” This in itself, though, makes him both admirable and the standard by which Machiavelli measures the other imitably virtuous princes who in great danger and with great difficulty successfully introduced new orders.

The example of Moses makes it clear that all that Machiavelli says about founding new orders and about the modes and conspiracies for doing this supremely difficult thing applies also to religions. Thus Machiavelli supplies Moses (or prophets) with arms because it is easy to persuade the people of “a [new] thing,” but difficult

to hold them to their belief; therefore, “a prophet must be ready when they no longer believe, to make them believe by force” (P, 6). Moreover, religions (also called “sects”) too must be renewed, as Machiavelli says in his discourse on renewals (D, III, 1). The modes for doing this are the same as the modes for renewing republics and kingdoms, by law-inspired terrorism and by the virtue of one man. Curing the corruption of “our religion” by bringing it back to its beginnings, says Machiavelli, was the task of men like Saint Francis and Saint Dominic, who, with their poverty and other exemplary reminders of Christ, prevented Christianity from disappearing. They did this with their “new orders,” the power of which prevented the “dishonesty” of the prelates and heads of “our religion” from ruining it. With this power, and with the “credibility” the new orders had with the people, they taught the people that it is “evil to speak evil of what is evil” and, by this fraud, that it is good to obey the corrupt prelates, leaving it to God to punish them.¹⁴ The founding of these new orders, which was the renewal of the Christian order, inspired a fear in the people, but not in the prelates, who “do the worst they can, because they do not fear that punishment which they do not see and do not believe in.” Not seeing or believing in God’s punishment, these corrupt prelates do not fear to do “the worst they can,” which is to say, the best they can, whatever the means, to succeed in managing and maintaining their new orders.

By collapsing the common-sense or patriotic or traditional distinction between the founding of a country and the defense of it, and the distinction between political and religious orders, Machiavelli becomes the teacher of those who choose to use the modes of cruelty and fraud when they wish to climb from “little beginnings” to found a new order or to take advantage of an old “corrupt” order to make themselves the heads of a new one. Machiavelli’s teaching that men need neither see nor believe in God in order to found and secure a new way of life is the

meaning of what is now called ideology, a "surrogate religion masquerading as philosophy."¹⁵ Terrorism has increasingly emerged as the mode distinctive to founding and securing ideological orders. We recognize terrorism today by its Machiavellian methods and by its employment by ideological "movements." The use of cruelty and fraud, or terrorism, in the name of religion can never be right; nor can it be right in the name of nationalism, for this too is an ideology, the belief in the unqualified and universal right of national self-determination, at whatever costs to the founding conspirators themselves or to the "occupiers" of the disputed land.¹⁶ The nature of terrorism, therefore, cannot be found in any single ideology, but in an idea that transcends the differences among ideologies and that generates terrorism.

III

THE IDEA THAT leads Machiavelli to give his practical lessons in using the modes of terrorism to establish and then to re-establish new orders in politics and religion lies in his thoughts on necessity and fortune. He conceives of man's relation to necessity as marvelously subtle, as appears in his interpretation of what "some moral philosophers have written," in *The Discourses* (III, 12). He says that this shows "how useful to human actions necessity is and to what glory it has brought them." What they have written is that "the hands and the tongue of man, two most noble instruments for making him noble, would not have operated perfectly nor brought human works to the height they have reached, if they had not been pushed by necessity."

This is a good maxim for warfare, he argues, because it shows that necessity can be imposed on one's own soldiers to make them fight and withdrawn from one's enemies to enable them to run away or to surrender. Machiavelli explains that the latter possibility is a matter of fraud, of falsely promising to pardon the enemies' soldiers and lying to them that it is not the

liberty of their city — not its "common good" — but only "a few ambitious men" that are being attacked. This fraud will remove the necessity and, "consequently," their obstinacy to defend their city. Machiavelli admits that this is only a pretext ("colori") and is easily recognized as such by prudent men; but pretexts often deceive the people, so that they will "close their eyes to all the traps hidden under such big promises. And in this way countless cities have become slaves."

Machiavelli's interpretation of the maxim on necessity severs the connection the "moral philosophers" make by it between necessity and nobility, by showing that necessity can be manipulated rather than taken as a guide. Using fraud to enslave other men is not noble, nor is it noble to overcome the "obstinacy" of one's own soldiers by making it no more than necessary that they fight.¹⁷ Instead of taking necessity as the mother of invention, Machiavelli makes an invention of necessity and thus establishes some men's ascendancy over necessity by their successfully manipulating its power over other men.

