



IDEAS IN CONTEXT

Roman Monarchy and the Renaissance Prince



Peter Stacey

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ROMAN MONARCHY AND THE RENAISSANCE PRINCE

Beginning with a sustained analysis of Seneca's theory of monarchy in the treatise *De clementia*, Peter Stacey traces the formative impact of ancient Roman political philosophy upon medieval and Renaissance thinking about princely government on the Italian peninsula from the time of Frederick II to the early-modern period. *Roman Monarchy and the Renaissance Prince* offers a systematic reconstruction of the pre-humanist and humanist history of the genre of political reflection known as the mirror-for-princes tradition – a tradition which, as Stacey shows, is indebted to Seneca's *speculum* above all other classical accounts of the virtuous prince – and culminates with a comprehensive and controversial reading of the greatest work of Renaissance monarchical political theory, Machiavelli's *The Prince*. Peter Stacey brings to light a story which has been lost from view in recent accounts of the Renaissance debt to classical antiquity, providing a radically revisionist account of the history of the Renaissance prince.

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Roman Monarchy and the Renaissance Prince

IDEAS IN CONTEXT

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ROMAN MONARCHY AND THE RENAISSANCE PRINCE

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Introduction

The protagonist of this book is a Roman political theory which helped to define the intellectual and ideological contours of the European early-modern state by performing an important historical and conceptual role in the formation of the Renaissance prince. This role has gradually become obscured over recent centuries, and the main purpose of the following chapters is to try to illuminate it. My explanation of the theory's contribution to the history of the sovereign state consists in two basic parts. The first is in terms of its conceptual character: it is a theory about the sovereign *princeps*, and an argument which is explicitly concerned to delineate a series of relations between the *princeps* and the *status* of various entities. So, for example, the prince is said to have the 'state' of those persons whom he governs in his hand; he is described as a tutor of 'the public state'; and his *principatus* is supposed to reflect the 'state of the world'. These claims are connected to a distinctive way of thinking about persons which considers their status from the point of view of the universal law of reason, rather than from a purely local legal perspective. The theory holds that persons should be governed according to the same rationality which governs the cosmos. One consequence of this approach was that it introduced to Roman political discourse a novel way of looking at the question of what a free or unfree person was. These manoeuvres and their revolutionary character are at the heart of my investigation of the theory and its classical setting in the first part of the book.

The second part of the explanation of how this conceptual apparatus came to structure the early-modern state is the history of its use as a powerful ideological tool to a succession of Renaissance monarchical regimes across the Italian peninsula between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries. Accounting for the centrality of the Roman theory of the *princeps* to the development of Renaissance monarchical thinking is, on the one hand, a matter of seeing how some fundamental characteristics of the theory itself made it valuable to those political agents wishing to

identify themselves as princes. But it is also necessary to describe its historical role in some detail in order to observe the specificity of its deployment in a set of determinate and different contexts from the *Duecento* onwards. Its doctrines are picked up in piecemeal fashion, adapted and occasionally transformed according to local ideological needs across a series of social, political and military conflicts and legitimisation crises; and it is through its initial involvement in these polemical contexts that discursive regularities are stabilised and coherent ideologies developed at a local level. The structure of my argument is designed to negotiate a path through these considerations. The classical section in which I examine the construction and content of the Roman theory is followed by five Renaissance chapters which trace out the story of how, why and to what effect, subsequent to its recovery by the medieval West, its language came to inform the articulation of the person of the Renaissance *princeps* in all three types of secular monarchical settings – imperial, royal and signorial – which characterised the political geography of the Italian peninsula between the *Duecento* and the High Renaissance.

Ancient Rome might seem the obvious place to start any genealogy of the *princeps*, that most Roman of persons, but my insistence on returning to the Roman theory of monarchy – to point out its existence, to say who wrote it and when, what it says and why – is related to two specific concerns. The first of these is to try to reverse some of the effects of its gradual, and perhaps even systematic, occlusion from the historiography of the Renaissance's ideological and intellectual debt to classical antiquity. The history of that occlusion is another story. But one explanation for why the theory remains obscured may be that we have become accustomed to thinking about the various languages which the Renaissance recovered from Roman antiquity in terms which have the effect of eclipsing a defining political and ideological event in the history of ancient Roman political life and literature. There is a massive caesura running down the centre of that history caused by the Roman revolution and the establishment of the Roman Principate under Augustus. The figure of the *princeps* is a product of that revolution. But the Roman revolution rather disappears – and with it the theory of the *princeps* – in the analytical categories currently deployed to talk about the body of concepts which were drawn from Roman literature into the various social, political, moral, literary, rhetorical, pedagogical and philosophical languages of the Renaissance, particularly those articulated in a humanist idiom. By excavating the classical theory of monarchy, I aim to prise open the general categories of 'Roman historians', 'Roman rhetorical models', 'Roman moralists', 'Roman moral

philosophy', 'the Roman authors', 'the Roman tradition' and 'Romanism' which are now in use within Renaissance historiography.¹ These descriptions have proved extremely important in emphasising the *Romanitas* of the Renaissance. But they are also deceptively flat and can hide as much as they reveal when they are used to imply an homogeneity or stability of political, moral and rhetorical outlook where none exists either in Roman or in Renaissance discourse. My specific aim in searching to break into this compound terminology is to recuperate some precise instances of the reordering which occurs at a conceptual level in the legal, political, visual and ethical apparatus elaborated after the Roman revolution. This process produces some of the monarchical and monological elements of Roman political theory which make a distinctive contribution to the historical formation of a post-classical European subjectivity and to the construction of a sovereign order within early-modern states.

The Roman theory of monarchy is an extended act of conceptual redefinition which has an almost embarrassingly imperial provenance. Its vision of a peaceful and happy principate extending across the entire world under the government of the virtuous *princeps* – humane, self-reflecting and thoroughly conscientious – reveals so frank a commitment to a global hegemony founded upon sovereign reason that it seems scarcely straight-faced. Its description of the *res publica* appears not to be very republican. And its idea of liberty – that a free person is one who lives according to universal reason and the law of nature – enables the Roman prince to assume a strikingly absolutist position at the head of the body politic, to rebut the accusation that the Roman Principate was a form of domination, and to suggest that, under his loving care, the body politic had been actually liberated rather than enslaved at the point of the sword by Caesarian conquest. Its latinity is not to everyone's taste, and, perhaps most awkwardly of all, its author is not Cicero. Yet none of these characteristics prevented this Roman argument about the *princeps* from becoming profoundly implicated in the constitution of monarchical political government on the Italian peninsula from the *Duecento* onwards. By the early sixteenth century, it had become so fundamental to the language which articulated the *persona* of the Renaissance prince that it attracted the unwavering hostility of Machiavelli in *Il Principe*. Surveying a peninsula which had seen the steady rise to power of monarchical regimes over the course of more than two and a half centuries, Machiavelli's argument

¹ For examples of this terminology, see Skinner 1981: 25, 30, 34, 35 (reiterated in Skinner 2000: 28–9, 32, 34); Tuck 1993: 6, 9, 10, 12, 14; Viroli 1992: 14.

comprises a meticulously constructed attack upon a vision of the *persona* of the *princeps* and his *principatus* which had come to captivate the Renaissance imagination. The concluding chapters of the book describe this assault on the Roman argument about the prince.

