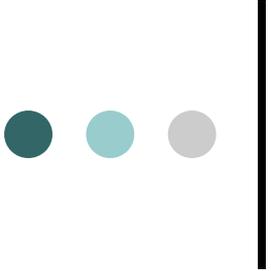


# Machiavelli

*The Prince*





# Machiavelli's *The Prince*

- Significance
  - Quintessential political treatise of the 16<sup>th</sup> century
  - He was a realist who dealt with power politics
  - Considered the Father of Political Science
  - Divorced politics from theology
  - Stated that the ends justify the means
  - Major break from medieval theory that said a ruler could only exercise power if it contributed to the common good and a ruler should emulate Christian moral principles

# Historical Overview

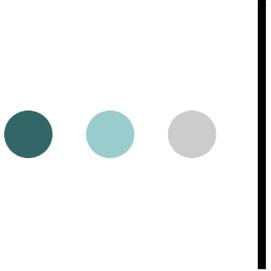
- Niccolò Machiavelli (1469 – 1527)
- European Renaissance
  - Declining power of Church
  - Advancing in Science, Arts, Literature
- *The Prince* written in 1513 during period of political exile



# Historical Overview

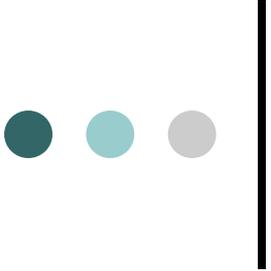


- Machiavelli & Florence
  - Medici family ruled city
  - French forces invaded, set up republican government
  - Machiavelli got a role in government, ended up as high civil servant, sent on some diplomatic missions and military operations



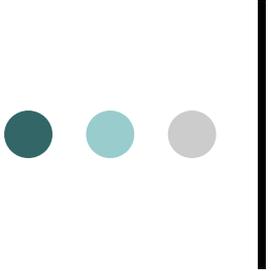
# Historical Overview

- Machiavelli & Florence
  - Spanish defeated the French, and reinstalled the Medici
  - Machiavelli was arrested, tortured, and eventually exiled to his country home beyond the city walls
  - During this period (he's in his 40s) he begins his philosophical/political writing, including *The Prince*
  - It was published in 1532 after his death and it was immediately controversial and condemned by the Pope.



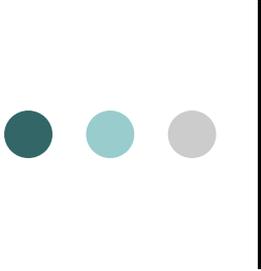
# Machiavelli & Florence

- *The Prince* seen as an extended job application to the Medici
  - *Prince* is dedicated to Lorenzo de Medici, the Magnificent
- Machiavelli drew on 2 sources:
  1. Italian political problems
  2. Knowledge of ancient Rome



# Overview

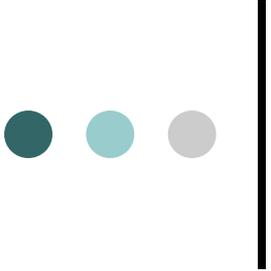
- One of the topics discussed in *The Prince* is the character and behavior of a ruler.
- For Machiavelli, what is key is how a ruler acquires and maintains political power.



# Human Nature

- Human beings are selfish animals
- Therefore, rulers need to construct a political life which is based on how people actually behave, not how we want them to be

“The desire to acquire is truly a very natural and common thing; and whenever men who can, do so, they are praised and not condemned; but when they cannot and want to do so just the same, herein lies the mistake and the condemnation.” (Chapter 3).



# Power

- Power
  - Machiavelli the first political thinker to focus on power as positive trait
  - Simple recognition of the fact that the quest for power is an essential part of human nature
- If we want to acquire possessions, then that implies that we also want the means to acquire those possessions
- Need to recognize that for rulers the study of power is vital: how to acquire it, how to keep it, how to use it

# Power



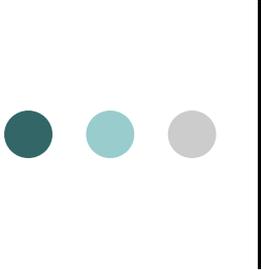
“Many writers have imagined for themselves republics and principalities that have never been seen nor known to exist in reality; for there is such a gap between how one lives and how one ought to live that anyone who abandons what is done for what ought to be done learns his ruin rather than his preservation...”

“for a man who wishes to profess goodness at all times will come to ruin among so many who are not good” (chapter 15).

# ● ● ● | Power

- So if a Prince or ruler wants to stay in power, he must “Learn how not to be good, and to use this knowledge or not to use it according to necessity” (chapter XV)
- Machiavelli is not advising us to behave badly simply for the sake of being evil





# Power

- Rather since power is a fact of political life we need to counsel rulers on how best to use it
- Basic advice, don't help others, be cruel, stingy, deceptive...
- And get others to do the dirty work so you can escape blame

“You must, therefore, know that there are two means of fighting: one according to the laws, the other with force; the first way is proper to man, the second to beasts; but because the first, in many cases is not sufficient, it becomes necessary to have recourse to the second” (chapter XVIII).

