

Anti-Machiavel

Anti-Machiavel:

A Discourse upon the Means of Well Governing

Innocent Gentillet

Translated by Simon Patericke
Edited by Ryan Murtha

ANTI-MACHIAVEL

A Discourse Upon the Means of Well Governing

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A
DISCOVRSE
VPON THE MEANES
OF VVEL GOVERNING AND
MAINTAINING IN GOOD
PEACE, A KINGDOME, OR
OTHER PRINCIPALITIE.

Divided into three parts, namely, The Counsell, the Reli-
gion, and the Policie, vvhich a Prince ought to
hold and follow.

Against *Nicholas Machiavell* the Florentine.

Translated into English by Simon Patericke.



LONDON,

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For Donald

Contents

Introduction	xv
Authors Cited	1
Dedication to the First Edition	1
Epistle Dedicatory	3

Part I: Counsel

Preface	7
1. A prince's counsel ought to proceed from his own wisdom.	19
2. Flatterers, friends and counsellors (<i>The Prince</i> , chapter 23)	54
3. A prince should not trust in foreigners. (<i>Discourses</i> , II.31)	92

Part II: Religion

Preface	107
1. A prince should wish to be esteemed devout, though he be not so. (<i>The Prince</i> , chapter 18)	126
2. A prince ought to sustain that which is false in religion. (<i>Discourses</i> , I.12, 13, 14)	135
3. The pagan religion makes men hardy; but the Christian religion humbles their minds and makes them more ready to be preyed upon. (<i>Discourses</i> , II.5)	143

4. The doctors of Christianity have sought to abolish the remembrance of letters of antiquity. (<i>Discourses</i> , II)	148
5. When men left the pagan religion, they neither believed in God nor the devil. (<i>Discourses</i> , I.12)	154
6. The Roman Church is the cause of all the calamities in Italy.	162
7. Moses could never have caused his laws and ordinances to be observed if force and arms had wanted.	168
8. Moses usurped Judea, as the Goths usurped a part of the Roman Empire. (<i>Discourses</i> , II.9)	170
9. The religion of Numa was the chief cause of Rome's felicity. (<i>Discourses</i> , I.12)	173
10. A man is happy so long as Fortune agrees with him. (<i>The Prince</i> , chapter 25; <i>Discourses</i> , II.29)	177

Part III: Policy

Preface	182
1. That war is just which is necessary.	184
2. A prince must commit some outrageous injury against his adversaries. (<i>Discourses</i> , III.32)	207
3. A prince in a conquered country must place colonies and garrisons, to chase away the natural and old inhabitants thereof. (<i>The Prince</i> , chapter 3)	210
4. A prince in a newly conquered country must subvert and destroy all those who suffer great loss in that conquest, and root out the blood and the race of those who before governed there. (<i>The Prince</i> , chapter 3)	215

5. To be revenged on a city or a country without striking any blow, it must be filled with wicked manners. (<i>Discourses</i> , I.35; II.19)	219
6. With princes and great lords, new pleasures do not cause them to forget offenses. (<i>The Prince</i> , chapter 7; <i>Discourses</i> , III.4)	221
7. A prince ought to imitate Cesare Borgia, the son of Pope Alexander VI. (<i>The Prince</i> , chapter 14)	229
8. A prince need not care to be accounted cruel, if thereby he can make himself obeyed. (<i>The Prince</i> , chapter 17)	247
9. It is better for a prince to be feared than loved.	266
10. A prince should not trust in the amity of men. (<i>The Prince</i> , chapter 17)	268
11. A prince who would put any man to death must seek out some apparent cause thereof. (<i>The Prince</i> , chapter 17)	271
12. A prince ought to follow the nature of the lion and of the fox, not of the one without the other. (<i>The Prince</i> , chapter 18, 19)	273
13. Cruelty which tends toward a good end is not to be reprehended. (<i>Discourses</i> , I)	278
14. A prince ought to use cruelty all at once, and do pleasures little by little. (<i>The Prince</i> , chapter 17)	283
15. A virtuous tyrant ought to maintain partialities and factions among his subjects. (<i>Discourses</i> , II.2, III.3)	286
16. A prince may be hated for his virtue as well as for his vice. (<i>The Prince</i> , chapter 19)	291
17. A prince ought to nourish some enemy against himself, to be accounted the more mighty. (<i>The Prince</i> , chapter 19)	295
18. A prince ought not fear to deceive and to dissemble. (<i>Discourses</i> , II.13; <i>The Prince</i> , chapter 18)	299

19. A prince ought to know how to wind and turn men's minds. (<i>Discourses</i> , I.42; <i>The Prince</i> , chapter 18)	303
20. A prince who uses clemency advances his own destruction. (<i>Discourses</i> , I.32)	305
21. A wise prince ought not to keep his faith when the observation thereof is hurtful to him. (<i>The Prince</i> , chapter 18; <i>Discourses</i> , III.42)	308
22. Faith, clemency, and liberality are virtues damaging to a prince, but it is good that he has some similitude thereof. (<i>The Prince</i> , chapter 18)	330
23. A prince ought to have a turning and winding wit, that he may show himself cruel and unfaithful when there is need. (<i>The Prince</i> , chapter 18)	350
24. To break a peace sworn with his neighbor, a prince should make war against the neighbor's friend. (<i>Discourses</i> , II.9)	352
25. A prince ought to have his mind disposed to turn after every variation of fortune, to make use of a vice when needed. (<i>The Prince</i> , chapter 18, 25)	353
26. Illiberality is commendable in a prince, and the reputation of a tradesman is a dishonor without evil will. (<i>The Prince</i> , chapter 8, 16)	358
27. A good prince cannot long endure in this world, in the company of so many others that are so bad. (<i>The Prince</i> , chapter 15)	368
28. Men cannot be altogether good nor altogether wicked, nor can they perfectly use cruelty and violence.	371
29. He who would become wicked to obtain his desire, ought to color his change with some apparent reason. (<i>Discourses</i> , I.42)	373
30. A prince, maintaining discords and partialities among his subjects, may more easily use them at his pleasure. (<i>The Prince</i> , chapter 20)	376

31. Seditions and civil dissensions are profitable.	386
32. The means to keep subjects in peace is to keep them poor. (<i>Discourses</i> , I.22; II.7; III.16, 25)	390
33. A prince who fears his subjects ought to build fortresses in his country to hold them in obedience. (<i>Discourses</i> , II.24; <i>The Prince</i> , chapter 20)	414
34. A prince ought to commit to another those affairs which are subject to hatred and envy, and reserve to himself those that depend upon his favor. (<i>The Prince</i> , chapter 7, 14)	417
35. A prince ought to establish a great number of judges. (<i>Discourses</i> , I.7)	418
36. Gentlemen who hold castles and jurisdictions are enemies of commonwealths. (<i>Discourses</i> , I)	440
37. The nobility of France would overthrow that kingdom if their Parliaments did not hold them in fear. (<i>Discourses</i> , I.1)	441
Appendix A: Parallel Passages in Francis Bacon	447
Appendix B: Parallel Passages in <i>Vindiciae contra tyrannos</i>	474
Appendix C: Parallel Passages in <i>The French Academy</i>	489

Introduction

The life and works of Innocent Gentillet, like all France of his time, were shaped in large part by the religious conflict which escalated into a series of civil wars waged intermittently over the latter half of the sixteenth century. Though termed the Wars of Religion, historians agree that division between Catholic and Protestant was not the sole contributing factor, and since the time of the wars many writers have argued that religion was not the primary cause. At its highest point the Protestant (or Huguenot) population comprised around ten percent of France, drawn mostly from the nobility, merchant, and professional classes; of these, "Huguenots of state" were politically motivated, while "Huguenots of religion" were concerned with reform of the church.¹ The distinction was not always clear, and a contemporary observer remarked of both Protestant and Catholic institutions that "those which held and persuaded pressure of consciences, were commonly interested therein themselves for their own ends."² In the most tragic event of the wars, the St. Bartholomew's Day massacres,

Atrocious deeds were done, in which religious passion was often the instrument, but policy was the motive . . . When the King of France undertook to kill all the Protestants, he was obliged to do it by his own agents. It was nowhere the spontaneous act of the population, and in many towns and in entire provinces the magistrates refused to obey. The motive of the Court was so far from mere fanaticism that the Queen [Catherine de Medici] immediately challenged Elizabeth to do the like to the English Catholics.³

The order for the killings was given by twenty-two-year-old Charles IX, under the guidance of his mother, Catherine de Medici, and her Italian advisers. Catherine had had little influence while queen of Henri II; after his death in 1559, however, she wielded great power for thirty years while her three ineffectual sons nominally reigned. In the wake of Bartholomew it was said that Catherine was governing by the principles of Machiavelli, her bedside reading and her Bible. This was

¹ See J.H.M. Salmon, *The French Wars of Religion: How Important Were Religious Factors?* Boston: D.C. Heath, 1967.

² Quoted in Francis Bacon, "Of Unity in Religion" (source unknown).

³ Dalberg-Acton, John. *The History of Freedom and Other Essays*, pp. 43-4. London: MacMillan, 1907.

polemic, but not without foundation; Machiavelli viewed religion as a tool to be cynically manipulated for political ends; and he approved political violence, provided it is done expeditiously and all at once. Moreover, *The Prince* had been addressed to Catherine's father, Lorenzo de Medici, advising him that "on the other hand, it would be easier to conquer the kingdom of France, but there would be great difficulty in holding it . . . The contrary is the case in kingdoms governed like that of France, because it is easy to enter them by winning over some baron of the kingdom, there being always malcontents, and those desiring innovations. These can, for the reasons stated, open the way to you and facilitate victory..."⁴ If this was not enough, Machiavelli implied in *The Prince* and *Discourses on Livy* that French incompetence and barbarism made them wothy of such handling. In this context it is not surprising that French reaction to Machiavelli was particularly hostile; and that reaction found its ultimate expression in Gentillet's *Anti-Machiavel*.



Gentillet was born around 1532, the year *The Prince* was published, in Vienne, an ancient city in south-eastern France whose proximity to Geneva made it more strongly Protestant than most of the country.⁵ After a period of military service he studied law and theology, acquiring a solid grounding in classical humanism. Beginning in 1547 he appears on court lists for twenty-nine years; in 1562 Vienne was sacked by Protestants, and Gentillet was sent to Geneva and Bern to recruit ministers for the Protestant congregation. He is listed in Vienne as a bailiff's attorney in 1564 and as a deacon in 1566. In 1568 he refused to take an oath required by the Edict of Longjumeau and was prosecuted for *lèse-majesté* in absentia. In 1572 he took a post in Toulouse, but fled to Geneva after the St. Bartholomew events. In 1574 he published an anonymous *Remonstrance* to Henri III, accusing Italians of fomenting disorder and proposing to banish them with their Machiavelli. The following year he printed the Duke of Alençon's *Protestation*, which said many of the same things; in 1576 he dedicated the *Anti-Machiavel* to the duke. After local Italians complained about

⁴ *The Prince*, ch. 4.

⁵ Rathé, C. Edward. "Innocent Gentillet and the First 'Anti-Machiavel'." *Bibliothèque D'Humanisme Et Renaissance* 27, no. 1 (1965): 186-225.

D'Andrea, Antonio. "The Political and Ideological Context of Innocent Gentillet's *Anti-Machiavel*." *Renaissance Quarterly* 23, no. 4 (1970): 397-411.

