

Machiavelli's enterprise

by Harvey Mansfield

Five hundred years ago, on December 10, 1513, Niccolò Machiavelli wrote a letter to a friend in Rome describing one day in his life as an exile from Florence and remarked casually that he had just completed writing *The Prince*. This momentous book, together with its companion, the *Discourses on Livy*, neither published until after his death, announces an enterprise affecting all human beings today: the creation of the modern world.

Machiavelli is famous for his infamy, for being “Machiavellian,” but his importance is almost universally underestimated. The extent of his consequence is not appreciated and the size of his ambition is little known. He makes it possible, even easy, to suppose that his ambition is confined to place-hunting with Lorenzo de’ Medici and service as drill-master of the Florentine republic—as if his thought was bounded by his employment opportunities. Of course everyone senses his greatness as a writer, a master of Italian prose with a gift for an acute phrase, often worth citing for effect but almost never actually avowed for use. “I am a Machiavellian” is something one doesn’t hear. But in addition to his insights, which in truth are deliberately exaggerated, he does not receive much respect as a guide to the future. But a guide with foresight is just what Machiavelli is, if one adds that he made the future to which he guides us.

To see how important Machiavelli was one must first examine how important he meant to be. In the *Discourses* he says he has a “natural desire” to “work for those things I believe will

bring common benefit to everyone.” A natural desire is in human nature, not just in the humans of Machiavelli’s time, and the beneficiaries will be everyone, all humanity—not just his native country or city. He goes on to say that he has “decided to take a path as yet untrodden by anyone.” He will benefit everyone by taking a new path; he is not just imitating the ancients or contributing to the Renaissance, that rebirth of the ancients, though obviously his new path makes use of the them. In the middle of *The Prince* he declares: “I depart from the orders of others,” also emphasizing his originality. One soon learns that he departs from the tradition of thought that begins with Greek, or Socratic, philosophy, as well as from the Bible. All this he refers to elsewhere as “my enterprise.”

There is an uneducated view of Machiavelli responsible for his evil reputation as “Machiavellian,” held by people who have not read a word of his but would instinctively recoil if they did at the practice of dirty tricks that he repeatedly recommends. Then there is an educated view of Machiavelli scholars who have read his books—a view that is primarily devoted to refuting and repudiating the uneducated view. To do this, the scholars latch on to one of Machiavelli’s own excuses, such as that the murder of your inconvenient brother may be for the common good, or they excuse him by taking an objective stance from outside his words. From the standpoint of science it is said that he was only trying to understand, not to judge, or from the outlook of history that he was only reflecting his times, not facing permanent problems. All these excuses

diminish his importance and result in a very great underestimation of Machiavelli. They reduce him from something extraordinary, recognized in the uneducated view, to someone who is ordinary in his context, which was the Italy of his day—its disunity, its corrupt popes, and its humanist and other authors, who provided him with intellectual equipment. I shall set forth the idea that Machiavelli was not caused by his context, but was the cause of a context, our context.

To create the modern world Machiavelli initiated a two-fold transformation of politics and philosophy that would bring them together: politics with the elevation of philosophy and philosophy brought down to earth. These two motions come together in the prince, now understood not merely as a ruler but also as a thinker devoted to improving the prospects of princes and incidentally, or not incidentally, their peoples—so that princes become knowers of “the world.” It was necessary for Machiavelli to reverse the meaning of *modern* and create a new meaning of *world*. “Modern” would no longer signify the weakness taught by Christianity but would acquire new vigor from obeying human necessities rather than divine commands. “The world” would be *this* world as opposed to the next world of Christianity and to the high-minded morality of classical philosophy.