# Power

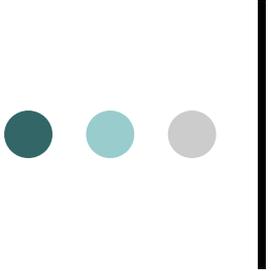


“Since, then, a prince must know how to make good use of the nature of the beast, he should choose from among the beasts the

fox and the lion; for the lion cannot defend itself from traps and the fox cannot protect itself from wolves. It is therefore necessary to be a fox in order to recognize the traps and a lion in order to frighten the wolves.”

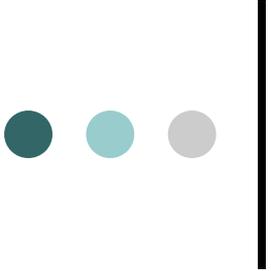


What qualities do a fox and a lion possess?



# Power

- Machiavelli is not counseling the need to be cruel, nor denying that cruelty is sometimes useful, but rather that a ruler should be prepared to use it if that action will help him stay in power—“the ends justify the means”
- The primary requirement for selfish individuals seeking personal goals is to enter into reciprocal relationships where each needs power or influence over the behavior of others
- In entering these relationships, all are equal in their selfishness, and all are free to seek power
- He’s not saying that people will never act on the common good, only that they will do so only if they see a convergence between their private interest and the common good



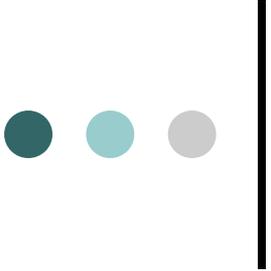
# Power

- “And it is essential to understand this: that a prince, and especially a new prince, cannot observe all those things for which men are considered good, for in order to maintain the state he is often obliged to act against his promise, against charity, against humanity, and against religion...”
  - Being a ruler requires one to do things that would be considered “bad” if one did them as an individual.
- “And therefore, it is necessary that he have a mind ready to turn itself according to the way the winds of fortune and the changeability of affairs require him; and, as I said above, as long as it is possible, he should not stray from the good, but he should know how to enter into evil when necessity commands” (Chapter XVIII).
  - A ruler should try and be good if events allow it, but if they do not, then he should not hesitate to act in an immoral (evil) manner. But a ruler should always **appear** good to his people.

# Fortune and Virtue

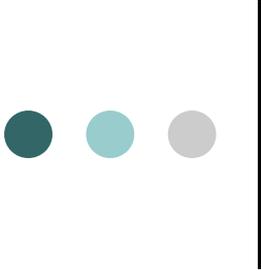
- Machiavelli recognizes that sometimes, despite the best planning, education, and skill, events still turn out badly
- That is, *fortune* or luck is also a part of our political life





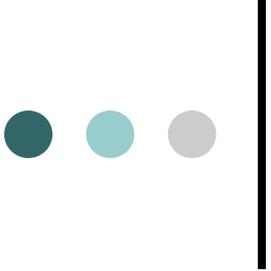
# Fortune and Virtue

- What to do?
  1. Follow Machiavelli's prescriptions. That is, learn the virtues of ruling
  2. "I also believe that the man who adapts his course of action to the nature of the times will succeed and, likewise, that the man who sets his course of action out of tune with the times will come to grief" (XVIII).



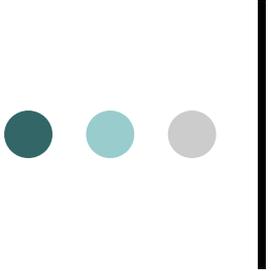
# Fortune and Virtue

- For Machiavelli a good ruler is one who can adapt to changing circumstances
- It means knowing when to be cautious and hesitant, or bold and forceful, as the occasion demands.
- Knowing *what* to do and *when* to do it is part of Machiavelli's understanding of virtue
- Unlike the ancient philosophers or Christian theologians, virtue is divorced from the idea of a code of conduct, of “good” versus “bad” ways of acting



# Fortune and Virtue

- Instead, for Machiavelli, virtue is *individualistic* [contra the Greeks and Romans] and *secular* [contra the Church]
- Not some idealistic merit or moral goodness, but ...



# Fortune and Virtue

- A true selfishness that enables individuals to get what they value, whether power, wealth, fame, etc.
- Those *who get what they seek* have demonstrated their virtue and they are judged, in Machiavelli's criteria, as good.
- By adapting – by adjusting cunning and strength, by following the fox and the lion – a virtuous ruler is one who can see trouble on the horizon (the work of fortune) and act rather than be taken off-guard by changing events
- Because a political state is passive (events happen to it), it needs constant attention devoted to creating order and avoiding disorder