Machiavelli's text furnishes the other principal reason I begin my argument with a reconsideration of the classical case for the prince. My aim is to bring more sharply into focus the shattering effect of Machiavelli's attack upon the tradition of political reflection which has in recent decades become very closely identified with a humanist literature about the prince usually designated as the *speculum principis*, or 'mirror-for-princes' genre. I reiterate the conventional wisdom that there is the closest possible relation between Machiavelli's text and the ideology of the princely mirror, a context first suggested in the pioneering work of Felix Gilbert and in the scholarship of Allan Gilbert, but subsequently elaborated, modified and refined with unrivalled precision, and to immensely powerful effect, by Quentin Skinner in his classic interpretation of *Il Principe*.² This context is now well-observed within Machiavellian scholarship, but it is Skinner's work which has most fully demonstrated how and why Machiavelli's text is 'a contribution to the genre of advice-books for princes which at the same time revolutionised the genre itself'. I also sustain a view of Machiavelli's argument which endorses Skinner's recent description of the great moralist as 'essentially the exponent of a neo-classical form of humanist political thought'.³ And my interpretation is, in some ways, an extended corroboration of Skinner's insistence that the 'most original and creative aspects' of 'Machiavelli's political vision are best understood as a series of polemical – sometimes even satirical – reactions against the humanist assumptions he inherited and basically continued to endorse'.⁴ However, whereas both Felix Gilbert and Skinner began a systematic reconstruction of the ideology around a series of princely mirrors produced in the second half of the fifteenth century, this account begins to trace out the monarchical language of the genre in the second half of the first century. It commences with a detailed study of *De clementia*, the political treatise of the Stoic philosopher Seneca which lays out a vision of the Roman *princeps* and his *principatus* and which declares in its opening sentence that its argument is designed to perform the role of a mirror. The Senecan text is the earliest surviving example of a Latin *speculum principis*, and the only surviving example of a

² Gilbert 1977a: 91–114; Gilbert 1938; Skinner 1978, I: 116–38; Skinner 1981: 21–47; Skinner 1981: 423–34; Skinner 2000: 23–53; Skinner 2002, II: 134–47.

³ Skinner 2000: Preface. ⁴ Skinner 2000: Preface.

systematic attempt to theorise the Roman monarchy. The theory is articulated in the demonstrative mode, that most princely of rhetorical genres; it is envisaged as an image of a person; and, as its central conceit reveals, its fortunes were tied to a view of the world in which both a text and a person could be said and be seen to reflect things as they really were. The central chapters of this book indicate how those fortunes were gradually but firmly secured across nearly three centuries of Renaissance political experience. In so doing, they provide an explanation as to why the Senecan argument of *De clementia* should have become the object of Machiavelli's theoretical concerns in *Il Principe*.

In laying out this more extensive thesis, I hold fast to some of the unassailable elements of the Skinnerian interpretation of *Il Principe* and its ideological context, while at the same time introducing two main modifications to it. The first consists in underlining that this humanist ideological tradition is considerably longer in the making than is currently envisaged. Skinner himself has recently provided a more detailed view of the development of the mirror-for-princes literature during the *Trecento*, but commentators on Renaissance political thought tend to follow the earlier view proposed by Gilbert and sustained by Skinner in *Foundations* that 'the heyday' of humanist princely writing is largely a development of the second half of the *Quattrocento*, a phenomenon then contrasted with an earlier 'civic' phase of humanist political thought.⁵ By contrast, I analyse its formation within a much more extensively structured political context which stretches well back into the *Duecento* in order to embrace the reign of Frederick II in the Kingdom of Sicily and the crisis of government within the northern Italian communes which precipitates the rise to power of the *signori*. I do so in order to indicate a very long 'pre-humanist' history of the princely ideology of the mirror prior to its emergence in Petrarchan humanist discourse in the 1340s.

But the fundamental change which I introduce to the Skinnerian perspective on Machiavelli's text concerns the theoretical structure of the humanist ideology of the *princeps* and its classical provenance. My basic point is that we may have been tracking the wrong Roman theory in our study of Machiavelli's *Il Principe* and its ideological context. I argue that we need to turn away from Cicero's *De officiis* and concentrate on Seneca's *De clementia* and its formative place in Renaissance political thought in order to see more closely what Machiavelli's text is doing. The importance of

⁵ For the *Trecento* material, see Skinner 1988: 414–16; Skinner 2002, II: 120–6. For emphasis on the later *Quattrocento*, see Gilbert 1977a: 93–109; Skinner 1978, I: 115–17; Skinner 1988: 423–5; Skinner 2002, II: 134–5. For similar views, see Rubinstein 1991: 30–5; Viroli 1998: 52.

Seneca to Machiavelli in *Il Principe* has certainly been suggested before. In the late 1960s, an insightful article by Neal Wood explored what he saw as the ‘parallels in their thought’.⁶ And in *Philosophy and Government* in the early 1990s, Richard Tuck observed that *Il Principe* was ‘largely an indirect criticism of Seneca rather than Cicero’, recalling that ‘Cicero, after all, had not provided a defence of princely government comparable to Seneca’s *De clementia*’.⁷ This assertion was, I think, fundamentally correct, although it made it harder to make sense of Tuck’s elaboration of a great distinction between an ‘old’ humanism which was said, somewhat contradictorily, to have been ‘dominated by the ideas and the style of Cicero’, and a ‘new’ early-modern humanism.⁸ It also incidentally raised the question of the degree of intimacy with which Machiavelli engages with the Senecan theory, and it is perhaps worth confronting this issue immediately. Are there grounds for thinking that all or any part of Machiavelli’s text is explicitly and self-consciously engaged in reversing the contentions of Seneca himself in *De clementia*? Or is *Il Principe* better understood as an ‘indirect’ intervention, an attack upon a series of prevalent ideological conventions which may well have the effect of overturning crucial doctrines of Seneca’s political theory – assuming for the moment that the Senecan argument had indeed come to inform Renaissance princely discourse significantly by Machiavelli’s day – but which nevertheless stops short of an engagement with the classical text itself? I veer strongly towards the former view at certain points of my analysis of the Machiavellian text for reasons which I hope to make clearer. But I cannot see any reason for supposing that such an interpretation necessarily rules out the latter view either. A strategy in which one alternates between occasionally criticising contemporary beliefs on their own terms and occasionally dragging them back to some earlier and more theoretical point of their formulation is not so arcane. On the contrary, in view of Machiavelli’s famous claim in the preface that his volume is the fruit of ‘una lunga esperienza delle cose moderne et una continua lezione delle antiche’, it makes considerable sense to think that his text is concerned with both ancient and modern wisdom about princely government.⁹ After all, Machiavelli straightforwardly names and cites ancient authorities on occasion in his text.¹⁰ The thought that he might be shown to be engaging with a particular set of classical political opinions which has not yet been clearly identified does not seem to be a particularly controversial one. And somewhere in between the two

⁶ Wood 1968: II. ⁷ Tuck 1993: 20. ⁸ Tuck 1993: 5. ⁹ Machiavelli 1960: 13.