D'Andrea, "The Last Years of Innocent Gentillet: 'Princeps Adversariorum Machiavelli'." *Renaissance Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (1967): 12-16.

Anti-Machiavel's recriminations against their countrymen, Gentillet was summoned to the Geneva city council; he published an apology of sorts, but in early 1577 was assaulted in the street by an Italian, Francesco Lamberto; another Italian was arrested after being overheard threatening to kill Gentillet if he met him out of town. Later that year Gentillet returned to France and was named to the *Chambre mi partie* (a court with both Catholic and Protestant members) of the Parlement of Grenoble. In 1578 he published a translation from Latin, *La République des Suisses*. In 1581 he was nominated to the presidency of the Parlement of Grenoble. In 1584 he published *Apologie ou défense pour les chretiens de France de la religion reformée*; the following year the Treaty of Nemours again banned Protestantism, and Gentillet returned to Geneva. In 1586 he published *Le Bureau du concile de Trente*. He died in Geneva on 23 June, 1588.

These are the facts as we have them now, more or less; but in 1702 the *Dictionnaire historique et critique* complained, "I wonder we have so few particulars about the life of a person who distinguished himself both by his writings and employments . . . those who have given us an account of the authors of his province could not fill up six lines concerning him without committing several faults."⁶ One of the editors of *Les bibliothèques françaises* questioned whether Gentillet had written the book at all: "For my part, I believe that all these Gentilletts are masks, and that the author of *Anti-Machiavel* is not known."⁷

Further controversy was sparked by Edward Meyer's *Machiavelli and the Elizabethan Drama* (1897). Because *The Prince* was not printed in English translation until 1640, Meyer questioned the origins of what he thought an unfair hostility in Elizabethan "Machiavel" allusions (of which he counted almost four hundred). On finding a copy of *Anti-Machiavel* in the British Museum, Meyer felt he had discovered "the source of all Elizabethan misunderstanding," the vitriolic invective of Gentillet.⁸ After T.S. Eliot remarked Shakespeare's "shameless lifting" from *Anti-Machiavel*,⁹ it was dismissed as "never of any importance in England,"¹⁰ which in turn has been refuted. Recent editors differed as

⁶ *The Dictionary Historical and Critical of Peter Bayle: The Second Edition*, Volume III, pp. 156-7. London, 1736.

⁷ *Les bibliothèques françaises de La Croix du Maine et de Du Verdier*, p. 220. Paris: Saillant & Nyon, 1772.

⁸ Meyer, Edward. *Machiavelli and the Elizabethan Drama*. Weimar: E. Felber, 1897.

⁹ G. Wilson Knight. *The Wheel of Fire*, p. xvi. London: Routledge, 2001.

¹⁰ Raab, Felix. *The English Face of Machiavelli*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965.

to the book's significance; C. Edward Rathé, who in 1968 published a reissue of the French first edition, enthusiastically called for more attention; while Antonio D'Andrea and Pamela Stewart, who collated several early editions to produce an authoritative French text in 1974, declared the matter closed:

It would be anachronistic indeed to imagine even for a moment that the *Discours* could still be read, quoted, and discussed, as in the past, in connection with the interpretation of Machiavelli's thought. Nor is it possible to expect of today's readers, even of scholars, the impassioned curiosity for erudite puzzles, that also contributed much for about two centuries to the success of a book, published anonymously by an author completely unknown beyond the restricted provincial horizon of the Dauphiné and the confines of Calvinist Geneva. These reasons for interest in the book have long since ceased to exist. From the nineteenth century on the only conceivable reason for studying the *Discours* has been the role they played in the origins and development of anti-Machiavellism.¹¹

This has proven something of an overstatement, however, and Gentillet continues to draw attention outside the province of Machiavelli studies. More recently Sydney Anglo hinted that in attributing Elizabethan "Machiavel" tropes to Gentillet's influence, Meyer "may have got something like the right answer for the wrong reasons,"¹² though unfortunately he did not give any indication as to what the right reasons might be. Another writer has suggested that "there are many more allusions [to Gentillet] waiting to be discovered by scholars who know what to look for . . . It would be helpful if readers of texts from the last quarter of the sixteenth century were to keep alert for more signs of his influence, so that we can estimate that effect more precisely."¹³ We will now note some of these allusions, a majority for the first time, hoping to shed some light on the "erudite puzzle" of Gentillet.



In September 1575 the Duke of Alençon, brother of Henri III and heir to the throne, leader of the moderate *politiques*, joined with Huguenot

¹¹ D'Andrea, Antonio and Pamela Stewart, eds. *Discours contre Machiavel*, pp. xi-xii. Florence: Casalini Libri, 1974.

¹² Anglo, Sydney. *Machiavelli – The First Century: Studies in Enthusiasm, Hostility, and Irrelevance*, p. 284. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

¹³ Bawcutt, N. W. "The "Myth of Gentillet" Reconsidered: An Aspect of Elizabethan Machiavellianism." *The Modern Language Review* 99, no. 4 (2004): 863-74.

forces opposed to the Catholic crown. His *Protestation*, calling for reforms and an end to foreign influence at court, was published in Geneva by Gentillet, who also printed his own response. Months later Gentillet dedicated the *Anti-Machiavel* to the duke; *The Prince* had been dedicated to Alençon's grandfather, Lorenzo de Medici. In 1583 Alençon, formerly a suitor to Queen Elizabeth, disastrously tried to attack Antwerp under the color of amity; when Shakespeare called his ancestor in *1 Henry VI* "that notorious Machiavel," adding "take this compact of a truce/Although you break it when your pleasure serves," he was alluding to the more recent duke's maneuvers. According to Meyer, "That Shakespeare had Gentillet in mind is perfectly evident."¹⁴ *Shakespeare's Answer to Machiavelli* notes "the only two times the word "Machiavel" is uttered in the history plays, it is spoken first by Richard York and second by his true son, Richard Gloucester."¹⁵ York is himself Machiavellian, deriding "churchlike humours [that] fits not for a crown"; but Shakespeare tells us that the father, who "will hunt this deer to death," is surpassed in perfidy by the son (Richard III), who "must hunt this wolf to death." In *2 Henry VI* the latter, who "always has piety on his lips in public, though he never observes any piety in private," says "Priests pray for enemies, but princes kill." In *3 Henry VI* he says

I can add colours to the chameleon,
Change shapes with Proteus for advantages,
And set the murderous Machiavel to school.

Anti-Machiavel states: "as soon as the prince shall clothe himself with Proteus' garments, and has no hold nor certitude of his word, nor in his actions, men may well say that his malady is incurable, and that in all vices he has taken the nature of the chameleon." This is unique to Simon Patericke's English translation; in the original French, followed by the Latin, "the nature of the chameleon" reads *le ply du camelot*, or the ply of a peddler. Patericke's *Anti-Machiavel* did not appear until 1602; presumably he borrowed from Shakespeare, who in turn borrowed from *The True Tragedie of Richarde Duke of York* (1595):

I can adde colours to the Camelion,

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 58

¹⁵ Hollingshead, Stephen. *Shakespeare's Answer to Machiavelli: The Role of the Christian Prince in the History Plays*. Diss., Marquette University, 1996. (Incidentally, Hollingshead is a descendant of Raphael Holinshed, whose *Chronicles* were Shakespeare's primary source for English history.)

And for a need, change shapes with Protheus,
And set the aspyring Catalin to schoole.¹⁶

Proteus and the chameleon were frequently coupled following the popular *Adages* of Erasmus; an entry in Francis Bacon's *Promus* reads "Chameleon, Proteus, Euripus" (Euripus is a strait in the Aegean with currents that regularly reverse direction).¹⁷ Bacon's *History of the Reign of King Henry VII* echoes Gentillet in its account of Richard:

Richard, the third of that name, king in fact only, but tyrant both in title and regiment, and so commonly termed and reputed in all times since, was by the Divine Revenge, favouring the design of an exiled man, overthrown and slain at Bosworth Field; there succeeded in the kingdom the Earl of Richmond, thenceforth styled Henry the Seventh.

Anti-Machiavel relates:

A similar punishment happened by the judgment of God to that cruel king Richard of England . . . that king, who despaired otherwise to be maintained in his estate, gave battle to the earl and was slain fighting, after he had reigned about a year. And the earl of Richmond went right to London with his victory, and the slaying of that tyrant; then he took out of the monastery Edward's two daughters, espoused the elder, and was straight made king of England, called Henry VII, grandfather of the most illustrious Queen Elizabeth presently reigning.

Divine intervention against Richard was frequently stressed because the Tudor dynasty's claim to the throne rested on a usurpation, albeit of a tyrant. Shakespeare's *Richard III* strongly emphasized this line: "Bloody thou art, bloody will be thy end"; "O God . . . revenge his death!"; "heav'n with lightning strike the murd'rer dead," etc.

¹⁶ The relationship between the two plays continues to be debated; see Randall Martin: "'The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York' and '3 Henry VI': Report and Revision." *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, 53, no. 209 (2002): 8-30.

¹⁷ Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, which features a character named Proteus, twice refers to the chameleon. The grouping is also found in Thomas Andrewes's *The Unmasking of a Feminine Machiavel* (1604):

With the Cameleon can she change her hiew,
Like every object that her eye doth view,
Proteus was never half so mutable
As the unconstant, of her word unstable. . .

Allusions to Gentillet in works with early references to Shakespeare, *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit* (1592) and *Polimantiea* (1595), have been noted previously. Events rehearsed in *Anti-Machiavel* are depicted in many of Shakespeare's English and Roman history plays; echoes of Gentillet have been found in *Measure for Measure*;¹⁸ and *Hamlet* may have been influenced by a passage which includes incest on the part of the emperor Claudius, poisoning, and improper royal succession:

When the emperor Claudius would espouse Agrippina, his brother's daughter, he made a law whereby he authorized the marriage of the uncle with the niece, which was published all over . . . indeed this marriage fell out not well for him; for Agrippina poisoned him to bring Nero to the empire, her son by another marriage; although Claudius had by his first wife Messalina a natural son called Britannicus, whom Nero poisoned when he came to the empire. So that by the incestuous marriage wherewith Claudius had contaminated and poisoned his house, he and his natural son, who by reason should have been his successor, were killed with poison.



A great deal has been written about the influence of Machiavelli on Francis Bacon; however, the influence of Gentillet has so far passed unremarked, with the exception of one writer who suggested that "It may not have been mere coincidence that in his account of the Essex trial . . . Francis Bacon echoes Gentillet in his conclusion that ambition engenders treason and treason finally brings the complete ruin of the traitor."¹⁹ In fact, when Bacon adverts explicitly to Machiavelli, more often than not he is echoing Gentillet, sometimes Shakespeare as well. An allusion with multiple parallels occurs in *The Advancement of Learning*:

As for evil arts, if a man would set down for himself that principle of Machiavel, that "a man seek not to attain virtue itself, but the appearance only thereof; because the credit of virtue is a help, but the use of it is cumber"; or that other of his principles, that "he presuppose that men are not fitly to be wrought otherwise but by fear, and therefore that he seek to have every man obnoxious, low, and in strait," which the Italians call *seminar spine*, to sow thorns: or that other principle,

¹⁸ Holland, Norman N. "Measure for Measure: The Duke and the Prince." *Comparative Literature* 11, no. 1 (1959): 16-20.