In the case of man's relation to fortune, however, Machiavelli counsels force rather than fraud. The reason for this difference is that while necessity properly used can bring glory, fortune stands in the way of success. The problem is that "human wants are insatiable, since man has from nature the power and wish to desire everything and from fortune the power to secure but little" (D, II, preface). The remedy to this malice or stinginess of fortune, according to Machiavelli, is to do without fortune, not to rely on it, or, when fortune is hostile, to overcome it by virtue. The greatest men, undertaking the most dangerous and most difficult things, succeed through virtue, not fortune, and this is true also of the greatest republic as a whole (D, I, 1).

In the penultimate chapter of *The Prince*, Machiavelli states most dramatically man's power over fortune. It is a common opinion, he says, that "fortune and God" govern "the things of the world" so

that "men with their prudence are unable to correct them." The things of the world, that is, do not fall into good order because of fortune or God, but — like a "new thing important to many" — need to be put into good order or to be corrected, though it is very difficult to do this. Machiavelli replies to the common opinion, in order to keep our "free will" alive, that fortune (he says no more about God, not that God is a woman, for example) arbitrates half of our actions and leaves the other half to be governed by us. After further reflection, he adds that, when men are "concordant" with fortune, they are happy, but not when they are "discordant" with her. However, as we have seen, Machiavelli knows how to overcome discordance with one's times and with fortune: by a conspiracy to "occupy" a corrupt country or to corrupt a free one or to renew its order; so he concludes that fortune, being a woman, can be conquered by the impetuous and the violent. It is, in fact, "necessary" to beat and knock fortune down. It is true that, in *The Discourses* (III, 29), he argues that the power of "the heavens" (which he amends to heaven's power) over men's affairs is such that "fortune" (which is the surrogate for heaven and God, as in P, 25)¹⁸ allows men only to "assist" her, "to weave her designs," but not to thwart her or break her designs. In the sequel to this observation (D, II, 30), however, Machiavelli repeats his argument that where men have little virtue, fortune is powerful, but that there is a "mode" by which fortune can be so ruled that, with "every revolution of the sun," she will not show "how much she can do."

This particular mode of regulating fortune is at odds with Machiavelli's idea that necessity yields to fraud and fortune yields to force. It is at odds because Machiavelli cannot envision or contain the whole of human affairs within the horizon of man "in motion," which is to say, at war (D, I, 6). One who believes, as he does, that "it is well to reason about everything" (D, I, 18 and 58) knows that there is an inner life of man that is inaccessible to the fraudulent and cruel modes of politics and war.

Machiavelli shows that he knows this when he says (D, II, 30) that the "mode" by which fortune's variations will be regulated is that of someone who "loves antiquity" (as did Machiavelli himself, not a captain but a teacher of "new modes and orders") and who loves it so much that what antiquity could not accomplish, he will accomplish. This suggests an ascent from man "in motion," beating and pounding Fortuna to achieve glory in a new thing important to many, to a man of learning, contemplating Fortuna's ways — though, to be sure, in order to teach others how to regulate her ways.

Machiavelli's contemplative ascent does not prevent him from teaching the modes of terrorism. This is clearest precisely where this ascent is most unequivocally stated. In *The Discourses* (I, 26), Machiavelli states that unless one is prepared to use the cruel modes of a new prince (which are those traditionally attributed to a "tyrant"), one ought "to prefer to live a private life rather than be a king who brings such ruin on men." A retreat into a private life surely is an ascent if no other way than Machiavelli's modes can be seen in which political life could be ordered. That it is not an ascent into moderation is clear in the thought that immediately follows: to take the "middle ways" between being entirely wicked and entirely good is very injurious. The single example Machiavelli then gives of this common error (D, I, 27) is only of the failure to be entirely wicked, of the very wicked but cowardly Baglioni's failure to be "honorably" wicked by treacherously killing and robbing the pope and all his cardinals when it would have been easy for him to do it. Machiavelli's only alternative, then, to living "in motion," to a politics and warfare that rejects moderation in favor of fraud and manipulation, is a retreat to private life.

Why does Machiavelli see this as the only alternative? He does consider the perfect alternative to perfect wickedness, but he rejects it. He rejects it because "the first way of the good,"¹⁹ which is the alternative to the modes that are "very cruel

and inimical to all life not only Christian but human" (D, I, 26), is not the way to certain success. The alternative "way of the good" is ultimately the way of genuine piety or religion. Machiavelli explains this especially well in *The Prince* (chap. 18), where he says that a prudent prince should appear to be but not truly be full of pity, faith, humanity, integrity, and religion. Of these qualities, "nothing is more necessary" than to appear to have religion, but truly having religion is "harmful."