¹⁰ Machiavelli 1960, Ch.XIII: 61 (Tacitus); Ch.XVIII: 69 (Virgil).

poles of ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ criticism, we might also need to consider the existence of a series of literary tactics regularly used by humanists to imitate, to ironise or to mimic their classical sources without citing them explicitly. What may look like rather oblique or veiled allusion in the work of Renaissance humanist writers on princely government is often the studiously cultivated effect of Renaissance rhetorical art. Some careful decoding is sometimes necessary in order to avoid deploying the categories of direct and indirect criticism too bluntly.

However, the person who has most carefully and consistently drawn attention to the irrefutable place of *De clementia* in the ideology which Machiavelli is subverting is, in fact, Skinner himself.¹¹ Since each of my points of departure from his interpretation of *Il Principe* represent to a considerable degree the development of ideas indicated in various parts of his scholarship on the Machiavellian text and its Renaissance background, I want to delineate them with some care at the outset.

Skinner’s work on Renaissance thought in general has effected a dramatic transformation in our understanding of how and why Roman classical concepts and arguments structured humanist political discourse. The extent of his contribution is particularly discernible in the obligation not only to recognise, in the light of his work on Machiavelli in particular, the pervasive Roman character of the classical republicanism expressed in the *Discorsi* but also to acknowledge that virtually all of the categories which *Il Principe* deploys are similarly Roman. Machiavelli is engaged in controverting a profoundly Roman story about how the prince should behave. The fact that he does so in no less profoundly Roman rhetorical mode, as a number of scholars have been illustrating for some time – Kahn, Cox, Viroli and Hörnquist most recently – only serves to underline the point further.¹² Even Althusser – not, perhaps, the closest reader of the text, but a no less creative interpreter of Machiavelli’s thesis for all that – could see that the work had practically nothing to do with Aristotle.¹³ In sum,

¹¹ See especially Skinner 1981: 29 (for Seneca and *fortuna*); 36 (for Senecan *magnanimitas* and *liberalitas* in *De clementia* and *De beneficiis*); 45–6 (for *crudelitas* in *De clementia* and in *Il Principe*); Machiavelli 1988: xvii, xxi (for the same conceptual connection); xxii (for notions of affability and accessibility in *De clementia* with which Machiavelli disagrees).

¹² Kahn 1994; Cox 1997; Viroli 1998: 73–113; Hörnquist 2004: 4–37. For a bibliography on Machiavelli’s rhetoric, see Cox 1997: 1110, n.3.

¹³ Althusser 1999: 36. For Althusser’s reliance on the French Barincou edition of the text, see note at ix. For a restatement of the fact that neither the basic Aristotelian category of ‘politics’ nor any of its cognate forms is used by Machiavelli in his text, see Viroli 1992: 129, esp. n. 8; for Machiavelli’s Aristotelian concerns in *Il Principe*, see Pocock 1975: 156–82; Mansfield 1996; Hörnquist 2004: 211–27.

Machiavelli's argument is about the government of persons and states, its precepts are self-consciously articulated according to the principles of Roman classical rhetoric, and the central concepts which structure Machiavelli's theory – *principe* and *principato*, *imperio* and *stato*, *virtù* and *ragione*, *fortuna*, *necessità* and *occasione*, *libertà* and *servitù*, *onore* and *gloria*, *fama* and *reputazione* – are translations of a terminology which had been almost entirely imported into Renaissance thinking about the figure of the prince from Roman literature.

Furthermore, Skinner's analysis of Machiavelli's 'humanist allegiances' and 'the unbridgeable gulf between himself and the whole tradition of humanist political thought' has taken us to the core of the Machiavellian revolution by indicating with unparalleled perspicacity a crucial conceptual rupture which occurs at the heart of *Il Principe*.¹⁴ As Skinner explains, the central theoretical contention over which Machiavelli parts company with his humanist predecessors and their classical authorities is the fundamental belief that the rational course of action in every conceivable situation will never involve a properly discerning moral agent in a conflict between considerations of what is right and honourable on the one hand, and calculations of what is beneficial on the other.¹⁵ Machiavelli's self-proclaimed departure 'very greatly' from the line of thinking 'of the others' is thus said to consist in his identification of just such a clash between what is deemed, in the Latin terminology in which this ethical doctrine was discussed by classical and humanist authors, to be *dignum* or *honestum* – that is, honourable – and thus in accordance with what is virtuous, and what is, in fact, *utile* in view of the primary princely task of *mantenere lo stato* which Machiavelli posits.¹⁶

The point at which these profound insights into the Machiavellian revolution begin to lose some of their clarity occurs when the event is located within an ideological field constituted by a *speculum principis* literature which is simultaneously held to be primarily structured by the contentions of Cicero's *De officiis*. According to Skinner, Machiavelli is engaged in subverting 'above all Cicero's general treatise on moral duties, *De officiis*', and this view is now widely shared.¹⁷ In *Foundations*, the conceptual core of the writings of the 'mirror-for-princes theorists' of the

¹⁴ Skinner 2000: 39, 44. ¹⁵ Skinner 2000: 41–3.

¹⁶ Machiavelli 1960, Ch.XV: 65: 'partendomi, massime nel disputare questa materia, dalli ordini delli altri'.

¹⁷ For this argument (which runs throughout his writings on the text), see Skinner's introduction to Machiavelli 1988: xv. For the consensus, see Colish 1978; Viroli 1992: 131; Viroli 1998: 52–4; Jackson Barlow 1999.

later fifteenth century was said to be derived from an earlier, somewhat collapsed Ciceronian civic tradition.¹⁸ In a more recent exploration of *Trecento* material on the prince, Skinner has described the argument of Petrarch in his famous letter to Francesco da Carrara in the 1370s in terms of the 'overwhelming extent of his debt to Cicero, especially the doctrines of the *De officiis*'.¹⁹ The same is said to hold for his 'humanist successors'.²⁰ Viroli has similarly asserted that 'Petrarch's main source is Cicero' in the letter.²¹ Both princely and civic humanist ideologies thus come to be primarily informed by Cicero and the precepts of Cicero's *De officiis*.