¹⁹ Zaharia, Alis. "Circulating Texts in the Renaissance: Simon Patericke's Translation of *Anti-Machiavel* and the Fortunes of Gentillet in England." *The University of Bucharest Review* vol. IV, no. 1 (2014): 54-62.

contained in the verse which Cicero citeth, *Cadant amici, dummodo inimici intercidant* [Let friends fall, provided our enemies perish with them], as the Triumvirs, which sold every one to other the lives of their friends for the deaths of their enemies: or that other protestation of L. Catilina, to set on fire and trouble states, to the end to fish in droumy waters, and to unwrap their fortunes...

Anti-Machiavel relates the story of "Catiline, who with his companions went about to destroy his country with fire and sword"; twice uses the phrase "fish in troubled waters," and devotes a chapter to the policy of keeping subjects poor. It also speaks of Cicero being traded to Antony: "Antony, to have his enemy Cicero (whom Octavian favored as his friend), was content to deliver in exchange Lucius Caesar, his own uncle on his mother's side; so that the one was exchanged for the other, and they both died." This brutal bargaining is depicted in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.

Octavius. Prick him down, Antony.

Lepidus. Upon condition Publius shall not live,
Who is your sister's son, Mark Antony.

Antony. He shall not live; look, with a spot I damn him.

Two scenes later, we learn that Cicero is one of the victims:

Brutus. Therein our letters do not well agree;
Mine speak of seventy senators that died
By their prescription, Cicero being one.

Gentillet asked: "Is it not a strange thing to hear that a friend should be betrayed to death, to have the cruel pleasure of slaying an enemy? Yet by this course died a hundred and thirty senators, besides many other persons of quality."

In *The Advancement of Learning* Bacon wrote: "Achilles was brought up under Chiron the Centaur, who was part a man and part a beast: expounded ingeniously but corruptly by Machiavel, that it belongeth to the education and discipline of princes to know as well how to play the part of the lion in violence and the fox in guile. . ." Earlier Gentillet wondered, "should we call this beastliness or malice, what Machiavelli says of Chiron? Or has he read that Chiron was both a man and a beast? Who has told him that he was delivered to Achilles to teach him that

goodly knowledge to be both a man and a beast?" Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens* displays similar impatience with Machiavelli's advice:

A beastly ambition, which the gods grant thee t'
attain to! If thou wert the lion, the fox would
beguile thee; if thou wert the lamb, the fox would
eat thee: if thou wert the fox, the lion would
suspect thee . . . What beast couldst thou be, that
were not subject to a beast? and what a beast art
thou already, that seest not thy loss in
transformation!

Another place in *The Advancement of Learning* reads "Machiavel noteth wisely, how Fabius Maximus would have been temporizing still, according to his old bias, when the nature of war was altered and required hot pursuit." Gentillet relates that "the Roman Senate sent against Hannibal Fabius Maximus, who was not so forward (and it may be not so hardy) as Flaminius or Sempronius were; but he was more wise and careful, as he showed himself." Bacon elaborates in *Apophthegms New and Old*:

Fabius Maximus being resolved to draw the war in length, still waited upon Hannibal's progress, to curb him; and for that purpose, he encamped upon the high grounds. But Terentius his colleague fought with Hannibal, and was in great peril of overthrow. But then Fabius came down from the high grounds, and got the day. Whereupon Hannibal said, *That he did ever think, that that same cloud that hanged upon the hills, would at one time or other, give a tempest.*

This is a strong echo of *Anti-Machiavel*:

On his arrival he did not set upon Hannibal, who desired no other thing, but began to coast him far off, seeking always advantageous places. And when Hannibal approached him, then would he show him a countenance fully determined to fight, yet always seeking places of advantage. But Hannibal, who was not so rash as to join with his enemy to his own disadvantage, made a show to recoil and fly, to draw him after him. Fabius followed him, but upon coasts and hills, seeking always not the shortest way, but that way which was most for his advantage. Hannibal saw him always upon some hill or coast near him, as it were a cloud over his head; so that after Hannibal had many times essayed to draw Fabius into a place fit for himself, and where he might give battle for his own good, and yet could not thereunto draw him, said: "I see well now that the Romans also have gotten a Hannibal; and

I fear that this cloud, which approaching us, still hovers upon those hills, will one of these mornings pour out some shower on our heads."

Francis Bacon is known for advocating inductive reasoning, or the Baconian method, a precursor of the scientific method. Anglo remarked that "Gentillet's appeals to historical exemplars are really no more rigid, and no further removed from true inductive reasoning, than is Machiavelli's use of Livy."²⁰ Bacon's *Novum Organum* strongly echoes Gentillet on the subject; Bacon wrote:

There are and can be only two ways of searching into and discovering truth. The one flies from the senses and particulars to the most general axioms, and from these principles, the truth of which it takes for settled and immovable, proceeds to judgment and middle axioms. . . The other derives axioms from the senses and particulars, rising by a gradual and unbroken ascent, so that it arrives at the most general axioms last of all.

Anti-Machiavel reads:

Aristotle and other philosophers teach us, and experience confirms, that there are two ways to come unto the knowledge of things. The one, when from the causes and maxims, men come to knowledge of the effects and consequences. The other, when contrary, by the effects and consequences we come to know the causes and maxims. . . The first of these ways is proper and peculiar unto the mathematicians, who teach the truth of their theorems and problems by their demonstrations drawn from maxims, which are common sentences allowed of themselves for true by the common sense and judgment of all men. The second way belongs to other sciences, as to natural philosophy, moral philosophy, physic, law, policy, and other sciences. . .

The Great Assizes holden in Parnassus (1645, attributed to George Wither) features a court of poets and scholars, with Francis Bacon as Chancellor, before whom are arraigned authors charged with "strange abuses, committed against [Apollo] and the Nine Muses":

Hee was accus'd, that he had us'd his skill,
Parnassus with strange heresies to fill,
And that he labour'd had for to bring in,
Th' exploded doctrines of the Florentine,
And taught that to dissemble and to lie,

²⁰ Anglo, Sydney. "The Reception of Machiavelli in Tudor England: A Re-Assessment." *Il Politico* 31, no. 1 (1966): 127-38.

Were vitall parts of humane policie. . .

"Th' exploded doctrines of the Florentine" can only refer to *Anti-Machiavel*; the court of Parnassus also includes Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and the scholar Isaac Casaubon, a friend of Bacon's who was born in Geneva to Huguenot refugee parents. Bacon wrote in a letter to Casaubon: "to write at leisure that which is to be read at leisure matters little; but to bring about the better ordering of man's life and business, with all its troubles and difficulties, by the help of sound and true contemplations — this is the thing I am at."²¹ He comments on the edifying potential of the stage in *The Advancement of Learning*:

Dramatic poesy, which has the theatre for its world, would be of excellent use if well directed. For the stage is capable of no small influence both of discipline and of corruption. Now of corruptions in this kind we have enough; but the discipline has in our times been plainly neglected. And though in modern states play-acting is esteemed but as a toy, except when it is too satirical and biting; yet among the ancients it was used as a means of educating men's minds to virtue.

A similar concern with the didactic effects of the theatre is expressed in the dedication of *Anti-Machiavel* (after the first edition):

After Solon had seen Thespis' first edition and action of a tragedy, and meeting with him before the play, he asked if he was not ashamed to publish such feigned fables under so noble, yet a counterfeit personage. Thespis answered that it was no disgrace upon a stage, merrily and in sport, to say and do anything. Then Solon, striking hard upon the earth with his staff, replied thus: "Yea but shortly, we that now like and embrace this play, shall find it practiced in our contracts and common affairs." This man of deep understanding saw that public discipline and reformation of manners, attempted once in sport and jest, would soon quail; and corruption, at the beginning passing in play, would fall and end in earnest.

This dedication ("for kinred") is to Francis Hastings and Edward Bacon, half-brother of Francis Bacon. It is dated 1577 and first appeared in the Latin edition of that year, published at Geneva. It is anonymous, and critics have accepted it as the work of a different author, but the possibility of a literary fiction cannot be discounted; the vituperative

²¹ Spedding, James. *The Letters and the Life of Francis Bacon*, Vol. IV, p. 147. London: Longman, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1868.

tone of Gentillet is also present in the dedication. Antonio D'Andrea attributes it to Lambert Daneau,²² a Huguenot theologian who had been a tutor of Francis and Anthony Bacon; Daneau later dedicated his commentary on the minor prophets (1586) to Anthony.²³ D'Andrea also suggests the possible involvement of Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor in Geneva and a colleague of Daneau's, who approved the *Anti-Machiavel* for publication.²⁴ While in Geneva Anthony Bacon lodged with Beza, who later dedicated his *Meditations* (1582) to Lady Anne Bacon, mother of Francis and Anthony. The Bacon family's connections in Geneva went back to Lady Anne's father, Sir Anthony Cooke, who corresponded with Calvin and met Beza while living on the continent as a Protestant exile during the reign of Mary I.²⁵ Beza's *Meditations* dedication echoes the one in *Anti-Machiavel*; while the former speaks of "that right vertuous and right renowned Lord, my Lord Nicholas Bacon your husband, & most worthy Keeper of the seale of England,"²⁶ the latter exhorts Edward Bacon to "imitate the wisdom, sanctimonie, and integritie of your father, the Right Honorable Lord Nicholas Bacon, Keeper of the broad Seale of England, a man right renowned. . ."

Machiavelli's influence on Bacon is now taken for granted; however, Bacon's family motto, *Mediocria firma* ("moderation is stable" or "the middle way is sure"), is flatly contradicted by Machiavelli, who complained that "men take certain middle ways that are very harmful, for they do not know how to be altogether wicked or altogether good." This is handled by Gentillet and in Bacon's *Wisdom of the Ancients*, "Scylla and Charybdis": "Mediocrity, or the middle way, is most commended in moral actions; in contemplative sciences not so celebrated, though no less profitable and commodious; but in political

²² D'Andrea, Antonio. "Machiavelli, Satan, and the Gospel." *Yearbook of Italian Studies* (1971): 156-77.

²³ Vickers, Brian. *Francis Bacon: The Major Works*, p. 562. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

²⁴ D'Andrea, Antonio. "Geneva 1576-78: The Italian Community and the Myth of Italy." In *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Italian Reform*, edited by Joseph McLelland, 60-3. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980.

²⁵ McIntosh, Marjorie Keniston. "Sir Anthony Cooke: Tudor Humanist, Educator, and Religious Reformer." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 119, no. 3 (1975): 233-50.