The most important use of fraud, then, is fraudulent piety or religion, a substitute or "surrogate religion." Along with the other qualities whose appearance masks the cruel modes of the successful prince and captain (conspirator and founder), this mode of fraud enables one to be concordant with fortune's variations. (Machiavelli praises the "prudence and gravity" of Nicias and ignores the genuine but untimely piety that prevented Nicias from ever redeeming his ignominious defeat.)²⁰ Machiavelli's knowledge of the nature of peoples and princes, his knowledge of antiquity, and his reasoning about reason and about necessity and fortune in men's lives enables him to see that piety severed from virtue commonly understood, from moderation and "the middle ways," and severed from genuine faith can bring success. The commands of

religion to take the way of the good — to "be merciful, for the love of God!" for example — or failing in this, as we all too often will, to take "the middle ways," are for Machiavelli irrelevantly utopian. He regards fortune (or heaven or God) as hostile towards man, while holding that, within nature as a whole, there is a way — the modes of one with "virtù" — to overcome fortune. This view is nicely put as Machiavelli's "hopeful brutality,"²¹ for he sees even nature as not perfectly malevolent: men, he says, "can always hope" (D, II, 29; cf. D, II, 5).

Yet Machiavelli's impatience with the obstinacy of fortune leads him to exaggerate man's ability to subdue nature and to depreciate man's capacity for moderation, even when men are most "in motion," even in war. This impatience is the impulse for Machiavelli's "new modes and orders," and it is the same source, in principle, of the terrorist's refusal to sacrifice success for the sake of moderation commonly understood. True piety, recognizing the impossibility of perfect success, demands this sacrifice; it is the common or patriotic way of expressing the "sense of the sacredness of 'the common.'" ²² Machiavelli's impatience for success leads him to sacrifice the sense of "common decency" which the patriot, but not the terrorist, fortunately knows.

¹Clifford Orwin, "Machiavelli's Unchristian Charity," 72 *APSR* (Dec. 1978), pp. 1223-24.

²Quotations from Machiavelli's writings are based on *Machiavelli, The Chief Works and Others*, Allan Gilbert, trans., 3 vols., Duke U. Press, 1965. *Machiavelli, Tutte Le Opere*, Mario Martelli, ed., Sansoni Editore, Florence, 1971, has been consulted frequently also, and several changes from Gilbert's translations have been made to render the Italian more literally. In the case of *The Prince*, the translation by Leo Paul S. de Alvarez (U. of Dallas Press, 1980) has usually been quoted. Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy* is cited as "D," with book and chapter references, and *The Prince* as "P," with chapter references. ³Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., in

Machiavelli's New Modes and Orders, Cornell U. Press, 1979, observes that Machiavelli here "goes well beyond Livy's Lentulus, who had said nothing of just or unjust, etc., but laid stress on the pressure of necessity, which Machiavelli does not mention" (p. 426). ⁴Cf. Machiavelli, *The Life of Castruccio Castracani*, Gilbert, vol. 2, p. 555: "Never when he could win by fraud did he attempt to win by force, because he was accustomed to say that the victory, not the manner of the victory, would bring you renown." ⁵This chapter (D, II, 13) contains an example of Machiavelli's own fraud: his attribution of fraud to Cyrus in his dealings with his uncle, Cyaxares. Gilbert, p. 357, though, assumes that Machiavelli errs, rather than lies.

⁶Cf. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chap. 28: "The infliction of what evil soever on an innocent man that is not a subject, if it be for the benefit of the commonwealth . . . , is no breach of the law of nature. . . . [N]or does the victor make distinction of nocent and innocent as to the time past nor has other respect of mercy than as it conduces to the good of his own people." ⁷See Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, U. of Washington Press, 1957, pp. 10 and 292, on Machiavelli's saying, in his own name, what ancient writers, especially Thucydides, had attributed to their "characters." Also, see Strauss, "Machiavelli and Classical Literature," in *Review of National Literatures*, 1970, pp. 10 and 13; and Mansfield, p. 318: although the "ancient writers" left the study of conspiracies "in the background," Machiavelli "fills this very long chapter with the ways and means of conspiracy, and does not consider the justice of it." ⁸The argument in the Melian dialogue that might makes right is not Thucydides' own, or not his whole argument. It is a deficient argument because it excludes the limits on the natural right of the stronger that are sustained, as many (the Melians) believe, by "the divine" or as a few (such as Diodotus, in the Mytilenian debate, and Thucydides himself) believe, by "logos"; the natural right of the stronger is not to be gainsaid (any more than the natural right of self-defense), but moderated — not least in order to prevent the self-destruction or decay of the stronger (or weaker) himself. See Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, U. of Chicago Press, 1953, p. 9. Strauss here controverts Max Weber's assumption that the Melian dialogue is evidence that "a most naked Machiavellianism" was taken for granted as ethically acceptable