We need to clarify the relation between *De officiis* and the mirror-for-princes genre which is currently believed to be indebted to it. This belief is generating a series of claims peculiar to the pervasive logic of a Ciceronian Renaissance. It is striking, for instance, to find it said that in *Il Principe* Machiavelli is attacking 'the conventional Ciceronian precept that to attain glory and preserve his state the prince must be virtuous'.²² Cicero himself, of course, laid down no such precept, and *De officiis* is quite transparently not a mirror for a prince. It is the most violently anti-Caesarian and profoundly anti-monarchical tract to come down to us from Roman antiquity, which is one reason it became a key text to the republican tradition, as Skinner points out.²³ It does not give us the concept of a virtuous *princeps*, and it does not extend any image of either *principe* or *principato* to which Machiavelli can be said to be referring when he famously declares his departure from 'le cose circa uno principe immaginate' or when he disagrees with a consensus of opinion in which, as he even more scathingly puts it, 'molti si sono immaginati repubbliche e principati che non si sono mai visti né conosciuti essere in vero'.²⁴ On the contrary, *De officiis* gives us a republican ideology which makes it virtually impossible to describe monarchy as anything other than tyranny. Of course, none of these characteristics militate against the text being put to a wholly different use in a transformed, monarchical setting. This is, in fact, exactly what happened. But a very great deal needs to happen to Cicero's account of virtue in the Roman republic in order to make it plausibly yield the idea of a *bonus princeps*. In short, the *princeps* needs to become the best, rather than the worst possible thing that can occur to a *res publica*. This process of ideological recharacterisation is not, however, the surreptitious achievement of Renaissance humanists who turn the text to their own

¹⁸ Skinner 1978, I: 117–19; Skinner 2002, II: 135. ¹⁹ Skinner 1988: 415; Skinner 2002, II: 124–5.

²⁰ Skinner 1988: 416. ²¹ Viroli 1992: 72. ²² Viroli 1998: 52.

²³ Skinner 2002, II: 27. ²⁴ Machiavelli 1960, Ch.XV: 65.

advantage and silently step over its anti-monarchism. It occurs in the first century as a consequence of the Roman revolution. A great deal of the crucial redescription of the central concepts of Roman republican discourse is undertaken within *De clementia*. In performing this task, Seneca is a philosophical participant in a wider process long observed in the formation of Roman imperial ideology: the construction of the person of the *princeps* upon the identity of the *civis*, and the creative reorganisation of some central republican concepts in order to represent a degree of continuity across a revolutionary act of military conquest, after which, as Paul Veyne points out most recently in his brilliant study of Seneca, ‘everything changed’.²⁵

The series of reconfigurations performed in the Senecan text came to constitute the theoretical groundwork of the Renaissance ideology of the *princeps* to a remarkable extent. Take the topic debated in *De officiis* about whether it is better to be loved or feared when acting in government. Seneca is easily the most rigorous of all Roman writers on monarchical government, pagan and Christian, to tackle Cicero’s allegation that Caesar had become so feared and hated by his attempts to enslave the Roman citizens and make himself their *princeps* that it had ensured his overthrow. Seneca reprises the topic and reorganises it entirely. Part of his explanation as to why a virtuous prince is not a contradiction in terms involves Seneca in a redefinition of tyranny. That redefinition produces a stark contrast between the love that exists between the perfectly rational, merciful prince and those whom he rules, and the fear and hate that his reverse image correspondingly incurs as a result of his inhumane cruelty. The antithesis between tyrannical bestiality and princely manliness which so crisply defines the *persona* of the Renaissance prince and which Machiavelli’s theory confounds is not Ciceronian – Cicero had nothing to say at all about princely *virtus* in *De officiis*. However, as humanists from Petrarch to Erasmus very clearly saw, the antithesis was absolutely pivotal to the Senecan construction of the Roman monarch in *De clementia*, where the figure of the monstrously cruel tyrant is depicted at great length. There were undoubtedly considerable political, polemical, moral and rhetorical benefits to be gained from occasionally adducing Cicero’s words to acclaim a loveable prince and to support his vision of *libertas*, *iustitia* and the *res publica* – a vision so markedly different from that of Cicero himself. But the ability to draft in Cicero to the prince’s cause was the product of

²⁵ Veyne 2003: 152. For the construction of the emperor’s person as a republican citizen, see especially Wallace-Hadrill 1981; Wallace-Hadrill 1982.

centuries of ideological accretion. In the case of the ideological construction of the loveable *princeps* in humanist princely writing, Seneca's political theory could hardly be said to be the only source of support for the idea within Roman imperial literature. Yet it was nevertheless crucial to that construction, perhaps because it was the most concerted philosophical attempt to explain why the virtuous prince is so loved. The fact that the explanation was couched in terms of the prince's merciful and humane behaviour towards his subjects helped to make the Senecan text a favourite place to go for arguments in support of enlightened monarchy – arguments which attracted the deepest hostility of Machiavelli.

That the topic of love and fear was one which both Cicero and Seneca had analysed in different ways rather than the peculiar property of the Ciceronian argument is a discursive fact about the classical texts which is very apparent to writers on government in the *Duecento*. Humanists from Petrarch onwards proved equally as adept in recurring both to the monarchical and the republican theories in order to amplify their discussions of the matter. This characteristic of the history of the debate about love and fear in Renaissance political writing is not very apparent in the existing historiography. But it is arguably crucial to understanding why Machiavelli's own contribution to the debate occurs in a chapter which is headed by the title *De crudelitate et pietate; et an sit melius amari quam timeri, vel e contra*, and which opens with him declaring that 'every prince should want to be thought merciful, not cruel; nevertheless one should take care not to be merciful in an inappropriate way'.²⁶ Skinner is punctilious in reminding readers that Machiavelli's treatment of *crudelitas* is here engaging with 'the classic analysis of this evil, Seneca's *De clementia*'; and he goes even further in describing Machiavelli's attack as one launched against 'the accepted image of the true prince, one mainly derived from Seneca's famous account'.²⁷ But the same consideration should also extend to Machiavelli's discussion of 'whether it is better to be loved than feared', a debate which the title of the chapter itself links to the quality of *crudelitas*, but which is said to see Machiavelli 'directly alluding to *De officiis* II, 7, 23–4'.²⁸ Yet it is Seneca who tells the Renaissance at length about cruelty and mercy, and love and fear, in his definition of the virtuous prince. The

²⁶ Machiavelli 1960, Ch.XVII: 68 (Machiavelli 1988: 58): 'dico che ciascuno principe debbe desiderare di esser tenuto pietoso e non crudele: non di manco debbe avvertire di non usare male questa pietà.' Except where stated otherwise, I either cite Price and Skinner's translation or use it as the basis of my own.

²⁷ Machiavelli 1988: xvii.