Is Machiavelli a philosopher? He does not say that he is. He uses the word very sparingly and does not openly address those he calls “philosophers.” He seems to confine himself to politics, but politics he refers to expansively as “worldly things” (*cose del mondo*). And yet he indicates that he is a philosopher, and repeatedly, insistently, in several ways. To expand politics to include the world implies that the world governs politics or politics governs the world or both. In his day the notion of the “world” immediately raised the question of which world, this one or the next? Here religion and philosophy dispute the question of which world governs the other and whether politics can manage or God must provide for human fortunes—*Fortuna* being, as everyone knows, a prominent theme of Machiavelli's.

Machiavelli sets forth the dispute in two separate places that the reader must make the effort

to put together. Casually, as it seems, to justify not omitting something, he says in a clause in the *Discourses*: “since it is good to reason about everything . . .”; whereas in *The Prince* he says, again in a clause, “although one should not reason about Moses, as he was a mere executor of things that had been ordered for him by God . . .” He does not expressly argue, for and against, the question of whether faith sets limits to reason, as a philosopher who wanted to make himself obvious might do, but leaves a contradiction that is blatant when exposed. Now why should one not reason about Moses? Moses is a figure in the Bible, the Book of God that commands reverence and is revered. To reason about Moses is to question the reverence in which he is held and to challenge the belief that holds him in reverence. To reason about everything is the work of a philosopher, who as such challenges belief merely by asking questions; to believe is to hold the answers the philosopher questions. Thus we have a distinction between the philosopher, who questions, and the believer, or non-philosopher, who has answers.

It is good to reason about everything and also good not to reason about everything. The latter must mean that it is good, having reasoned or while reasoning about everything, not to *appear* to reason about everything. Machiavelli does not call himself a philosopher or say that he is bringing a new mode of philosophy, but leaves these things to be inferred from hints or allusions or incomplete, solitary statements surrounded with innocent, apparently non-philosophic context. In the letter mentioned above he left a memorable picture of the life of the philosopher and of himself as philosopher: the one who, after noisy, contentious card-playing in the inn he frequents, sits down in the evening with his books to the quiet conversation of his mind, imagining himself clothed in regal and courtly garments so as to “enter the ancient courts of ancient men, where, received by them lovingly, I feed on the food that alone is mine and that I was born for.” Yet, despite this beautiful description of philosophizing, he still does not call himself “philosopher.”

After Machiavelli, with Bacon and Descartes, modern philosophy became established

as an institution and thrived on public recognition to the point that in the eighteenth century the *philosophes* could claim to be a ruling force and be so regarded. Machiavelli was a philosopher who founded modernity but not modern philosophy. He left that task to his successors. But he laid the foundation for them in a single paragraph, one could almost say in a single phrase, in *The Prince*.

The paragraph is the first one in Chapter 15, already quoted from, in which Machiavelli says: "I depart from the orders of others." The phrase is "effectual truth" (*verità effettuale*), with which he explains why it is necessary to do evil. In this paragraph he moves from morality to politics to truth, or what is today called epistemology. By following closely what he says in this small space, we shall see how Machiavelli's politics is elevated to truth and his philosophy lowered to what is visible in the world. To begin with, morality is not separable from politics as it was in Aristotle, who wrote two books on *Ethics* and *Politics*. Morality must be judged from what happens if you practice it, which means judged from the standpoint of the prince. Even among friends and relations, to say nothing of fellow citizens or subjects, "a man who wants to make a profession of good in all regards must come to ruin among so many who are not good." A "man" must have the outlook of a prince, a wary prince.

Why is "a profession of good in all regards" relevant? Those who do good rely on others not to take advantage of them, indeed to return that good in gratitude so that do-gooders will not "come to ruin." The many who do not write or read but merely live by moral principle implicitly rely on the argument of philosophy or religion to show convincingly that they can afford to be moral. Good deeds must be accompanied with an explanation, a "profession of good." And because a deed that appears good may be done with evil intent, the doer needs to profess the good he does as well as perform it. But also because evil may appear good, no visible evidence will suffice to prove the intent of the doer and his profession must appeal to some invisible principle or realm; it must rely on imagination to guarantee its existence. In

sum, for Machiavelli the foundation for morality, what makes it reliable, what justifies taking the risk of coming to ruin by doing a moral deed, is a "profession"—a pretense of philosophy or religion. A profession of good "in all regards" would have to be the good society as a whole, not merely isolated good actions taken by themselves. So Machiavelli says that many rely on "imagined republics and principalities that have never been known to exist in truth." He does not give examples, but it is easy to supply them. An imagined republic might be Plato's *Republic* of philosopher-kings, based on the "idea of the good," and an imagined principality might be St. Augustine's *City of God*, promising salvation in the next world.