throughout the ancient world. ⁹*Leviathan*, chap. 13, penultimate paragraph; see Mansfield, p. 319. ¹⁰Cf. Mansfield, pp. 340-41. ¹¹Cf. Machiavelli's letter to Vettori, May 17, 1521, where Machiavelli says that he believes that "the true way of going to Paradise would be to learn the road to Hell in order to avoid it." ¹²Machiavelli says that an "extrinsic" accident, such as the French capture of Rome, after which Rome was "born again," can also bring about a renewal, but that he regards this as "so dangerous that it is not in any way to be desired." ¹³Cf. Mansfield, p. 303. ¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 304. ¹⁵This definition of ideology is George Grant's in his *English-Speaking Justice*, Mt. Allison University, 1974, p. 55. ¹⁶Cf. *The Age of Ideology*, by Issac Kramnick and Frederick M. Watkins, Prentice-Hall, 1979: "The growth of nationalism is clearly associated with the rise of ideology" (p. 35). ¹⁷Cf. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chap. 21: "To avoid battle is not injustice but cowardice," and Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, sec. 139. ¹⁸See Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, pp. 217-23. ¹⁹Cf. Machiavelli's sermon "An Exhortation to Penitence," in Gilbert, where Machiavelli speaks of man's having lost "the other way" to heaven; "the other way" is the way of Christ, the "way of the good," which Machiavelli most clearly rejects in P, 15. ²⁰D, I, 53. Cf. *Thucydides* VII, 86.5. Hobbes's translation of Thucydides' praise of Nicias also omits any mention of Nicias's piety. ²¹This phrase is Allan Bloom's in "Political Science and the Undergraduate," *Teaching Political Science*, V. van Dyke, ed., Humanities Press, 1977, p. 125. ²²Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, p. 292.

Revolution and Renewal in Prescott's *The Conquest of Peru*

Thomas S. Gladsky

UNLIKE HIS CONTEMPORARY James Fenimore Cooper, with whom he shared conservative social and political ideas, William Hickling Prescott (1796–1859) was relatively silent about those changes in American life that Cooper was criticizing in his novels, letters, and treatises of the 1830s. In fact, even when Prescott did comment, he praised the progress and blessings of the nation. For example, in 1831 he described the American and French revolutions as manifestations of God's guidance. Tempests like these, he wrote, are divinely inspired, "occasionally sent to clear the moral atmosphere, and renovate the face of society."¹ The arrival of the first British steamer in Boston harbor prompted him to say: "This is the go-ahead age certainly and the genius of our own people and institutions is remarkably well suited to that of the times."² Even as late as the writing of *The Conquest of Mexico* (1843), Prescott still had high praise for the American experiment.

But even then Prescott made it clear that he was at times "confounded and uncomfortable" with the direction of American life. This discomfort rapidly increased in the 1840s. The Harrison-Tyler administration provoked him to complain that "the Presidency had never reached so low a degradation."³ By 1841 his enthusiasm for the spirit of revolution had so eroded that he could only cautiously state

that "revolutions in society . . . must be the slow work of time."⁴ With the 1844 election of Polk, Prescott's hopes were again dashed. The leadership of the aristocracy, it seemed to him, had given way to mediocrity elected by a new majority. Of this, Prescott could only say that the millions sinned "more from ignorance than design. The design is in the knaves that duped them."⁵ By 1845 Prescott was worrying about "our constitutional rights" and criticizing the annexation of Texas, which he labeled as "empire craving," "in contempt of constitutional law," "the most serious shock yet given to the stability of our glorious institutions."⁶ At this time Prescott also began to fear for the preservation of the Union, a concern that echoes through his writings up to his death. The result of Prescott's increasingly critical view of the United States is that ultimately he could not resist the temptation to shape his history with an eye toward contemporary events.

Thus *The Conquest of Peru*, written in the mid-1840s, is quite different from its predecessors, *The History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella the Catholic* (1838) and *The Conquest of Mexico* (1843). In the broadest sense, *The Conquest of Peru* (1847) offers an analogy of sorts between sixteenth-century Spain and nineteenth-century America, where, as Jonathan Daniels observes, "the expansive concepts