²⁶ Beza, Theodore. *Christian Meditations upon Eight Psalmes of the Prophet David*. London: Christopher Barker, 1582.

employments to be used with great heed and judgment . . . The way of virtue lies in a direct path between excess and defect." This idea is also found in *Merchant of Venice*: "It is no mean happiness, therefore, to be seated in the mean." Machiavelli counseled a prince "to appear merciful, faithful, humane, religious, upright, and to be so, but with a mind so framed that should you require not to be so, you may be able and know how to change to the opposite." Bacon wrote "Constancy is the foundation on which virtues rest," echoing Gentillet: "constancy is a quality which ordinarily accompanies all other virtues; it is, as it were, of their substance and nature." This idea is also found in *Measure for Measure*: "it is virtuous to be constant in any undertaking"; and *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (spoken by Proteus): "were man but constant, he were perfect." Machiavelli's assertion that "when the deed accuses, the effect excuses," commonly interpreted as "the ends justify the means," is attacked by Gentillet and strongly condemned in Bacon's "Charge against Owen": "evil is never in order towards good. So that it is plainly to make God the author of evil, and to say with those that St. Paul speaketh of, *Let us do evil that good may come thereof*, of whom the Apostle says excellently *That their damnation is just*."²⁷ I will here note by the way what appears to be an intentional misprint in the 1606 English edition of Jean Bodin's *Six Books of a Commonwealth*, which reads: ". . . Frauncis Machiauell, and many other following Polybius, have as it were with one consent approoued his opinion. . ." Thus the relationship between Machiavelli and Bacon is more complex than has hitherto been assumed, and might be summarized in what has been said of Shakespeare: "while he clearly rejects the most fundamental tenets of Machiavellian political philosophy as unnatural and therefore destructive, he is not so foolish as to dismiss Machiavelli's other insights out of hand."²⁸



The infamous Huguenot tract on the right of resistance, *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* (1579), was included as a sort of antidote in several editions of *The Prince*. The *Vindiciae* was first published in Basel with a false imprint of Edinburgh, under the pseudonym Stephanus Brutus Junius—alluding to Marcus Junius Brutus (later in *Julius Caesar*), as

²⁷ Spedding, James. *The Works of Francis Bacon*, Volume XII, p. 167. London: Longman, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1869.

²⁸ Hollingshead (1996), p. 274.

well as Lucius Junius Brutus, who deposed Tarquin and established the Roman Republic (later in *The Rape of Lucrece*). Machiavelli advised that "Whoever takes up a tyranny and does not kill Brutus, and whoever makes a free state and does not kill the sons of Brutus, maintains himself for little time." The *Vindiciae*'s account of Tarquin reads:

Tarquinius Superbus was therefore esteemed a tyrant, because being chosen neither by the people nor the senate, he intruded himself into the kingdom only by force and usurpation . . . The true causes why Tarquinius was deposed, were because he altered the custom, whereby the king was obliged to advise with the senate on all weighty affairs; that he made war and peace according to his own fancy; that he treated confederacies without demanding counsel and consent from the people or senate; that he violated the laws whereof he was made guardian; briefly that he made no reckoning to observe the contracts agreed between the former kings, and the nobility and people of Rome.

Anti-Machiavel reads:

Tarquin, who enterprised to slay his father-in-law king Servius Tullius to obtain the kingdom of Rome, showed well by that act and many others that he was a very tyrant. . . when he changed his just and royal domination into a tyrannical government, he became a contemner and despiser of all his subjects, both plebian and patrician. He brought a confusion and a corruption into justice; he took a greater number of servants into his guard than his predecessors had; he took away the authority from the Senate; moreover, he dispatched criminal and civil cases after his fancy, and not according to right; he cruelly punished those who complained of that change of estate as conspirators against him; he caused many great and notable persons to die secretly without any form of justice; he imposed tributes upon the people against the ancient form, to the impoverishment and oppression of some more than others; he had spies to discover what was said of him, and punished rigorously those who blamed either him or his government.

The introduction to *The Rape of Lucrece* echoes these passages, and may reflect what Eliot called Shakespeare's "shameless lifting" from Gentillet:

Tarquinius, for his excessive pride surnamed Superbus, after he had caused his own father-in-law Servius Tullius to be cruelly murdered, and, contrary to the Roman laws and customs, not requiring or staying for the people's suffrages, had possessed himself of the kingdom . . . the people were so moved, that with one consent and a general

acclamation the Tarquins were all exiled, and the state government changed from kings to consuls.

The *Vindiciae's* preface, which has been ascribed to Gentillet,²⁹ includes an edict of Theodosius II and Valentinian III, whereby emperors became subject to Roman law; the edict is also transcribed in full in *Anti-Machiavel*. The *Vindiciae's* preface challenged, "the Machiavellians are free to descend into the arena: let them come forth. As we have said, we shall use the true and legitimate weapons of Holy Scripture. . ." ³⁰ Gentillet, on the other hand, "must fight against their impiety . . . not by assailing them with the arms of the holy Scripture . . . but by their proper arms and weapons" (that is, pagan authors). However, Gentillet and the *Vindiciae* use many of the same sources, biblical and classical; this in itself is unsurprising, but the similarities are so extensive as to indicate at the least a strong influence.

The *Vindiciae's* authorship is still unresolved.³¹ It was first attributed to François Hotman, author of the *Francogallia* (1573), another Huguenot "Monarchomach" treatise. Hotman's son Jean had been a tutor in the household of English ambassador Sir Amias Paulet, while Francis Bacon happened to be living there. Beza, author of *De jure magistratuum* (The Right of Magistrates, 1574), was then thought responsible; his connections with the Bacon family have been noted. The next candidate was Philippe du Plessis Mornay, a Huguenot author and diplomat who fled to England after the St. Bartholomew's Day massacres. During the peace negotiations at Poitiers in late 1577, Bacon met both Mornay and Jean de La Gessée, secretary to the Duke of Alençon. Mornay later invited Anthony Bacon to Montauban, and the two became good friends.³² Finally Hubert Languet, or a collaboration between Languet and Mornay, was credited with the *Vindiciae*. Languet corresponded extensively with Sir Philip Sidney, a friend of Bacon's who witnessed the Bartholomew events and helped

²⁹ By Mastellone (1969); see Victoria Kahn, "Reading Machiavelli: Innocent Gentillet's Discourse on Method." *Political Theory* 22, no. 4 (1994): 539-60.

³⁰ *Vindiciae, contra tyrannos*, tr. George Garnett, p. 11. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Other citations are from the 1648 English translation dubiously attributed to William Walker, supposed executioner of Charles I.

³¹ See Barker, Ernest. "The Authorship of the *Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos*." *Cambridge Historical Journal* 3, no. 2 (1930): 164-81. Also George Garnett, *Vindiciae, contra tyrannos*, pp. lv–lxxvi.

³² See Daphne du Maurier, *Golden Lads* (1975).

try to negotiate a marriage between Elizabeth I and Alençon. Bacon himself has not been proposed as a possible author of the *Vindiciae*, but it is interesting to note that he had connections to all candidates, a fact that has so far been overlooked.



Numerous parallels with *Anti-Machiavel* are also found in Pierre de la Primaudaye's *L'Academie Française*, published in four volumes from 1578-98. A draft of the first volume, in English, was published as *The Anatomie of the Minde* in 1576. *The French Academy* strongly resembles Bacon's later essays; as with Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*, it features four young French gentlemen secluded for purposes of study. In the dedication to Henri III, Primaudaye (who later worked for the Duke of Alençon) speaks of having attended the Estates General in 1576-77 (as did Bacon). He begins: "Sir, if we credit the saying of Plato, commonwealths begin then to be happy, when kings exercise philosophy, and philosophers reign." Gentillet said: "there cannot come a better and more profitable thing to a people than to have a prince wise of himself; therefore, said Plato, men may call it a happy commonwealth when either the prince can play the philosopher, or when a philosopher comes to reign there." Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* echoes: "although he might be thought partial to his own profession, that said 'then should people and estates be happy, when either kings were philosophers, or philosophers kings'; yet so much is verified by experience, that under learned princes and governors there have ever been the best times." As a recent example Primaudaye cited "Francis I, a prince of most famous memory, [who] so loved and favored letters and the professors of them that he deserved the name of the restorer of sciences and good arts." Gentillet said "the restoration of good letters, which Francis I brought into France, did more to celebrate and immortalize his name in the memory of all Christian nations, than all the great wars and victories his predecessors had."

As with Gentillet, Primaudaye attributes France's troubles to foreign influence: "the ruin and destruction of this French monarchy proceeds of no other second cause (our iniquity being the first) than of the mixture which we have made of strangers with ourselves. Wherein we are not contented to seek them out under their roofs, unless we also draw them unto us and lodge them under our roofs, yea prefer them before our own countrymen and citizens in the offices and honorable

places of this kingdom..." An English intelligence paper credited to Francis (or Anthony) Bacon, "Notes on the Present State of Christendom" (1582), reported "division in [France] for matters of religion and state, through discontentment of the nobility to see strangers advanced to the greatest charges of the realm, the offices of justice sold, the treasury wasted, the people polled, the country destroyed, hath bred great trouble, and like to see more."³³ Gentillet complains of "all France fashioned after the manners, conditions, and vices of foreigners that govern it, and who have the principal charges and estates." Shakespeare's *Richard II* laments:

Reports of fashions in proud Italy
Whose manners still our tardy-apish nation
Limps after in base imitation.
Where the world doth thrust forth a vanity-
So be it new, there's no respect how vile. . .

Primaudaye warns: "It is a hard matter (said Socrates) for a man to bridle his desire, but he that addeth riches thereunto, is mad." Gentillet asked: "Who could then bridle vices and iniquities, which are fed with much wealth, and no less liberty?" Bacon's *New Atlantis* again echoes: "the reverence of a man's self is, next religion, the chiefest bridle of all vices" (Calvin stressed the need to "bridle our affections"). Finally, *The French Academy* echoes the strident tone as well as the content of *Anti-Machiavel*:

[T]here are a great many amongst us of those foolish men of whom David speaks, *Who say in their hearts that there is no God*. In the forefront of which company, the students of Machiavel's principles and practicers of his precepts may worthily be ranged. This bad fellow, whose works are no less accounted of among his followers than were Apollo's Oracles amongst the Heathen, nay than the sacred Scriptures are among sound Christians, blushed not to belch out these horrible blasphemies against pure religion, and so against God the Author thereof; namely, that the religion of the heathen made them stout and courageous, whereas Christian religion makes the professors thereof base minded, timorous, and fit to become a prey to every one; that since men fell from the religion of the Heathen, they became so corrupt that they would believe neither God nor the Devil; that Moses so possessed

³³ Spedding, *Works* Volume VIII, p. 27. The same report noted that "the diseased estate of the world doth so concur with [Alençon's] active forwardness, as it give him matter to work upon."

the land of Judea as the Goths did by strong hand usurp part of the Roman Empire. These and such like positions are spewed out by this hell hound sometimes against true religion, other whiles against the religion and Church of Rome, sometimes also taxing the religion of the heathen of falsehood and cozenage; so that in truth he would have all religion to be of like account with his disciples, except it be so far forth as the pretense and show of religion may serve to set forward and effect their wicked policies. And for this cause he sets down this rule for every Prince and Magistrate to frame his religion by, namely, that he should pretend to be very religious and devout, although it be but in hypocrisy. And to this he adds a second precept no less impious, that a Prince should with tooth and nail maintain false miracles and untruths in religion, so long as his people may thereby be kept in greater obedience.



Gentillet's influence, while not so great as to account for "all Elizabethan misunderstanding" of Machiavelli, has not been fully understood. Certainly it is enough to warrant more attention, and many more allusions remain to be found. Though much maligned and seldom studied, recently Gentillet has found a few defenders; though he represents a world long past, many of his arguments are still valid; and even where he is obsolete or unfair to Machiavelli, the historical citations are worthwhile. Gentillet is admittedly reactionary, as his adversary was revolutionary; but his thinking, as a previous editor said, "always shows itself to be a curious mixture of idealism and common sense . . . it would be quite wrong to see Gentillet as an idealist dreamer combatting the pragmatic scientist, Machiavelli."³⁴ Leo Strauss, who claimed to hold the "old-fashioned and simple" view of Machiavelli, wrote that "one cannot see the true character of Machiavelli's thought unless one recovers for himself and in himself the pre-modern heritage of the western world, both Biblical and classical."³⁵ This perspective is best espoused by Gentillet, who "was not naïve enough to believe that princes had always been virtuous, but viewing the world as a battle ground between good and evil, he was

³⁴ Rathé, *Ibid.*, 220-1.