Machiavelli rejects these two kinds of imagined truth for his own "effectual truth." He concentrates the power of this phrase by using it just this once in all his writings. Indeed, Machiavelli scholars have been unable to find any other use of the term in the Italian Renaissance among humanist authors, and I am not aware of any earlier use of it. In the Bible the truth of Revelation is to be brought to all by God's ministers, as Paul said "according to the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working [*energeia*] of his power" (Ephesians 3:7, King James Version). Marsilius of Padua (an author known to Machiavelli), quoting Aristotle, speaks of false belief as a hindrance to truth, an obstacle to its becoming effectual. In neither case is the truth itself effectual; rather it is that divine or human aid can make it effectual or not. What then does Machiavelli mean by the phrase he first formulated, "the effectual truth of a thing" as opposed to its imagination?

To understand it, we must return to "the world" that a prince, or a philosopher-prince, can know. In *The Prince* and the *Discourses* Machiavelli never refers to the next world, thus not to the distinction between this world and the next. But he does speak frequently, if never at length, of "the world" in his two main books, leaving to his readers, as always, the task of reasoning out the sum of his references. It appears, first, that the world is a whole, "the whole world." Neither Plato nor the Christians would have admitted that the world, with all its imperfections, can be a

whole; because of its imperfections the world has to be supplemented by supra-mundane or superhuman intelligence and power. Machiavelli presumes it is possible to know the world, and he criticizes the Florentines, the Venetians, and a pope for not knowing the world. Above all, he claims for himself that in the *Discourses* he has expressed "as much as I know and have learned though a long practice and continual reading in worldly things." Both practice and reading are required: the school of books and the School of Hard Knocks.

"Worldly things" have a limit to their life and are variable. Deceit is an aspect of the world; in the "actions of the world" men ordinarily understand little, especially not what is extraordinary. Yet "in the world there is no one but the vulgar," meaning that the truth must eventually come out so as to be appreciated by ordinary men, though what they appreciate as true may not be true. In Machiavelli's "effectual truth," the truth is not forever hidden but shown in its effects. Effectual truth means not only that the truth will have an effect, a consequence, but also that its effect will show. Those who try to live by a profession of good will fail and be shown to fail. Although Machiavelli speaks frequently of nature and the natural, he never defines them and he indicates that human nature can be changed and that what may appear to be permanent nature is actually mere longtime custom. The world does not have the permanence and the formal structure of nature, as previously understood by philosophers.

The whole world, for Machiavelli, can be characterized by "weakness" because of the influence of Christianity or by "corruption" because of French, Spanish, or Italian customs. Yet it can be "full of peace and justice" (under the good Roman emperors between Nerva and Marcus), when one saw "the world in triumph," golden times "when each can hold and defend the opinion he wishes." Here would seem to be a John Stuart Mill paradise, with glory and security for princes and peoples and freedom for philosophers. These emperors include "the philosopher Marcus," as he is called in *The Prince* in the one instance of that word there. But the philosopher-emperor is not presented as presiding over Mill's paradise; he is plucked out of

the triumph of the world and paired with the emperor Severus, who is called a criminal in the *Discourses*, to provide a model for a prince, Severus for founding it and Marcus for maintaining it. So "the world" seems not be bereft of morality, as one might suppose from the adjective "Machiavellian," but to maintain a certain, worldly morality of a new kind in which the philosopher, namely Machiavelli, has a new role. Instead of soothing moral anger and opposing moral contradiction in the tradition of Socrates, the philosopher (Marcus) allies with criminality (Severus) rather than morality. Or, better to say, he allies both with criminality and with moral indignation against criminality. Both are allowed to be expressed or purged because both are natural, not in the sense of intelligible in the light of higher principles, as with the Socratics, but as spontaneous eruptions that can be managed but not suppressed.