²⁸ Machiavelli 1988: xvii (discussing Machiavelli 1960, Ch.XVII: 69–71, esp. his declaration at 69: 'Nasce da questo una disputa: s'elli è meglio essere amato che temuto, o e converso').

Senecan prince 'is loved, defended and courted by the entire *civitas*'.²⁹ His security is assured by the fact that his mercy wins him 'one impregnable bulwark – the love of the citizens'.³⁰ A cruel tyrant, on the other hand, is 'hated because he is feared, and being hated makes him want to be feared'.³¹ Machiavelli disagrees: 'a prince must nevertheless make himself feared in such a way, that, even if he does not become loved, he does not become hated' since 'it is perfectly possible to be feared without incurring hatred'.³² Machiavelli may well be alluding to Cicero in this chapter. In fact, it seems highly likely: as he points out, the topic is the subject of a dispute, and that dispute had conventionally drawn in evidence from both classical writers. But Machiavelli is nevertheless intervening in a specifically Senecan construction of the debate, and not merely because he is writing – like Seneca – about the connections between cruelty, love and fear in a theory of the virtuous prince. The shocking impact of his chapter consists in its blurring a distinction which only emerges in the Senecan division between humane prince and bestial tyrant. The Ciceronian theory made no distinction for the Renaissance to develop and for Machiavelli to subvert: in *De officiis*, the very idea of a *princeps* is held to be an appallingly tyrannical prospect.

Armed with a knowledge of the Roman theory of the prince and its Renaissance history, a similar degree of specificity about the object of Machiavelli's attacks can be identified throughout his text. The explanation for this focus may be almost deceptively simple. In putting forward his own controversial case, Machiavelli is, I maintain, undermining a classical argument which had come to inform humanist thinking in the ideology of the mirror to a striking degree because it was an argument specifically about the *princeps* and princely government. Machiavelli is not indiscriminately wielding a Roman political, moral, philosophical and social vocabulary in the direction of monarchy; he is moving it about within a determinate conceptual field particularly indebted to one classical composition for the way in which its terms had come to be related. Identifying this degree of structure to the apparatus under reconceptualisation does not

²⁹ Seneca 1928a, I.13.4: 396: 'a tota civitate amatur, defenditur, colitur'. I normally cite Cooper and Procopé's translation of *De clementia* (Seneca 1995), but here the translation is mine.

³⁰ Seneca 1928a, I.19.6: 412 (Seneca 1995: 151): 'salvum regem clementia in aperto praestabit. Unum est inexpugnabile munimentum amor civium.'

³¹ Seneca 1928a, I.12.4: 392–4 (Seneca 1995: 144): 'Nam cum invisus sit, quia timetur, timeri vult, quia invisus est.'

³² Machiavelli 1960, Ch.XVII: 70 (Machiavelli 1988: 59): 'Debbe non di manco el principe farsi temere in modo, che, se non acquista lo amore, che fugga l'odio; perché può molto bene stare insieme esser temuto e non odiato.' But note how the causal connection between fear and hate in the Senecan theory continues the theme of the words of Ennius cited by Cicero in *De officiis*, II.7.23.

mean overlooking the presence of other elements of classical writing introduced by Machiavelli into *Il Principe*. Nor is it to overlook the famously creative use to which Machiavelli puts Cicero's *De officiis* in the one place where its presence is spectacularly evident: the passage of Chapter XVIII in which Machiavelli reworks the imagery of fox and lion, retrieved directly from the Ciceronian text, in order to illustrate his point about the need for the prince to cultivate bestial qualities.³³ Machiavelli's recourse to *De officiis* in this chapter illustrates his systematic use of material drawn from a considerable number of Roman texts in a highly complex rhetorical discourse which weaves together examples, voices and images from a considerable range of classical *auctores*. But there is nevertheless a degree of specificity in Machiavelli's system of reference which occasions his descent into the Ciceronian imagery at this point in his argument as he works his way through a series of allusions.³⁴ The reason Machiavelli should turn to the textbook of classical republicanism in this passage in order to envision a princely person equipped with precisely the qualities which Cicero condemns in the *De officiis* is linked to the reason he should turn, in the very same paragraph, to recommend that his prince become a '*gran simulatore e dissimulatore*'.³⁵ For Machiavelli is here similarly advocating to his prince the imitation of another profoundly Roman republican *bête noire*: the person of Catiline. Although there is a distinctive body of rhetorical theory underpinning Machiavelli's conception of the arts of simulation and dissimulation, his choice of words is almost certainly pointed in this passage. For Machiavelli's humanist readers would have been all too aware that the man who had plotted to overthrow the Roman *res publica* and install himself as monarch had been memorably introduced by Sallust in his *Bellum Catilinae* as a *simulator ac dissimulator*.³⁶ At this particular juncture of his argument, Machiavelli is reanimating spectres from Roman republican discourse in order to flesh out his vision of the prince, and the explanation for why words and images from Ciceronian and Sallustian passages come into the picture in this particular chapter requires further comment.

Perhaps the greatest advantage in seeing how and why Machiavelli is intent upon ravaging the perspective of the Senecan mirror is that it helps to illumine arguably the most obscure and vexing part of the Machiavellian

³³ Machiavelli 1960, Ch.XVIII: 72. For a recent assessment of this heavily annotated passage, see Jackson Barlow 1999.

³⁴ Machiavelli 1960, Ch.XVIII: 72. ³⁵ Machiavelli 1960, Ch.XVIII: 73.

³⁶ Sallust 1921, 5.4: 8: '*animus audax subdolos varius, cuius rei lubet simulator ac dissimulator*'.

revolution: the place of the relation between the *princeps* and *fortuna*. Machiavelli's concern to set his audience straight on the proper way to view the effects of *fortuna* in the world is inextricably connected with his assault on the conventional form of the belief that 'it is always rational to be moral', as Skinner puts it.³⁷ It is certainly true that an attempt to dispel the notion that 'a thing may be morally right without being expedient, and expedient without being morally right' lies 'at the heart of Cicero's *Moral Obligation*', as Skinner further indicates.³⁸ But the idea that what is *dignum* is always what is *utile* can hardly be said to be the exclusive property of that Ciceronian theory. On the contrary, it is fundamental to Stoic ethics, as Cicero himself explains in *De officiis* and as Renaissance humanists well knew.³⁹ It is certainly right to say that 'Cicero takes for granted the Stoic doctrine of the identity of the honourable and the beneficial' in *De officiis*; but it nevertheless causes problems for the Roman statesman, who discusses it so laboriously in part because he struggles throughout his theory to keep the equation together.⁴⁰ Cicero, after all, is not a Stoic and he never makes the Roman *res publica* coterminous with the Stoic cosmic *civitas* within which Stoic ethics were conceptualised. But the equation certainly provides the basis of the much more orthodox Stoic reasoning in Seneca's mirror. And that reasoning is effortlessly sustained in *De clementia* partly because of Seneca's view of *fortuna*. Cicero obviously had nothing to say about the relationship between the prince and *fortuna*. Seneca, on the other hand, discusses the terms of that relationship throughout his argument. Setting those terms is a crucial part of his theory. For the Stoic moral formula about the useful and the honourable which comes under such duress in the Machiavellian text demands that you take a very specific stance on the idea of contingency in the world in order to sustain the principle coherently. It demands that you deny that there is, in fact, anything contingent at all about the world. Seneca's exhaustive attempts in his political and moral philosophy to convert his Roman audience to a Stoic, providential point of view about the character of *fortuna* helped turn him into the principal Roman philosopher of a phenomenon whose existence he wanted to argue was more apparent than real. Seneca wrote copiously about *Fortuna's* weaponry, her kingdom, her cruelty and her enslaving designs upon man while at the same time remaining entirely committed to a belief in a divine and providential universe. When the classical mirror is picked up by the medieval West, so is its depiction of the relationship between