³⁵ Strauss, Leo. *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, pp. 9-12. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958. It should be noted, however, that Strauss emphasized the need for "esoteric" writing, whereby philosophers cloak amoral and dangerous views in conventional piety.

not prepared to surrender without a fight, to accept an amoral standard in personal or political life."³⁶ Issues raised by Machiavelli will always be with us, and some of his positions will remain controversial; his opponents, even if dated and imperfect, should continue to find readers as well.

³⁶ Rathé, *Ibid.*, 209.

*Greek, Latin, and French authors, out of which are
extracted the histories and other things cited in
these discourses against Machiavelli*

Ammianus Marcellinus, Annales of France, Aristotle, the Bible, Capitolinus, Cicero, Philippe de Commynes, Cassius Dio, Dionysius Halicarnassus, du Bellay, Aeschylus, Euripides, Florus, Jean Froissart, Herodian, Homer, Horace, Josephus, Juvenal, Jus Civile & Canonicum, Aelius Lampridius, Livy, Molineus, Monstrelet, Sebastian Munster, Papon, Paulus Aemylus, Pliny the Younger, Bartolomeo Platina, Plutarch, Pomponius Laetus, Sabellicus, Sallust, Johannes Sleidanus, Sophocles, Aelius Spartianus, Suetonius, Tacitus, Thucydides, Trebellius Pollio, Virgil, Vopiscus, Xenophon

Dedication to the First Edition

To the very high and illustrious prince, François, Duke of Alençon, son and brother of the King.

My Lord,

Being on the point of bringing to light these Discourses against Machiavelli, to reveal to those of understanding of our French nation the source and the authors of the tyranny which has been exercised in France for fifteen years or more, by those who have too much abused the minority as well as the naive goodness of the Kings; it has come about, by the grace of God, that your Excellency has undertaken the protection of the law and the public good of the kingdom against this tyranny. Which has occasioned me to take the boldness of dedicating to you this work, and of making it public under the favor of your most illustrious name, as something wholly according and corresponding to your heroic and magnanimous designs. For if it pleases your Excellency to have you read sometimes, by way of pleasure, some chapter of the subjects which are here treated, you will find many points which not only conform to your generous and laudable designs, but also approve and authorize them by several reasons and remarkable examples. You will be able to see, my Lord, several good examples of the kings of France, your

ancestors, and several great emperors who prospered in their estates, and who happily governed their kingdoms and empires by having had good and wise people in their council. As on the contrary, those who have used bad counselors and governed by flatterers, ambitious and avaricious men, and above all by strangers, have all rushed into great misfortune and have precipitated their whole estate into utter ruin, and their subjects into confusion and misery; which is a fault into which princes often and easily fall, of which nevertheless they should keep themselves from more. It is certain that in all things bad counsel is the cause of infinite evils, and chiefly for a prince and a republic; it is the principal and most grievous malady of which poor France is now afflicted, that your Excellency endeavors to apply the remedies necessary to cure it. You may also see here, my Lord, that the duty of a good prince is to embrace and sustain the Christian religion, and to seek and inquire into the pure truth of it, and not to approve or maintain falsehood in religion, as Machiavelli teaches. And as for policy, your Excellency will also be able to see several notable examples of your royal ancestors of France, and of the greatest Roman emperors, by whom it appears that the princes who governed themselves by mildness, and joined clemency to justice, and who have used moderation and good humor towards their subjects, have always greatly prospered and reigned for a long time. But on the contrary, the cruel, iniquitous, perfidious, and oppressive princes of their subjects immediately precipitate themselves and their states into peril or utter ruin, and have not long prevailed, but most often have finished their days by bloody and violent death. And the examples of good government in the greater part of the noble house of France, from which your Excellency is issued, I am sure, my Lord, that they will always be stronger to revivify you and to make shine in you the heroic virtues of your ancestors, and to drive out from France the infamous vices which are rooted therein; cruelty, injustice, perfidy, and oppression, together with the foreigners who brought them there, and the degenerate and bastardized French, their adherents, who favor their tyrannies and oppressions, which after them follow the subversion of the state of the kingdom. This, too, will cause your Excellency to restore the true manner of French government used by your predecessors, and to banish and send back that of Machiavelli to Italy, from whence it has come to our great misfortune and pity. Wherewith all the kingdom, noblemen, ecclesiastics, merchants, and commoners, even the princes and great lords, will ever be greatly beholden and obliged; as is the poor languishing patient, who is in danger of death, to the prudent doctor who cures him. And posterity will never forget such a great benefit, but will celebrate your heroic and

magnanimous virtues by immortal stories and praises. And it seems that God, having pity on poor France and wishing to deliver it from the bloody and barbarous tyranny of foreigners, has aroused you as the final liberator; you, my Lord, who is Prince François, of the house of France, French by nation, French by name, and French in heart and in effect. For who else could better effect the enterprise of freeing France from tyranny, and gain the honor of so high and heroic a feat, than your Excellency, who has nothing that is not French? To whom can poor France best have recourse in her extreme peril and necessity, but to that which is a true stem from the good Louis XII, father of the people, and the great king François, a prince very fond of his subjects, and the debonair king Henri II? We have therefore greatly to praise the goodness of God, which has aroused you and touches the heart, for such an excellent and necessary enterprise; of which everyone must hope, because it is based on so just and reasonable causes as are possible; so that God (who always keeps the party of reason and right) will favor it by his grace. Besides, your Excellency being accompanied by great and illustrious Princes, and so many valiant Knights and wise Lords (who have not defiled the virtues of their ancestors in the stinking smell of Machiavelli and those of his nation), we must hope that our Lord will bring back, by his grace, your counsels and enterprises to a good, successful, and happy outcome.

My Lord, I pray to the Creator that he will give you grace, and that poor France may well feel the deliverance of the tyranny which oppresses it, and the fruit of a good reformation (which we expect from the favorable clemency of God, by means of your heroic and generous enterprise), and that he maintain and increase your Excellency in all greatness and prosperity. This first of March, 1576.

Epistle Dedicatory

To the most famous young gentlemen, as well for religion, modesty, and other virtues, as also for kindred, Francis Hastings and Edward Bacon, most hearty salutations.

After Solon had seen Thespis' first edition and action of a tragedy, and meeting with him before the play, he asked if he was not ashamed to publish such feigned fables under so noble, yet a counterfeit personage. Thespis answered that it was no disgrace upon a stage, merrily and in

sport, to say and do anything. Then Solon, striking hard upon the earth with his staff, replied thus: "Yea but shortly, we that now like and embrace this play shall find it practiced in our contracts and common affairs." This man of deep understanding saw that public discipline and reformation of manners, attempted once in sport and jest, would soon quail; and corruption, at the beginning passing in play, would fall and end in earnest. Therefore Tacitus worthily extols the manners of the Germans of his time, among whom vices were not laughed at; for laughers begun of some public shame and dishonesty will assuredly procure some miserable calamity. Hereof France is unto all ages and nations a woeful view, yet a profitable instruction at this day. For when the clear light of the Gospel began first to spring and appear, Satan—to occupy and busy men's minds with toyish plays and trifles, that they might give no attendance unto true wisdom—devised this policy, to raise up jesters and fools in courts; who, creeping in by quipping and pretty conceits, first in words, and after by books, uttering their pleasant jests in the courts and banquets of kings and princes, labored to root up all the true principles of religion and policy. And there were some whom the resemblance of nature or vanity of wit had so deceived, that they derided the everlasting verity of the true God as if it were but a fable. Rabelais among the French, and Agrippa among the Germans, were the standardbearers of that train, who with their scoffing taunts inveighed not only against the Gospel, but all good arts whatsoever. Those mockers did not as yet openly undermine the groundwork of human society, they only derided it. But such Cyclopean laughers in the end proved to be only signs and tokens of future evils; for little by little, what was in the beginning taken for jests turned to earnest, and words into deeds. In the neck of these came new poets, very eloquent for their own profit, who incensed unto lust and lightness such minds as were already inclined to wantonness, by quickening their appetites with the delectable sauce of unchaste hearing, and pricking them forward with the sharp spurs of pleasure. Who could then bridle vices and iniquities, which are fed with much wealth, and no less liberty? Seeing them not only in play, mirth, and laughter entertained, but also earnestly accepted and commended as being very excellent. Yet some trod the steps of honesty, which now lay a dying, and practiced the old manners and fashions which were almost forgotten. For although the secret faults of the court were evil spoken of, yet shame stood in open view; heinous and infamous crimes kept secret corners; princes were of some credit and faith; laws were in reasonably good use; magistrates had their due authority and reverence; all things only for ostentation and outward show, but none would then have feared an utter destruction. Then Satan, being a disguised person

amongst the French, in the likeness of a merry jester, acted a comedy; but shortly ensued a woeful tragedy. When our countrymen's minds were sick and corrupted with these pestilent diseases, and discipline waxed stale, then came forth the books of Machiavelli, a most pernicious writer, who began not in secret and stealing manner (as did those former vices), but by open means and by a continual assault utterly destroyed not this or that virtue, but even all virtues at once. It took faith from the princes; authority and majesty from laws; liberty from the people; and peace and concord from all persons, which are the only remedies for present maladies.

For what shall I speak of religion, whereof the Machiavellians had none, as already plainly appears; yet they greatly labored also to deprive us of the same. And although they have wrongfully banished us from our native country, yet still we fight for the church's defense. Moreover Satan uses strangers of France as his fittest instruments to infect us with this deadly poison sent out of Italy; who have so highly promoted their Machiavellian books, that he is of no reputation in the court of France who has not Machiavelli's writings at the fingers' ends, both in the Italian and French tongues, and can apply his precepts to all purposes, as the oracles of Apollo. Truly it is a wondrous thing to consider how fast that evil weed has grown within these few years, seeing there is almost none that strives to excel in virtue or knowledge, as though the only way to obtain honor and riches were by this deceiver's direction.