If the world is not intelligible in the way of classical philosophy, according to Machiavelli, then how rational is it? Certainly it can be known, but how? The world is not chaotic, but it is tumultuous, open to change and discord as to its meaning, as for example in the diverse "humors" of princes and peoples. The world has its necessities not in intelligible definitions or essences but in patterns of behavior; in this example princes and peoples are in a rather strange relationship, those few who desire to command in relation to those many who desire not to be commanded. Here is the classical political division between the few and the many to be found in Plato and Aristotle, but Machiavelli sees it differently. The few and the many are not presented in a manner to bring them together in a whole of quality and quantity. Instead, princes and peoples are at odds, the former insisting on what the latter insist must not be. Each temper has its necessity, but the two necessities are contrary to each other, and the result is not a harmonious whole but a whole in which the necessary humor of princes can be accomplished only by deceiving or manipulating the necessary humor of peoples. The one necessity (desiring to command) includes the denial of that necessity by the other necessity (desiring not to be commanded), and princes, if they

are to know the world, must understand that peoples as such do not understand the world; princes must see the necessity of deceit. Here we have in sharp focus the kind of analysis of necessities that our social science, unconsciously imitating Machiavelli but very far from matching his acuity, retails with clumsy jargon and false precision.

The deceit of the princes is expressed in what Machiavelli, borrowing from the Averroists (Aristotelians opposed to the Scholastic Aristotelians) that were a force in his day, calls the sect. All sects (or religions) obey the necessities of human nature that require the people to be reassured they do not live under the necessity of being commanded, but that justice is possible. Yet some sects are more in keeping with human necessities than others, and the "Christian sect"—so Machiavelli has the face to call it—under which he lived, with its provisions for the interference of the next world in the honor of this world, overlooked the necessity of the human desire to command, of human ambition. To repeat, necessities are not necessarily recognized; in fact they necessarily will *not* be recognized by peoples as opposed to princes. Knowledge of the world's necessities includes the necessary ignorance of most human beings regarding those necessities.

These are the necessities Machiavelli has in mind when he says, to return to the crucial paragraph, that it is "necessary to a prince . . . to learn to be able not to be good, and to use it and not use it according to necessity." One might think that it is unnecessary to give advice to act "according to necessity," as if necessity were a choice one could make or not make. But Machiavelli expands the instinctual necessities that dictate the actions of subhuman animals. When he says that a prince must of necessity use a fox and a lion to defeat a wolf, that is, use both fraud and force, he implies that a human can choose his nature rather than be enslaved by it, but that his choice must still follow what he knows to be his necessity. We cannot help noting that human necessity is put to us by Machiavelli in terms of animal necessities, though with their different ways, which is after all a kind of enslavement. Our unique human faculty of choice is set to the task of calculating, not the transcendence, but

the greater efficiency through human versatility of subhuman instincts. Does this not describe the general method of social science today in its various findings of the "determination" of our lives?

Machiavelli, however, has a deeper understanding of necessity because he is much more aware of the alternatives to it in classical philosophy and Christianity. For him the world has its necessities in polemical contrast to those alternatives. He knows he has to defend "the world," truly *his* world, against them. The world he defends is grounded in the earth (*terra*) so as to give it resistance to, leverage against, the attractions of heaven as set forth diversely by Socrates with his successors and by Christianity. For him republics and sects are preserved not by aiming at an end, still less by gaining it. Human institutions become corrupt if they do not return to their beginnings rather than pursue the satisfaction of gaining their ends. At the beginning of human institutions there is fear; so returning to the beginning requires reproducing original fears. Worldly philosophy abandons ends for beginnings.