³⁷ Skinner 2000: 41. ³⁸ Skinner 2000: 41. ³⁹ Cicero 1913, III.2.7–4.20: 276–86.

⁴⁰ See Griffin's comments in Cicero 1991: xxii, xxxv–xxxvi.

fortuna and the *princeps*. And when Senecan moral philosophy travels from medieval monasteries to Petrarchan humanist circles, so a thoroughly Senecan depiction of the war between the man of virtue and *Fortuna*, the tyrannical *dominatrix*, comes to inform the Renaissance imagination.

So if it is true that the belief that ‘expediency can never conflict with moral rectitude’ is ‘adopted in its entirety by the writers of advice-books for Renaissance princes’, it would therefore follow that these writers must have adopted the type of providentialist perspective on *Fortuna* which Seneca and the Stoics advocated – a perspective which was, besides, assimilable to a Christian moral position.⁴¹ Unless one turns Machiavelli into a providentialist, which is even more absurd than turning him into an Aristotelian, it seems unlikely, then, that he is ‘a typical representative of humanist attitudes’ in ‘his handling of this crucial theme’ of *Fortuna* in the penultimate chapter of *Il Principe*.⁴² On the contrary, it seems highly likely that when Machiavelli parts company with these writers over the basic structure of their ethical thinking, he must also be departing from their commitment to a specific view of *Fortuna*, rather than endorsing or developing an already existing conception of its place in the virtuous government of persons and states.⁴³ Machiavelli’s idea of *Fortuna* is better understood as a crucial part of the subversive apparatus used to effect a conceptual revolution, rather than the extension of an established Renaissance view of the world which had helped to bring forth ‘a new attitude to freedom’ among the humanists of fifteenth-century Italy.⁴⁴ This is not to deny that Renaissance humanists had indeed revived a classical conception of man’s relation to *Fortuna* and explored a new-found sense of liberty as a consequence.⁴⁵ On the contrary, it is an important aspect of my argument about the development of the Senecan ideology to agree that this is precisely what happened. It is Machiavelli who is in violent disagreement with this description of things. He sees that this attitude towards *Fortuna* has helped to bring about quite the reverse of liberty and it is the central aim of his text to put the matter straight. The fact that he does so by reworking both the language and the imagery of the Senecan argument of *De clementia* in his famous chapter on *Fortuna* may yet prove to be another astonishing display of Machiavelli’s masterful economy of violence. Seneca as a providentialist obsessed with *Fortuna*? Machiavelli is merciless in his punishment of this irony.

⁴¹ Skinner 2000: 41. ⁴² Skinner 2000: 32.

⁴³ For discussion of this point, see Newell 1987. ⁴⁴ Skinner 2000: 31.

⁴⁵ For this argument, see Skinner 2000: 28–35.

There are some obvious dangers of over-interpretation which accompany my focus in this book on the historical life of a specific set of ideas: of forcing a reading of Machiavelli's text too exclusively in the light of the Senecan theory; or of stretching an understanding of the Florentine's language to a point where his text would seem to be playing in a rather recondite manner with one particular classical argument above all others. In response first of all to the second type of objection – that I am turning Machiavelli into a literary *érudit* of a rather obsessional nature – I am certainly insistent that Machiavelli is a quite brilliant orator. But I also see him as one engaged in a heated battle, a campaign waged just beneath the apparent calm of his cool definitions and measured typologies. This interpretation of *Il Principe* would shade into the merely suggestive if it remained at the level of the purely literary; but my reading of the text comes after a sustained analysis of the Senecan content of princely humanism from the time of Petrarch onwards. I consider the various historical and ideological reasons, in conjunction with an examination of the language of *Il Principe*, for which it might have made sense for Machiavelli to have discerned and attacked a distinctively Senecan body of doctrine about princely rule. Whether this approach makes my analysis ultimately convincing is another matter. But by making evident in the central chapters the existence of ample humanist precedents for engaging with the Senecan text, I nevertheless hope to bring some historical depth to my arguments.

As for the first type of objection, it should already be clear that I am quite categorically not claiming that *Il Principe* is all about Seneca. I am, however, claiming that an attack on a neo-Senecan ideology constitutes a significant part of Machiavelli's undertaking; and it is that part of the story which I concentrate upon telling in this book. While Renaissance princely ideology in its humanist mode is manifestly made up of a considerable number of diverse classical voices and theoretical strands, there is a relatively stable conceptual framework which runs through its history and which derives from the Roman *speculum principis*, even though it comes to acquire significantly new meanings in a post-classical, Christian environment. That framework determines the princely *persona* in a distinctively Senecan manner. But it also helps to characterise the political body over which the prince rules as a free republic. While these two aspects of the theory are inextricably interrelated, recognising the ideological utility of the second of them to the politics of the prince in the Renaissance may do the most to shake us out of a calm complacency with regard to Machiavelli's theoretical undertaking in *Il Principe*.