But now to turn my eyes from beholding so many miseries of poor afflicted France, as often as I see or remember our neighbor countries (which thing I do daily), so often do I bewail our miseries. Yet I am right joyful for your felicities; chiefly because God of his great bounty has given you a most renowned queen, as well in deed as title, even in the midst of so many troubles. For her coming to the crown, even when England was tossed with tempestuous storms, so dispersed those clouds with the brightness of her counsel and countenance, that no civil dissention nor external invasion has disturbed your peace and tranquility these many years, especially with so many wars sounding on every side. For she, by maintaining wholesome unity amongst all degrees, has hitherto preserved the state of her realm, not only safe but flourishing; not by Machiavellian arts, as guile, perfidy, and other villainies, but by true virtue, as clemency, justice, and faith. Therefore when she goes on her progress through the realm of England, she is entertained in all places with happy applause, rejoicing, and prosperity of all her subjects, she being a princess of both nobles and commons, by due desert most entirely beloved. Whereas we against our wills behold our country swimming in blood and disfigured by subversion, which is

a joyful object to the eyes of strangers; yea and those labor most to work her destruction, who should be most careful to rescue and deliver poor France out of her long calamities; but the Lord will at length behold our miseries. But O how happy are ye, both because you have so gracious a queen, and because the infectious Machiavellian doctrine has not breathed nor penetrated the entrails of most happy England. But that it might not do so, I have done my endeavor to provide an antidote and present remedy to expel the force of so deadly poison, if at any time it chance to infect you. For when I thought it right, especially in such a confused disorder of matters and times, to impart to our Frenchmen and to other nations these discourses, first written by a man of most singular learning and wisdom, I willingly undertook this labor, which I have performed to the utmost of my power; and now I wholly refer myself and my travail to serve for the benefit of public utility. Yet I properly dedicated and inscribed it to your names, because although I never saw England, yet it might serve as a pledge to testify my thankful mind towards your countrymen, whose singular courtesy and kindness showed to my brethren when they were banished for the profession of the Gospel, has generally bound me to all Englishmen, but privately to you. Also, by way of exhortation I might enflame you (being most virtuous gentlemen), to study and follow the contents of this book, but especially the arts and virtues therein published, and almost in every word thereof so highly commended; which indeed is no other thing than you do already. For beholding your ancestors' monuments of their virtues, which are both many and famous, moves you thereunto more than the directions drawn from all ages and examples here delivered. Therefore my dear friend Francis, among so many notable examples of your realm, tread the steps of your uncle, the Right Honorable Earl of Huntingdon; a man most admirable and illustrious, as well for godliness and other notable virtues as for noble parentage and honor; that you may show yourself worthy of your place and kindred. And you, good Edward, imitate the wisdom, sanctimony, and integrity of your father, the Right Honorable Lord Nicholas Bacon, Keeper of the broad Seal of England, a man right renowned; that you may lively express the image of your father's virtues in the excellent towardness which you naturally have from your most virtuous father. If you both daily ruminate and remember the familiar and best known examples of your ancestors, you cannot have more forcible persuasions to move you to that which is good and honest. But I will continually pray God to prosper that good hope which your parents and kinfolk have of you, your good studies also; and that he will plentifully bless and beautify you with all the gifts of his spirit, that you may become profitable members of the church, your

country, and commonweal, and may live long and happy days. *Kalends Augusti. Anno 1577.*

*The first part, entreating what counsel
a prince should use*

Preface

Aristotle and other philosophers teach us, and experience confirms, that there are two ways to come unto the knowledge of things. The one, when from the causes and maxims men come to knowledge of the effects and consequences; the other when contrary, by the effects and consequences we come to know the causes and maxims. As for example, when we see the earth wax green and trees gather leaves, we know by that effect that the sun, which is the cause thereof, approaches near us; and we come to receive this maxim, that the sun gives vigor and force unto the earth to bring forth fruits. And by the contrary also, when we have knowledge of this cause and maxim, we come to know the effect and conclude the consequence; which is that the sun coming near us, the earth brings forth her fruits, and withdrawing from us, the earth leaves off bringing forth. The first of these ways is proper and peculiar unto the mathematicians, who teach the truth of their theorems and problems by their demonstrations drawn from maxims, which are common sentences allowed of themselves for true by the common sense and judgment of all men. The second way belongs to other sciences, as to natural philosophy, moral philosophy, physick, law, policy, and other sciences, whereof the knowledge proceeds more commonly by a resolute order of effects to their causes, and from particulars to general maxims, than by the first way; although it is certain that sometimes they also help themselves both with the one and the other way.

In the political art then, whereof Plato, Aristotle, and other philosophers have written books, men may well use both these ways. From the effects and particulars of a civil government, men may come to the knowledge of maxims and rules; and on the contrary, by the rules and maxims men may have the knowledge of effects. So that when we see the effects of a political government which is of no value, and which is pernicious and evil, men are hereby brought to the knowledge of the maxims and rules which are of the same sort; and by good and profitable

effects, men are also led to the notice of good rules and maxims. And on the other side, good or evil rules and maxims lead to the knowledge of like effects. Yet although the maxims and general rules of the political art may somewhat serve to know well to guide and govern a public estate, whether a principality or free city, yet they cannot be so certain as the maxims of the mathematicians, but are rules rather very dangerous, yea, pernicious, if men cannot make them serve and apply them unto affairs as they happen to come; and not to apply the affairs unto these maxims and rules. For the circumstances, dependencies, consequences, and antecedents of every affair and particular business, are all for the most part diverse and contrary; so that although two affairs be like, yet men must not therefore conduct and determine them by one same rule or maxim, because of the diversity and difference of accidents and circumstances. For experience teaches us that in one same act, that which is good in one time is not in another, but rather hurtful; and that which is convenient for some nations is not good for others; and so of other circumstances. They then who deal in the affairs of public estate need to know not only the maxims and rules of the political art, but also they must have a wise, quick, and sharp wit and judgment, rightly and discreetly to ponder and weigh the circumstances and accidents of every affair, prudently to apply them to the rules and maxims, yea, sometimes to force and bend them to serve the present affair. But this science and habit of knowing well to weigh and examine the accidents and circumstances of affairs, and then to be able to apply unto them their rules and principles, is a science singular and excellent, but rare and not given to many persons. For of necessity he that will come to this science, at least in any perfection to be able to manage and handle weighty affairs, first needs to be endowed with a good and perfect natural judgment; and secondly, he must be wise, temperate, and quiet, without any passion or affection, but all to public good and utility; and thirdly, he must be conversed and experienced in many and sundry affairs. These he cannot have and obtain unless he himself has handled or seen them handled, or else by great and attentive reading of choice histories he has brought his judgment to be very staid and well exercised in such affairs.

We must not then think that all sorts of people are fit to deal with affairs of public estate; nor that everyone who speaks and writes thereof can say what belongs thereunto. But it may be that some will enquire if I dare presume so much of myself as to take upon me effectually to handle this matter. Hereunto I answer that it is not properly my purpose whereunto I tend, or for which cause I enterprise this work; but my intent and purpose is only to show that Nicholas Machiavelli, not long

ago a secretary of the Florentine commonwealth (which is now a duchy), understood little or nothing in this political science whereof we speak; and that he has taken maxims and rules altogether wicked, and has built upon them not a political, but a tyrannical science. Behold here then the end and scope which I have proposed unto myself; that is, to refute the doctrine of Machiavelli, and not exactly to handle the political science, although I hope to touch some good points thereof in some places when occasion shall offer itself. Unto my aforesaid purpose I hope to come (by the help of God) with so prosperous a good wind and full sails, as all they who read my writings shall give their judgment and acknowledge that Machiavelli was altogether ignorant in that science, and that his scope and intent in his writings is nothing else but to frame a very true and perfect tyranny. Machiavelli also never had parts requisite to know that science; for as for experience in managing affairs, he could have none, since during his time he saw nothing but the brabbings and contentions of certain potentates of Italy, and certain practices and policies of some citizens of Florence. Neither had he any or very little knowledge in histories, as shall be more particularly showed in many places of our discourse; where (God aiding) we will mark the plain and as it were palpable faults and ignorances which he has committed in those few histories which it pleases him sometimes by the way to touch; which most commonly he cites to evil purpose, and many times falsely. As for a firm and sound judgment, Machiavelli also lacked, as is plainly seen by the absurd and foolish reasons wherewith he confirms the propositions and maxims which he sets down; only he has a certain subtlety (such as it is) to give color unto his most wicked and damnable doctrines. But when a man comes something nigh to examine his subtleties, then in truth it is discovered to be but a beastly vanity and madness, yea, full of extreme wickedness. I doubt not but many courtiers who deal in matters of estate, and others of their humor, will find it very strange that I should speak in this sort of their great doctor Machiavelli; whose books rightly may be called the French Koran, they have them in so great estimation, imitating and observing his principles and maxims no more nor less than the Turks do the Koran of their great prophet Mahomet. But yet I beseech them not to be offended that I speak in this manner of a man whom I will plainly show to be full of all wickedness, impiety, and ignorance; and to suspend their judgment, whether I say true or no, until they have wholly read these my discourses. For as soon as they have read them, I do assure myself that every man of perfect judgment will say and determine that I speak but too modestly of the vices and brutishness found in this their great Doctor.

But to open and make easy the intelligence of what should here be handled, we must first search out what that Machiavelli was, and his writings. Machiavelli then was in his time the secretary or common notary of the commonwealth of Florence during the reign of Charles VIII and Louis XII, kings of France; Alexander VI and Julius II, popes of Rome; and of Henry VII and Henry VIII, kings of England. In which time he wrote his books in the Italian language, and published them about the first beginning of Francis I, king of France, as may be gathered by his own writings. Of his life and death I can say nothing, neither did I, or vouchsafed I once to enquire thereof, because his memory deserved better to be buried in perpetual oblivion than to be renewed among men. Yet I may well say that if his life was like his doctrine, as is to be presumed, there was never man in the world more contaminated and defiled with vices and wickedness than he was. By the preface he made unto his book entitled *De Principe, Of the Prince*, it seems he was banished and chased from Florence; for he there complains unto his magnificence Lorenzo de Medici (unto whom he dedicated his work) of what he endured injuriously and unjustly, as he said. And in certain other places he recites that one time he remained in France, another time at Rome, and another (not sent ambassador, for he would never have forgotten to have said that, but as it is to be presumed) as a fugitive and banished man. But howsoever it may be, he dedicates the said book unto the said Lorenzo de Medici, to teach him the reasons to invade and obtain a principality; which book for the most part contains nothing but tyrannical precepts, as shall appear in the prosecution and progress of this work. But I know not if the Medici have made their profit and taken use of Machiavelli's precepts contained in his book; yet this appears plainly, that since that time they occupied Florence and changed the aristocratic free estate of that city into a duchy, or rather into a manifest tyranny, as will easily appear unto those who are advised and have seen how Florence is at this day governed and ruled. Besides this book of a prince or a principality, Machiavelli has also written three books discoursing upon the first decade of Livy, which (illustrating the other book of the principality) are instead a commentary thereunto. Through all which discourses he disperses here and there a few words out of Livy, neither rehearsing the whole deed nor history of the matter, for which he fishes these words and applies them preposterously after his own fantasy, for the most part forcing them to serve to confirm some absurd and strange thing. He also mixes herewith examples of small and petty potentates of Italy, happening in his time or a little before, which are not worth the recital, but are less worthy to be proposed for imitation. Yet herein is he to be excused, in that he knew no better; for if he had known