To preserve either a republic or a principality one must take it back to or toward its beginning, and this means that an appeal to patriotism will not suffice. One must revive the original fear that precedes and is the basis for any later patriotism. Machiavelli was a patriot, to be sure—though for Florence or for Italy? And of course he says in a letter that he loves his *patria* more than his own soul. As a philosopher he might have said that his enterprise is grander than the defense of his *patria*—unless his *patria* is something even grander than Florence and Italy. His *patria* is the world of which he is a knower, sometimes presented as the earth. The universal beginning is a first principle, but with a home—and the home is defined against what is foreign to the earth and above it.

The polemical stance in Machiavelli's thought of "the world" against the other world might make one think that angry spiritedness (in Plato's term *thumos*) has come to prevail in it. He does allow for defensiveness in the fear he endorses and the spiritedness (*animo*) that he wants to release. But he doesn't allow *animo* to

dominate human behavior; he transforms the spiritedness of self-defense into eagerness to acquire. For what is necessity overall? "And truly it is a very natural and ordinary thing to desire to acquire," is Machiavelli's answer in *The Prince*. In the *Discourses*, he says, in a fine example of his sarcastic humor: "[I]n ordering a republic there is need to think of the honorable part and to order it so that if indeed necessity brings it to expand, it can conserve what it has seized." The "honorable part" is the "honor of the world" that he criticized the Christians for ignoring, but Machiavelli has transformed it. No longer does honor come with a claim to justice, as with Plato; in appraising Rome's aggrandizement, Machiavelli ignores its injustice and decides in favor of what he claims that necessity requires. His instruction calls up both fear and glory, two seeming opposites that when set loose bring drama to the human soul. Still, the combination of necessity and desire that he initiates came later to be called, in a more regular mode of his fundamental notion, the "self-interest" of liberalism and bourgeois society. Honor can be brought together with necessity if it can be made clear that the honor of the world compels us to insist on recognizing and acting on human necessities over divine commands. In this way, Machiavelli shows, we do as we wish, as we ought, and as honor demands.

To reform contemplative philosophy, Machiavelli moved to assert the necessities of the world against the intelligibility of the heavenly cosmos and the supra-heavenly whole. *His* nature, as opposed to that of Plato and Aristotle, lacked the lasting or eternal intelligibles of nature as they conceived it. To assert the claim of nature against theology Machiavelli changes nature into the world, or, more precisely, because the world is not an intelligible whole, into "worldly things." This world is the world of sense. In replacing the world of intelligible nature with the world of sense, he discovered the world of fact underneath the reason of things. In doing so he laid the foundation for modern philosophy, which is modern epistemology (as it came to be called) and its two modes, modern empiricism and modern rationalism. To see how Machiavelli discovered "fact," we may return to his

"effectual truth of the thing" in the paragraph of *The Prince* being featured. That notion was contrasted to the imagination of the thing that led to making a profession of good, from which he drew a moral lesson for the prince or indeed for man as such: You will come to ruin if you base yourself on what should be done rather than on what is done.

For example, Machiavelli speaks of the dissensions in Rome between the nobles and the plebs, prior to him condemned by "many" as having ruined the republic. For him, these were the cause not of Rome's ruin but of its strength and freedom. This historical thesis at the start of the *Discourses* begins his attack on Plato's imaginary republic, an attack—though he does not use the word—by fact on imagination. Plato knew very well that all actual cities are full of dissension, and there is no disagreement with Machiavelli on this point. But Plato went on to imagine a city of harmonious justice without dissension in order to see what justice fully required. "Justice" is a word in common use, but by most people ignorantly and incoherently. The real, or strict, meaning of a word is what the thing it describes is in its completion and perfection: real justice as opposed to alleged justice. Plato's dialogues are devoted to developing the truth out of what people commonly and inadvertently assert through reasoning and imagination. That proceeding reason uses imagination to see (with the eye of the mind) what is the justice one would wish for and pray for. For Socrates, imagination is an aid to reason. The human faculty of imagining permits one to make an image of what one sees and to reason out what is necessary or natural in it and what is accidental to it. With imagination, one can rise above justice as observed to justice as it might be at its best and most complete—from fact to definition or form. Imagination fixes on the visible shape or form of things in order to make an image from which one can make an invisible form or definition. This is how Socrates could think, contrary to Machiavelli and his modern successors, that the invisible is more real than the visible.