One virtually structural characteristic of the fetish of the Florentine Renaissance which Skinner's work has done a great deal to demystify but which the more heavily invested spheres of Anglophone scholarship has nevertheless continued to reproduce has been a reluctance to let the object of its affections too near the rival definition of *libertas* and the *res publica* which had come to inform humanist thinking in monarchical quarters since the inception of a Petrarchan discourse on the *princeps* in the 1340s. I have therefore tried to outline the account of the *res publica* and the idea of *libertas* under a *princeps* which humanists outside Florence were interested in elaborating in the *Trecento*, and to indicate how both concepts have classical credentials which cannot be verified against a Ciceronian Renaissance. The aim here is to contribute material to the reconstruction of the ideological and polemical context in which the Florentines advanced their own neo-classical and markedly Ciceronian argument in the early *Quattrocento*. The steady, and perhaps systematic, removal of the work of Bruni and the civic humanists from a framework in which their concerns can be seen as the product of an engagement with an opposing humanist point of view, an ideological response to a set of well-defined arguments pivoted upon a rival vision of Roman greatness, has enabled their documents to be construed as the outcome of a relentlessly provincialised Florentine perspective, almost wholly fixated upon its own affairs, and incapable of finding, looking at, thinking about, and responding creatively and polemically to a different interpretation of Rome's past emanating from a source beyond it. Part of reversing this tendency involves observing the longevity of the conceptual apparatus with which the prince was armed in 1402 and the depth of the problem which republican thinkers from Bruni to Machiavelli faced. Indeed, what is most striking about the Milanese princely ideology by the time that Giangaleazzo Visconti reaches the environs of Florence in 1402 is not so much that it has to hand a notion of *libertas* and the *res publica* which humanist monarchical discourse has been articulating for over fifty years, but that it is the heir of a specifically Viscontean ideology which has been propagating a version of both of these concepts for over one hundred and twenty years. The Visconti virtually found their regime on the claim to be saving the *res publica* and its *libertas*. And they have an impeccably classical argument with which to sustain their case.

Since my overriding concern has been to bring both the theory and its Renaissance history into view, I have tried as far as possible to resist burdening or colonising its past with more recent conceptual concerns. The aim is to leave the way clear for an historical enquiry into how some of the theoretical elements of the mirror may have helped to structure the

development of early-modern political experience at a practical and conceptual level in such a way that they have contributed to the definition of those later preoccupations. I hope that the notes which accompany my reading of the Senecan text indicate some of the extent to which my attempts to come to grips with Seneca's philosophy have been immensely helped by the brilliant renaissance of Anglophone scholarship on ancient Stoicism. Experts in this particular field may find that I have moved rather too quickly over the complexities which surround the place of Senecan thought within the history of Stoicism as a whole. These *lacunae* are regrettable, and where possible I have attempted in my notes to point the reader to more extended discussions. But I have decided to avoid – for the moment at least – becoming too preoccupied by such theoretical problems in favour of a brisker narrative in view of the overall aim of the book. I have also learnt a great deal from the French 'revival of Seneca' which began in the early 1980s in a literature produced by a publishing circle around Michel Foucault.⁴⁶ It is occasionally difficult to avoid describing the political argument of *De clementia* in a terminology redolent of Foucault's concerns about the self, but this may be because those concerns were sometimes stated in almost hauntingly Senecan terms (Foucault's immersion in Senecan philosophy is well known: he thought Seneca's *Epistulae morales*, for example, superb).⁴⁷ I have certainly drawn some attention to the development of one particular technology of the self (to cite the jargon) in the theory: the classical practice of conscience and its acquisition of a juridical character at the earliest pre-Christian stages of its involvement in western European monarchical power. Generally, though, I have made a concerted effort to try to let the prince speak for himself.

Bringing back this ghost from ancient Rome seems important for one other pressing reason. His is the voice of sovereign reason itself, and to suggest that it has been drowned out in the historical reconstruction of Renaissance political discourse through mere inadvertence is implausible. A certain partiality in the reconstitution of Renaissance intellectual and ideological preoccupations has had the almost exquisite effect of depriving the prince of one of the key arguments which he wielded for his assumption of power, making it much easier for successive generations of modern scholars to tyrannise him. It is unnecessary to recall the seemingly endless

⁴⁶ Foucault 1988; Foucault 2000: 93–106, 207–22; 223–51. For Foucault and Senecan philosophy, see Davidson 1994 (repr. in Gutting 1994: 115–40); Veyne 1993: 1–2; Veyne 2003: ix–x; Hadot 1989: 176–7; Hadot 1992.

⁴⁷ For Foucault's opinion of the *Epistulae morales*, see Veyne 1993: 1.

references to Renaissance tyranny that have come to entitle books and articles as well as to inform analyses of Renaissance political thought in the last fifty years since Hans Baron's decision to characterise not merely the Visconti ruler of Milan in 1402 but also an entire age as one of tyranny.⁴⁸ Baron was hardly the first to think in such terms. Burckhardt famously used the language of tyranny to describe the *signori*; but then Burckhardt also began his account of the Renaissance with their story because he perceived, with almost Nietzschean lucidity, something of the violent and bloody origins of the rationality of the state in their activities.⁴⁹ This unsettling insight was buried by Baron's thesis of civic humanism, which was wedded to the Florentine claim that the Milanese prince was a tyrant (which he was, of course, from a Ciceronian perspective) and to a quaint attempt to medievalise Caesarism. But a propensity to lapse into a language of tyranny or – even more inappropriately – despotism when confronted with the prince in humanist discourse is not restricted to those bound to the culture of the Florentine Renaissance.⁵⁰ Such statements are produced according to the logic of a Ciceronian Renaissance. For the theory of monarchy which is central to the Renaissance prince is pivoted on the contention that it is virtue and virtue alone which makes a prince a prince. Renaissance humanists are quite insistent that the claim to princely status is a moral claim. They allege that a prince is so called by reason of his virtue and by virtue of his reason. This point of view cannot be articulated out of a Ciceronian Renaissance. It belongs to a way of thinking about the government of the republic which only emerges after the Caesarian conquest. It may, of course, be desirable at some level to tyrannise the monarchical rationality that brings us the *princeps*. It may also be a little predictable: the state, after all, has a well-known tendency to cover its tracks. But to silence the prince, deprive him of his weapons, and occlude his vision of the *res publica* and *libertas* arguably points the way to his triumph. Bringing him back into view may help to loosen his grip upon the writing of a Renaissance which is making him disappear to magnificently monarchical effect.

⁴⁸ Baron 1955. For the very latest discussions of Baron's thesis, see the essays in Hankins 2000.

⁴⁹ For Burckhardt and Nietzsche, see in particular Rehm 1928; von Martin 1947; Heller 1971; Montinari 1981. I need to thank Martin Ruehl for invaluable guidance on this subject.

⁵⁰ For an important statement of the need to 'banish the term despot from the vocabulary of late medieval Italian politics', see Kohl 1998: xviii.

PART I

The Roman Princeps

The Roman theory of monarchy

One hundred years and a revolution separate Cicero's *De officiis* from Seneca's *De clementia*. That both texts share a political, moral and rhetorical language to some extent indicates a degree of conceptual continuity in Roman political discourse across the Caesarian divide which is illustrative of a relatively unexceptional fact about the history of ideologies: every political experience, however novel, is rendered intelligible to some degree by the use of pre-existing vocabularies. Both texts articulate political theories in distinctively Roman rhetorical mode; both are primarily concerned with laying down moral precepts as the key to successful political conduct; and neither is particularly exercised by questions of constitutional definition or reform (Seneca in particular is explicitly dismissive of the importance of this line of enquiry). Furthermore, both authors identify the cultivation and practice of *virtus* as crucial to the welfare of the Roman *res publica*; both give accounts of the Roman body politic which delineate the relations between this quality and the concepts of *gloria*, *honor* and *fama* in their prescriptions of its proper exercise; and both are preoccupied with the extent and the effect of the domination represented by the person of Caesar on the politics of their day. But the political distance which has been travelled between the two texts is most obviously revealed in the diametrically opposed positions towards the figure of Caesar and the idea of monarchy which each of them take up.