better, I doubt not but would have brought them to light, to have adorned his writings and to have made them more authentic and receivable. But out of those two books, namely *The Prince* and the *Discourses*, I have extracted and gathered what is properly his own, and have reduced and brought it to certain maxims, which I have distinguished into three parts, as may be seen hereafter. And I have been as it were constrained to do so, that I might revoke and gather every matter to its certain head and place, the better to examine them. For Machiavelli has not handled every matter in one same place, but a little here and a little there, interlacing and mixing some good things amongst them; doing therein as poisoners do, who never cast lumps of poison upon a heap, lest it be perceived, but most subtly incorporate it as they can with some other delicate and dainty morsels. For if I had followed the order that he holds in his books, I must needs have handled one same point many times, yea confusedly and not wholly. I have then drawn the greatest part of his doctrine and of his documents into certain propositions and maxims, and withal added the reasons whereby he maintains them. I have also set down the places of his books, to lead them thereunto who desire to try what fidelity I have used, either in not attributing unto him anything that is not his own, or in not forgetting any reason that may make for him. Wherein so much there wants that I fear that any man may impose upon me to have committed some fault therein; on the contrary, in some places I have better cleared and lightened his talk, reasons, and allegations than they are in his writings. And if any man says that I wrong him in setting down the evil things contained in his books without speaking of the good things which are dispersedly mixed therewith, and might bring honor and grace unto him, I answer and will maintain that in all his writings there is nothing of any value that is his own. Yet I confess that there are some good places drawn out of Livy or some other authors; but besides that they are not his, they are not by him handled fully, nor as they should be. For as I have said, he only has dispersed them amongst his works to serve as an honey sweet bait to cover his poison. And therefore seeing that what is good in his writings is taken from other better authors, where we may learn them better for our purpose, and more whole and perfect than in Machiavelli, we have no cause to attribute honor unto him, nor to thank him for what is not his, and which we possess and retain from a better shop than his. And as for his precepts concerning the military art, wherewith he deals in his books, which seem to be new and of his own invention, I will say nothing but that men do not now practice them, neither are they thought worthy of observation by those who are well seen in that art; as we may see in what he maintains, that a prince ought

not to have in his service any foreign soldiers, nor to have any fortresses against enemies, but only against his subjects when he is in fear of them. For the contrary hereof is ordinarily seen practiced; and in truth it shows an exceeding great pride and rashness in Machiavelli, that he dares speak and write of the affairs of war, and prescribe precepts and rules unto those who are of that profession; seeing he had nothing but by hearsay, and was himself but a simple secretary or town-clerk, which is a trade as far different from the profession of war as an arquebus differs from a pen and inkhorn. Herein it falls out to Machiavelli as it did once to the philosopher Phormio; who one day reading in the Peripatetic school of Greece, and seeing arrive and enter there Hannibal of Carthage (who was brought thither by some of his friends, to hear the eloquence of the philosopher), he began to speak and dispute with much babbling of the laws of war and the duty of a good captain, before this most famous captain, who had forgotten more than ever that proud philosopher knew or had learned. When he had thus ended his lecture and goodly disputation, as Hannibal went from the auditory one of his friends who had brought him there asked what he thought of the philosopher's eloquence and gallant speech. He said, "Truly I have seen in my life many old dotards, but I never saw one so great as this Phormio." So I do not doubt but those who have knowledge in the military art will give the like judgment of Machiavelli, if they read his writings, and will say according to the common proverb, that he speaks not like of clerk of arms. But I leave things touching this matter unto those who have more knowledge therein than I; for it is not my purpose to touch what Machiavelli has handled of the military art, nor such precepts as concern the leading of an army.

By this which we have before spoken, that Machiavelli lived during the reign of Charles VIII and Louis XII, kings of France, and attained the beginning of the reign of Francis I, it follows that there has not been past fifty or threescore years since his writings came to light; whereupon some may marvel why he was not spoken of at all in France during the reign of Henri II, and that after them the name of Machiavelli did but begin to be known on this side the mountains, and his writings come into some reputation. The answer is not very obscure to those who know how the affairs of France have been governed since the decease of king Henri II of happy memory. For during his reign and before, the kingdom was governed after the mere French manner; that is to say, following the traces and documents of our French ancestors. But since, it has governed by the rules of Machiavelli the Florentine, as shall be seen hereafter. From that time until the present, the name of Machiavelli has been celebrated and esteemed as of the wisest person of the world, and most

cunning in the affairs of state; and his books held dearest and most precious by our Italianized courtiers, as if they were the books of Sibylla whereunto the pagans had recourse when they would deliberate upon any great affair concerning the commonwealth, or as the Turks hold dear and precious their Mahomet's Koran, as we have said above.

And we need not be abashed if those of Machiavelli's nation, who hold the principal estates in the government of France, have forsaken the ancient manner of our French ancestors' government, to bring France into use with a new form of managing and ruling their country, taught by Machiavelli. For on the one side every man esteems and prizes the manners, fashions, customs, and other things of his own country more than those of another. On the other side, Machiavelli their great doctor describes so well the French government in his time, blaming and reprehending their conducting of affairs of state, that it might easily persuade his disciples to change the manner of French government into the Italian. For Machiavelli vaunts that being once at Nantes, and talking of public and state affairs with the Cardinal of Amboise, who was a very wise man, he plainly told him that the French had no knowledge in affairs of state. And in many places he reprehends the government of our abovenamed kings, Charles VIII and Louis XII; in other places he calls our kings tributaries of the Swiss and of the English. And often when he speaks of the French, he calls them barbarous and says they are full of greed and disloyalty; so also he taxes the Germans of the same vices. Now I beseech you, is it not good reason to make so great account of Machiavelli in France? who so defames and reproves the honor of our good kings and of all our whole nation, calling them ignorant of the affairs of state, barbarous, covetous, disloyal? All this might be borne withal and passed away in silence, if there were not another evil. But when we see that Machiavelli, by his doctrine and documents, has changed the good and ancient government of France into a kind of Florentine government, where we see with our eyes the total ruin of France, it infallibly follows (if God by his grace does not remedy it soon) that now it should be time, if ever, to lay hand to the work, to remit and bring France again unto the government of our ancestors.

Hereupon I humbly pray the princes and great lords of France to consider what is their duty in this case. Seems it, most illustrious lords, seeing at this time poor France, which is your country and mother, so desolate and torn in sunder by strangers, that you ought to suffer it to be lost and ruined? Ought you to permit them to sow atheism and impiety in your country and to set up schools thereof? Seeing your France has always been so zealous in the Christian religion that our ancient kings by their piety and justice have obtained so honorable a title and name of

Most Christian? Think you that God has caused you to be born into this world to help to ruin your country, or coldly to stand still and suffer your mother to be contaminated and defiled with the contempt of God, with perfidy, sodomy, tyranny, cruelty, thefts, strange usuries, and other detestable vices which strangers sow here? But rather contrary, God has given you life, power, and authority to take away such infamies and corruptions; and if you do it not, you must make account for it, and you can look for but a grievous and just punishment. If it is true, as the civilian lawyers say, that he is a murderer and culpable of death who suffers to die with hunger the person unto whom he owes nourishment; shall not you be culpable before God of so many massacres, murders, and desolations of your poor France if you give it not succor, seeing you have the means and that you are obliged thereunto by right of nature? Shall you not be condemned and attainted of impiety, atheism, and tyranny if you drive not out of France Machiavelli and his government?

Here if any man will inquire how it appears that France is at this day governed by the doctrine of Machiavelli, the resolution hereof is easy and clear. For the effects which we see with our eyes, and the provisions and executions of the affairs which are put in practice, may easily bring us to the causes and maxims, as we have above said; which is one way to know things, by ascending from effects and consequences to the knowledge of causes and maxims. And whoever shall read the maxims of Machiavelli, which we shall handle hereafter, and descend from thence into the particularities of the French government, he shall see that the precepts and maxims of Machiavelli are for the most part at this day practiced and put in effect and execution, from point to point. Insomuch that by both the two ways, from the maxims to the effects and from the effects to the maxims, men may clearly know that France is at this day governed by the doctrine of Machiavelli. For are they not Machiavellians, Italians or Italianized, who handle and deal with the seals of the kingdom of France? Is it not they also who draw out and stamp edicts? Who dispatch all things within and without the realm? Who hold the goodliest governments and terms belonging to the crown? Yea, if a man will at this day obtain or get anything in the court, for to have a good and quick dispatch thereof he must learn to speak the Messereske language, because the Messers will most willingly hear them in their own tongue; and they understand not the French, no not the terms of justice and royal ordinances. Whereupon every man may conjecture and imagine how they can well observe or cause to be observed the laws of France, the terms whereof they understand not. Moreover, it is plain enough that within these fifteen years Machiavelli's

books were as familiar and ordinary in the hands of the courtiers as the breviaries are in the hands of curates of parishes.

And as for the disparity of ancient government which was ruled in following the traces, fashions, and customs of our ancestors, from the modern and present government which is founded upon the doctrine of Machiavelli, it is easily and apparently seen by the fruits and effects which proceed therefrom. For by the ancient French government the kingdom was maintained and governed in peace and tranquility under the observance of ancient laws, without any domestic or civil war, flourishing and enjoying a free traffic, and subjects were maintained in possessing and enjoying their goods, estates, franchises, and liberties. But now, by the Italian government of this time the good and ancient laws of the realm are abolished and suppressed; cruel wars and dissensions are maintained in France; peace always broken; the people destroyed and eaten, and traffic decayed; subjects are deprived of their ancient liberties and franchises, and brought into such confusion and disorder that none knows well what is his own and what is not; but one plows and sows, and another mows and reaps the same. And although this is so true and manifest that it shall not be needful to show more amply that the manner of our ancestors' government was otherwise, and better than the modern which at the present is in use; yet for all that I pretend hereafter upon every maxim clearly to demonstrate by good examples that our ancient Frenchmen guided and governed themselves by good reason and wisdom, clean contrary from the way of Machiavelli's precepts.

Yet I mean not to authorize my sayings by the citation of examples of small potentates and tyrannizers born in one night like toadstools (as Machiavelli does), but by gallant and notable examples of our kings of France, confirmed and fortified; yea by other examples of good and ancient emperors, princes, and Roman captains, and of the Senate of Rome. For I have chosen those two monarchies, the Roman and the French, as the fairest and most excellent, from whence to draw true and good examples which are worthy for a prince to imitate; borrowing but few from other precedent monarchies, as Medes, Assyrians, and Greeks, as less known to us concerning the management and government of their affairs, too far from our time and from our manners and customs. I have lastly chosen the best and most authentic historiographers, and especially those who have written those things which fell out in their own time; and of those affairs, most of which they were spectators and actors therein. Of this sort and order of my own country's historiographers were Froissart, Montrelet, de Commines, du Bellay; and of Romans, Sallust, Tacitus, Suetonius, Dion, Herodian, Lampridius,

Capitolinus, Josephus, and certain others who shall be cited hereafter in their places. I also have drawn out some part of my citations out of our Annales of France, out of Paulus Aemylius, Thucydides, Xenophon, and many other authors, all which are authentic and approved, and by prescript of ancient time and long continuance have gained that praise and reputation to be good witnesses, without reproach or defamation. And for what Machiavelli dares say, that the French have no understanding or knowledge in matters or causes of state, I hope it shall appear clean contrary, not only by the good government which I shall show to have been kept and observed by our ancestors in public causes, but also by the places and examples which I shall bring forth and cite out of M. Philip de Commynes, knight and chamberlain of king Louis XI; who lived even in Machiavelli's time, and who understood better how the affairs of a kingdom or commonwealth should be ruled or governed, than ever Machiavelli knew how to guide and rule a simple town. Yet I cannot but confess that for the governing and guiding of a tyrannous state, Machiavelli has more cunning than any other of whom I have read; he so well knew all the points and precepts which were meet and convenient for the establishing of it, as hereafter shall be seen in the handling of his maxims.