For Machiavelli, reason does not cooperate with imagination to see the perfection of a thing. The very virtues constituting the perfec-

tion of the soul according to Plato and Aristotle must not be understood as perfect or part of perfection. They are "qualities," a neutral term, that bring "either blame or praise," to be appreciated as they appear to others only as effects. Their effectual truth is quite different from the truth one imagines when they are merely thought out without regard to their effect. When looked at from the standpoint of effectual truth, the virtues that Socrates induced from his companions because they were true or real virtue turn out to be apparent virtue quite opposed to effectual virtue, now said to be real virtue. Machiavelli reverses the upward course of Socratic argumentation and brings it "down to earth." The effect, and not the intent understood as intent toward perfection, is the locus of good, and when judging the intent from the standpoint of the effect, vice, or some combination of vice and virtue, is more powerful than virtue alone, and blame is more effectual than praise.

Machiavelli questions the primacy of the good and dethrones it as the object of human action. Men do not have a natural preference for real or true good as opposed to what is merely apparent, as was the basis of Socrates's arguments. They are satisfied ("satisfied and stupefied") with the apparent good they see in "good effects," especially if they are impressive or sensational. Good effects are what they appear to be; they are deeds, *faits accomplis*. The accomplished facts of Machiavelli are the origin of the modern notion of fact. Fact is what everyone sees, including the vulgar, indeed principally the vulgar, because the vulgar many reveal the effectual truth of the few wise. Wisdom is in its effect on the unwise. It is not that the wise disappear or are no longer needed but that their wisdom is effectual, and in that sense is as it appears to the many of their audience. Fact is what can gain common assent, typically by being opposed to our intent or wish: Facts are stubborn or brute, standing in one's way and demanding acceptance.

Imagination does not disappear in Machiavelli, but from its status in Plato as an aid to reason toward knowledge it is demoted to a deviation of reason away from "what is done." Clearly

Machiavelli, like Plato, has a perfect republic in his imagination, one that may even last forever. But it is not the one imagined to be what perfect justice would require, as in Plato's *Republic*, but one imagined from reasoning with the necessities that face actual republics and finding remedies for their imperfect prudence. This "perpetual republic," if it could exist, would also be, like Plato's, under a philosopher-king, or prince. The difference is that Plato has in mind not Socrates personally but someone like him—whereas Machiavelli thinks of himself. Basing his republic on the facts of actual republics, he introduces the modern notion that practice follows directly from theory, so that knowledge ("firm science" he calls it) is perfected with practice: Knowledge is power. What Machiavelli knows is effectual; it makes him the prince not just in principle but in fact.

Machiavelli, we have seen, substitutes the world with its necessities for two rival but related notions. The first is the other world of Christianity and the second is the cosmos of classical rationalism with its intelligible and intelligent beings. Both notions set the highest virtue in contemplation, and by means of that virtue hover over this world to criticize it from their very different standpoints, the godliness of Christianity and the nobility of Socratic philosophy. Machiavelli believed that the two notions were related in their high-mindedness, the Christian God being the effectual truth of the good or the idea of the good of the philosopher, for men in their spiritedness would want to personify the good in a being that would guarantee its possession for them. They would want a Providence to take care of them. Therefore, to defend this world Machiavelli decided that he would have to go beyond the equivocal compromises with Christianity made by the humanists and attack it directly and openly, rather than combine it, and thus compare it with classical rationalism as they did. He would have to "depart from the orders of others" and leave the ancients behind, much as he loved them. He would have to forsake the Renaissance. For the sake of philosophy and of humanity he would alter the character of philosophy, uniting it with practice, with the result that it recommended a