THE CICERONIAN CRITIQUE OF MONARCHY

The concept of a virtuous prince is rendered virtually a contradiction in terms by Cicero's theory of political virtue in *De officiis*, which associated the institution of monarchy with that of slavery to enduring effect.¹ This

¹ For monarchy as slavery in neo-Roman republicanism from Machiavelli onwards, see Skinner 1998: 36–57; Skinner 2002, II: 286–307. For anti-monarchism more generally in early-modern European republicanism, see the articles in Gelderen and Skinner 2002, I: 1–81.

outcome is very much the point of his text, given the historical circumstances in which it was written. Cicero's 'conservative moral response to the revolution through which he was living' was a moral response to the perceived threat of monarchy.² An integral part of Cicero's account of republican virtue in *De officiis* is the unrelentingly scathing denunciation of the military dictatorship of Julius Caesar as the epitome of the moral and political corruption facing the Roman *res publica*, accompanied by an impassioned defence of his assassination two years earlier in 44 as tyrannicide. The killing of Caesar had been 'the fairest of all splendid deeds' which had gloriously spared the free people of Rome from monarchical servitude.³ The dictator had been 'a man who longed to be king of the Roman people and master of every nation'.⁴ His will to be *dominus* was irrational, unjust and utterly dishonourable: 'if anyone says that such a greed is honourable, he is out of his mind: for he is approving the death of laws and liberty; and counting their oppression – a foul and hateful thing – as something glorious'.⁵ Caesar had been 'a king who oppressed the Roman people themselves with the Roman people's army, and forced a city that was not just free, but even the ruler of the nations, to be his slave . . . what stains of guilt, what wounds do you think he had in his heart?'⁶ He had been nothing other than a 'tyrant, whom the city endured under force of arms'.⁷ The vivid image of a vicious and oppressive tyrant, driven by inordinate desire to enslave the free people of Rome, is further fleshed out by Cicero when he says of Caesar that a particular verse of Euripides was 'always on his lips . . . "If justice must be violated for the sake of ruling, then it must be violated: you may indulge your piety elsewhere."' ⁸ Resorting to the most pejorative political vocabulary available within Roman republican ideology, Cicero thus polemicises relentlessly around

² Atkins 2000: 513.

³ Cicero 1913, III.4.19: 286 (Cicero 1991: 107): 'ex omnibus praeclaris factis illud pulcherrimum'. I cite Griffin and Atkin's translation of *De officiis* throughout.

⁴ Cicero 1913, III.21.83: 356 (Cicero 1991: 131): 'qui rex populi Romani dominusque omnium gentium esse concupiverit idque perfecit'.

⁵ Cicero 1913, III.21.83: 356 (Cicero 1991: 131): 'Hanc cupiditatem si honestam quis esse dicit, amens est; probat enim legum et libertatis interitum earumque oppressionem taetram et detestabilem gloriosum putat.'

⁶ Cicero 1913, III.21.84–5: 358 (Cicero 1991: 132): 'quanto pluris ei regi putas, qui exercitu populi Romani populum ipsum Romanum oppressisset civitatemque non modo liberam, sed etiam gentibus imperantem servire sibi coegisset . . . quas conscientiae labe in animo censes habuisse, quae vulnera?'

⁷ Cicero 1913, II.7.23: 190 (Cicero 1991: 71): 'huius tyranni solum, quem armis oppressa pertulit civitas . . .'

⁸ Cicero 1913, III.21.82: 354–6 (my translation): 'in ore semper Graecos versus de Phoenissis habebat . . . "Nam si violandum est ius, regnandi gratia/Violandum est; aliis rebus pietatem colas."'

the idea that Caesar was driven by *cupiditas regnandi*, a desire to be *rex*, and so to reinstate the system of monarchy whose last representative had been characterised as *Superbus* and whose memory had been wiped out in the interests of the Roman people.⁹

But this polemical onslaught, in which Cicero makes *rex* and *princeps* and *tyrannus* and *dominus* interchangeable terms for an enslaving monarchical figure motivated by the vices of *superbia* and *cupiditas*, is grounded in a series of theoretical moves. Cicero's text articulates a political and social code of conduct designed to prevent precisely this type of domination recurring within the Roman *res publica* and to ensure its continued existence in a condition of liberty. When Cicero compares the situation in which the *res publica* had recently found itself under the rule of Caesar to the condition of an enslaved person, he is referring to the condition defined by Roman law as one in which a person is subject to the *ius*, or jurisdiction, of another person, and therefore in their power.¹⁰ As the rubric *De statu hominis* states at the start of Justinian's *Digest*, free and unfree persons are differentiated by the fact that the latter are subject to the law and power of someone else.¹¹ According to this view, the free people of Rome had lost their ability or power to live under their own jurisdiction during Caesar's period of domination and had suffered an illegitimate form of subjection to the will of one of its citizens. This critique is firmly linked to his earlier argument in Book I, where Cicero introduces the view that monarchy is an offence to justice, the virtue which does most of the work in Cicero's theory. Justice is the quality which he upholds as 'the most illustrious of the virtues, on account of which men are called good', and as 'the mistress and queen of virtues'.¹² It is responsible for sustaining 'the reasoning by which the fellowship of men with one another, and the communal life, are held together'.¹³ But no sooner has Cicero concluded his treatment of justice and the related topic of *iniuria* than we are presented with a condemnation of monarchy. He states that 'men are led most of all to being overwhelmed by forgetfulness of justice when they slip into desiring positions of

⁹ See Cicero 1913, III.10.40: 308.

¹⁰ See *Digest* 1985, vol. I, I.5.3–4: 15; vol. I, I.6.1–3: 17–18. For a discussion of the relevant rubrics, see Skinner 1998: 38–41.

¹¹ *Digest* 1985, vol. I, I.5.4: 15: 'Servitus est . . . qua quis dominio alieno contra naturam subicitur'; I.6.1: 17: 'alieno iuri subiectae sunt . . . in aliena potestate sunt'.

¹² Cicero 1913, I.7.20: 20 (Cicero 1991: 9): 'iustitia, in qua virtutis est splendor maximus, ex qua viri boni nominantur'; III.6.28: 294 (Cicero 1991: 110): 'iustitia; haec enim una virtus omnium est domina et regina virtutum'.

¹³ Cicero 1913, I.7.20: 20 (Cicero 1991: 9): 'ea ratio, qua societas hominum inter ipsos et vitae quasi communitas continetur'.