Moreover, if in certain places where the matter requires it I speak a little too hardly of Machiavelli's Italian nation, I hope that the good men of that country cannot find it evil; as well because Machiavelli gives me just occasion, having villainously and opprobriously slandered in many ways our French nation, but also because I intend not in any way to blame or reprove the good Italian people. And I will not deny but that among the Italian and Florentine nation there are diverse virtuous people, who are not less than mere Machiavellians, and who detest and abhor his wicked doctrine. For there is not so bad a ground which amongst divers and sundry evil plants brings not out some good. Yet I will give a particular praise and commendation unto such Italians as are virtuous, which more pertains to them than to the virtuous and goodly men of other nations; namely, that as precious stones and some other drugs and spices are esteemed to be most singular as they are most rare, so the good and virtuous are so much the more to be praised and commended because they are rare, and because it is no trivial and common thing in Italy to be a virtuous and good man. There is also another point which excuses me; that is, that the force of truth has drawn and expressed this confession of Machiavelli, when he says that there is no nation or people in Christendom that is more vicious and corrupted than the Italian nation; and that there is no province nor kingdom where there is less care of God and of all religion than in Italy. Although to this

last point of religion Machiavelli, who in all his books shows himself a very atheist and contemner of all piety and godliness, meant not to tax nor blame them of his nation of impiety nor of atheism; but only that they are not like the pagans, who so scrupulously observe their superstitions and ceremonies, as we shall more at large set down in the second part of this discourse.

But from whence comes this impudence of Machiavelli to tax and blame the French of disloyalty and perfidy; seeing that he himself also teaches that a prince ought not to keep and hold his faith but for his profit and commodity, and that the observation of faith is pernicious and hurtful? I will not deny but at the present time many Italianized Frenchmen are disloyal and faith-breakers, having so learned by Machiavelli's doctrine; but I deny that in the time of Machiavelli the French nation was contaminated with that vice; as yet there are many good and natural Frenchmen (thanks be to God) who detest all perfidy and disloyalty and are in no way affected to those exploits which the Italians and Italianized do in France, but rather sob and sigh in their breasts to see the French nation defamed with that infamous and abominable vice, detested and hated amongst all countries and nations. And I also hope that the good and loyal Frenchmen will endeavor themselves to recover the good renown and reputation of the French nation, which some degenerated and Italianized have defiled and polluted. But wherefore does Machiavelli so defame and disgrace the French nation for greed? I do much marvel at it, for until the present time the French have always had the reputation to be liberal, courteous, and ready to do any pleasure even unto strangers and those who are unknown to them. And would to God that the French nation had never been of that nature and condition to do well unto strangers, without first knowing and trying their behaviors and manner of life. We should not then see France to be governed and ruled by strangers, as it is; we should not feel the calamities and troubles of civil wars and dissensions, which they enterprise to maintain their greatness and magnitude, and to fish in troubled water. The treasures of France should not be so exhausted and drawn out by their rapines and most insatiable avarice, as they are. What country or nation is there in the world that feels or can justly complain of the covetousness of Frenchmen? Or rather, what nation is there which has not felt the liberality of the kingdom of France? But contrarily we see with the eye and touch with the finger the covetousness and avarice of the Italians who undermine and ruin us, yea, who also suck out all our substance and wealth, and leave nothing at all for ourselves. Some of them are publicans or farmers of the king's revenues or farm-rents; some farmers of the customs and freights of merchandizers and carriages;

some farmers of yearly tributes and subsidies; and some of the prince's private rents, yea, of all public and common profits belonging to the French king, rating them even at what price they will. By that means infinite coin comes into their hands, but there is little which returns again to the public or common good of the prince and country. Others obtain great estates, offices, and benefices, by the means whereof all the treasure and money of the kingdom of France falls into the hands of strangers. And those Italians, who have no means or occasions to deal with the public affairs of the commonwealth, hold and keep banks in good towns, where they exercise most exorbitant and unmeasurable usuries, by the means thereof they wholly eat and consume poor France and bring it unto confusion. And although in Machiavelli's time France was not fallen into that extreme evil and great calamity as it is now at present, yet since that time we have sufficiently felt the greed of the Italians in the wars which our kings of France have made in Italy and Piedmont. For the great store of treasure and money that must needs have been sent beyond the Alps, to satisfy the insatiable and greedy lusts of the Italians, was the cause oftentimes of increasing and raising taxes and tallies upon the people, which little by little rose so high that they exceeded and do exceed many times more than half the revenue of the poor plebian, or common sort of people. But this Italian covetousness which they exercised in France at that time, by their dealings drawing our treasure and money into their own country, was but honey in respect to that which they have exercised and still exercise more and more since they have passed on this side of the Alps; and they come to domineer and perch all over the country of France, and to hold and possess offices, benefices, farms, customs, revenues, and banks, as is heretofore said. And therefore it is clearly and evidently seen that it is (as I may say) against the hair that Machiavelli and the other Italians tax the French of avarice, unless a man will say that the French are more to be blamed and reprehended for passive avarice; that is to say, what they suffer and endure from the Italians, who by their active greed which they practice and put in action amongst us clip the wool on the back, and suck our blood and substance, as men do with sheep. And in this sense to take it, as we should, it is certain and assured that Machiavelli, blaming us of passive covetousness, which we do suffer, shows us briefly that we are beasts who will suffer ourselves to be bereaved and weakened of our wool and our blood (with patience) by strangers. For it may well one day come to pass that they may be made to disgorge their booties and rapines, and that their great heaps of money, gotten by extortions in France, may turn them unto damage; for as the poet Sophocles says:

Men must not seek, nor love, of all things to get gain,
 For he that draws gain out of that which is naught,
 Before he profit gets, shall sooner loss sustain:
 For evil gotten goods are often dearly bought.

And whereas Machiavelli taxes and charges the Germans with greed and perfidy, herein may be seen what an impudent and most wicked slanderer he is. For all men may plainly see that neither in their own country nor in the towns of France where they dwell for their commerce and traffic, they practice no great and execrable usuries as the Italians do; but content themselves with a mean and reasonable profit for their money, as of five or eight percent at the most; whereas the Italians often return their money with the gain of fifty, yea often of a hundredth, for a hundredth. And as for merchandise and traffic, it is well known that no other nation is more plain, faithful, sincere, and loyal than they are in their bargains and traffic. For they do not refresh, polish, and deck up their wares, nor change them and sell one for another; they set not a price for their merchandise more than it is worth, but at the first word they ask what at the last they will have, or not sell it, without seeking any unmeasurable or extraordinary profit upon them who know not what the merchandise is worth. And as for perfidy, deceit, and treason, the Germans have them in so great execration and detestation that they think there neither is nor can be any greater vice or sin than they are. After a man once has forfeited and failed in his faith, contract, and promise, although but in small things and of no great reckoning or value, they will never afterward esteem or account him a good or honest man; so great, I say, is their detestation of all kind of deceit and false dealing. But a man need not marvel that Machiavelli dares so impudently lie upon the Germans, for he has brought forth more strange things than this slander, as we shall show hereafter, both to the good of all others that shall read his writings, and to the manifest and plain laying open of him in his true and perfect colors: for the effecting thereof, let us then now enter into the matter.

1.1 *Machiavelli*

A prince's good counsel ought to proceed from his own wisdom;
 otherwise, he cannot be well counseled.

It is a maxim and general rule that good counsel ought to proceed from the wisdom of the prince himself, and not contrary, that the prince's

wisdom should proceed from good counsel. For if the prince is not wise himself, he cannot be well counseled. For if he is counselled by one alone in the administration of his affairs, hardly shall he find a man of requisite honesty and sufficiency to counsel him well. And although he should find one of such quality, there is danger that he would take away the prince's estate; for to domineer and reign, there is no honesty or virtue that can keep in the ambition of men. And if an unwise prince takes counsel of many, he will have discordant and contentious counsels and opinions, which he can never accord nor reconcile; meanwhile every one of his counsellors will seek his own profit, of which the prince cannot know or remedy.

Answer

At first this maxim seems to have some appearance of truth; but when it is well examined, a man shall find it not only untrue, but also pernicious and of wicked consequence. I am content to presuppose that it is certain that there cannot come a better and more profitable thing to a people than to have a prince wise of himself; therefore, said Plato, men may call it a happy commonwealth when either the prince can play the philosopher, or when a philosopher comes to reign there. That is to say, in a word, when the prince is himself wise and prudent. For in old time, the name philosopher was taken for a person full of wisdom and science, not for a dreaming unsociable man, as it is commonly taken today. Of old the name of philosopher was attributed for a title of great honor unto the emperor Marcus Aurelius, who in truth was a good and wise prince. But to verify what I say it is not needful to cite many reasons, for it is evident enough that the felicity of a state lies wholly in well commanding and well obeying, whereupon results a harmony and concordance so melodious and excellent that he who commands and he who obeys both receive contentment, pleasure, and utility. But to obey well depends wholly on well commanding, and cannot be without it; so commanding well depends on the prudence and wisdom of him that commands. The emperor Severus, being in wars and his son Bassianus with him, being carried in a litter because he had the gout, saw his soldiers discontented and mutinous, and would have Bassianus for their chieftain. He assembled all the army, but especially his colonels, captains, and corporals, and after having made unto them some remonstrance and oration, he executed all the heads of that mutiny. Afterwards he spoke thus to all the army: "Now know ye that it is the head and not the feet which commands you." And in deed and truth, good commanding proceeds from the prudence and wisdom of he that

commands; who remains and has his being not in the feet nor arms, but in a brave mind, well stayed and governed, aided by a good natural towardness, a mature and ripe age, and experience. And the prince who can well command shall also undoubtedly be well obeyed; for a prudent commandment draws after it withal an obedience, because a wise prince will always found his commandments in reason and justice, and to the public utility, not to his own pleasure. By which means they who are to obey shall be constrained by the force of reason and equity, and drawn also by the sweetness of the profit to yield obedience. But if some by these means cannot be induced to obey, as there are always some among many, they will be brought thereunto either by the example of those who let themselves be overcome with reason and public utility, or else by punishment, which is in the prince's hand. He who will show by plurality of examples that prudent princes have always been well obeyed, and that their kingdoms and countries have been happy and full of prosperity, should never be done; but I will content myself to cite only two. Solomon was a king most wise, and a great philosopher; for he asked wisdom from God, who gave it in such abundance that besides being ignorant of nothing a prince should know to govern his subjects well, he also knew the natures of plants and living creatures, and was so cunning in all kinds of philosophy that his knowledge was admired through all the world. His prudence and wisdom made him so respected by all the great kings, his neighbors, that they esteemed themselves happy to do him pleasure and have his amity. By this means he maintained his kingdom in so high and happy a peace that in his time his subjects made no more account of silver than of stones, they had such store. And as for himself, he held so magnificent an estate that we read not of any king or emperor that did the like.

Charles the Wise, king of France, on coming to the crown found the kingdom in great confusion and calamity, for all Guyenne, part of Normandy, and Picardy were occupied by the English. He saw he had king Edward III of England as his adversary, who was one of the most happy and most valiant princes that ever was in England, and who some years before had obtained two great victories in France. One was at Crécy against king Philip of Valois, where France lost eleven princes, twelve hundred knights, and thirty thousand other people of war. The other victory was at Poitiers, by the leadership of the prince of Wales, Edward's son and lieutenant general. King John of France was there taken prisoner, with his son Philip (later duke of Burgogne), along with many other princes and great lords, all which were taken into England; there was made there a great discomfiture of people. By these two battles lost in France, one after the other in a small time, the kingdom was so