very different sort of humanity. No longer are we to imitate Socrates and Jesus; our models now are Severus and Cesare Borgia, installing the new primacy of evil. Evil is of course somehow good, but good folk, if they want to be reasonable, have to admit this.

One other phrase from our single paragraph in *The Prince* needs to be examined. Machiavelli says that it appears to him more fitting to “go directly” (*andare dritto*) to the effectual truth, bypassing the profession of good. To look at the effect or the outcome of an event means to consider it in the light of the necessity, that is the various necessities, of its participants, and thereby to ignore their opposing intentions regarding its goodness. Goodness is complicated, which is why it requires a “profession of good in all regards.” Necessity simplifies by “going directly” to the effect without regard to opposing claims and doubtful or contradictory reasonings. Machiavelli recommends acting first and reasoning—rationalizing—afterwards. An example of what he wants to avoid can be seen at the Palazzo Pubblico of Siena, rival of Florence, in the Sala della Pace and its famous frescoes of Good and Bad Government, done by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in 1338–40. These frescoes show the “effects” of good and bad government on opposite walls, the virtues of the one and vices of the other. The effects imply the possibility of choice between virtue and vice. They are connected by a wall that amounts to a depiction of the sort of profession of good to which Machiavelli refers. It displays both theological virtues and moral virtues and “justice” appears twice, once under the theological virtues (featuring capital punishment) and once under “wisdom,” which leads to “concord” with a cord connecting all citizens to a man who represents the Sienese community. Here is confusion, or let us say complication, arising from the typical problems of classical political philosophy mixed with Christianity: The relationships between intellectual and moral virtue, theology and philosophy, morality and political concord. In this painting the political effects, good and bad, emerge from an articulation of the good; in Machiavelli, the effects result from

an imputed necessity that deliberately ignores what people say and thinkers think. Our social science today believes in what it calls the fact/value distinction, meaning that fact is science and value is not. In so behaving, it ignores, as much as it can, the profession of good that accompanies every human action and follows Machiavelli's effectual truth unconsciously and with brusque, unjustified confidence in its own independence.

To sum up this compressed view of Machiavelli's enterprise: It is new and recommends what is new; It shows that the use of dirty tricks is for our good; It reveals the philosopher as prince; It calls for the effectual versus the imagined truth; It finds that truth in the world, which is the world of necessity and the world of sense; It uncovers and explains what would later be called “fact”; It solves problems by simplifying them in the manner of modern natural and social science.

A difficulty remains, however, in the notion of effectual truth: Is all truth effectual truth? Is philosophy now to have an agenda for changing the world, rendering it rational, and leaving behind the former philosophy that wished merely to understand, and not to understand for the sake of power to effect change? Machiavelli promises that the effectual truth will work; it will save us from ruin among so many who are not good. But is it true that it works? Have we not seen in the twentieth century that atheist regimes can be as harmful to humanity, indeed far more harmful, than the religious ones that Machiavelli and Hobbes and all the other modern philosophers feared and despised and attempted to replace? The truth of effectual truth has to be judged by its promises, its professions of good. This truth would be plain truth, not effectual or tendentious truth. It is very difficult of access because of the very success of Machiavelli's enterprise, which covers over its beginning. The modern philosophy Machiavelli founded, like the modern science founded by his successors, has the character of progress, each stage going further than the preceding and, if not erasing it, rendering it obsolete. Machiavelli's ancient and Biblical adversaries—and even Machiavelli himself—seem simplistic and irrelevant to us today. We are altogether too much impressed by “effectual truth.”

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