

THE MACHIAVELLIAN REVOLUTION

It is impossible to understand the significance of Machiavelli's work if one does not understand, to begin with, the concept of man and of the world which dominates it.

Too frequently the image of Machiavelli is limited only to a study of the procedures, tricks, string-pulling, ropes (and even ropes around the neck) which he prescribes for the attainment and maintainance of power, all of this well embellished with a psychology which is either praised or deprecated.

This aspect of Machiavelli's work is not false. It is undoubtedly true that Machiavelli is the father of all the Machiavellian recipes. But it is no less true that Machiavellism does not exhaust all the thought of Machiavelli. No work of genius exhausts the genius who has created it. Plato is greater than Platonism, because he bears within himself an entire world of which his work is only a fragment. Balzac is greater than the *Comédie Humaine*. The property of genius is to be inexhaustible. In contrast to the chatterer, it tirelessly continues to say the same thing. And so does Machiavelli. Even at the very heart of the political mechanisms which the Florentine patiently takes apart, there is a certain vision of the human being placed in the world, organizing

its relations and coordinating its joints. The advice which Machiavelli gives to those who love power has no meaning aside from the central philosophical and anthropological intuition which strategically orients it. To give this advice, and to be sure that it would be well received, Machiavelli had to know what the man of his time was, what concept this man had of himself and of his place in the universe. The Florentine was not a man to preach to the deaf.

If one does not discern this initial concept, from which all of Machiavelli's thoughts spring as from a subterranean source, nothing is left of his work but a formless, inchoate, disconnected mass of behavior, manners, attitudes and artifices. Most critics of Machiavelli, and the men of action who wanted to shape their conduct according to the suggestions of the author of *The Prince*, have fallen into this trap. They constructed for themselves a conventional Machiavelli. They made him a sort of *virtuoso* of Machiavellism. They imagined him as a simple technician of politics. If Machiavelli is a fox constantly on the lookout for prey, he is, however, a thinking fox, whose ruses and slynesses depend on the type of man whom he observes in his time, and whose effigy he carries within himself. He is much too intelligent not to surpass by a thousand ells the vulgar Machiavellism to which his thought is too often reduced. He knows the new man whom the Renaissance has brought forth. He has formed, in his most secret thoughts, a just, firm and lucid idea of him. His art of governing is not left to chance, to improvisation, nor even to a mere knowledge of the psychological motivations of the human heart. He knows all that, and well, but above all he knows human nature as it was conceived by the Renaissance.

But in order to grasp the concept of man which Machiavelli ceaselessly assumes in his ruthless analyses (and which doesn't openly appear in any of his work), it is necessary to contrast it with the concept of the Middle Ages.

The Middle Ages were dominated by the Aristotelian concept of man that the genius of St. Thomas integrated with Christianity. Of medieval man, one might say in general that he was all of a piece, without a break or crack between the components of his being, like a peasant innocent, in his simplicity, of the psychological conflicts of city-dwellers, whose cerebral vision of the world

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is so often pushed to an extreme by the spell of urban civilization. Confronting reality, the attitude of medieval man is synthetic and not analytic. He apprehends himself as a whole, just like the creatures and things of nature which he observes and with which his life is involved. A tree, for him, is not roots, plus trunk, plus branches; the parts are all alive with a single principle. An animal isn't a sum of organs and members put together like the parts of a machine, but a living being which takes its life from a mysterious entity diffused equally in all its members and which the scholars call the soul. The universe appears to him to be a vast net of correspondences agreeing among themselves in an organic fashion. His concept of man and of the world is essentially vitalistic.

It is, therefore, not astonishing that the man of the Middle Ages, formed by contact with nature, adopted in his behavior the Aristotelian doctrine—the scholars consciously, the ignorant unconsciously. This doctrine adapts itself like a glove to his being. For Aristotle, indeed, the soul is not separated from the body, the spirit is not cut off from the flesh. They are two incomplete entities which only exist together. The soul penetrates the body down to the least fiber, and the body impregnates the farthest recesses of the soul. Christian Aristotelianism orchestrated this *unitary* concept of man. For it, the spiritual is carnal, to use the formula of Péguy, a medieval man lost in the nineteenth century. Grace is, undoubtedly, distinct from nature; but far from abolishing it, it fulfills itself by becoming incarnate in it.¹ It is not at all a layer of paint or a poster slapped onto man, but intimately involved in his life, as food is in blood; it is the principle of all his supernatural actions and the origin of his theological virtues. The Christian Aristotelianism is governed by the radical law of the incarnation of Grace and of the soul in the body, with which they form *one* substance.

For the medieval man, then, there is not the soul on one hand and the body on the other, like a pilot in a boat, but one being only, all of a piece. There is not on the one hand the super-

¹ *Perficit*, says St. Thomas; one could translate: it carries nature to the point of supreme perfection and maturity, while remaining at the same time, as the source of this transformation, superior to nature.

natural and on the other the natural, but a complete human being, baptized man, completely natural and completely supernatural to the degree that he realizes within himself the demands of nature and of Grace.

The human being is, therefore, for medieval man, an individual in the strongest meaning of the word, that is, an *undivided* being. Only death can break this fundamental unity. But even death, in the Christian perspective, is only the open door to resurrection, where the soul and the body are rejoined, where the concrete unity of the human being is reconstituted. The scenes of resurrection on the doors of Romanesque or Gothic cathedrals of the Middle Ages are not only the pictured translation of the Last Judgment, but also the symbol of the reconstitution of the integral human being, gifted with a soul, supplied with flesh and bones, promised an eternity of joy or an eternity of suffering according to the life led on earth, and who arises anew, with a permanently fixed destiny. The dogma of the resurrection of the body is tightly linked with the unitary concept of man which passed from Aristotelianism to Christianity.

The universal macrocosm is only the gigantic enlargement of the human microcosm. It too is subject to the golden rule of the unity of its component parts. Every terrestrial phenomenon has its celestial counterpart, and vice versa. The dogma of the mystical body that is the Church in its triple aspect—militant, suffering, and triumphant—directly underlines the tight solidarity which exists between the hierarchical and unitary concept of the Aristotelian *cosmos* and Christian theology.

Man, therefore, finds himself in fundamental accord with the universe in which he is placed by the accident of birth. Doubtless, original sin has distended this relationship. It has not completely broken it. Man has been excluded from the benefice of Grace, but the nature within him, while wounded, has not been corrupted to the point of no longer being nature. Christ, also, came to restore the unity of creation, and to offer it anew, sublimated by His redeeming sacrifice, to the Father who created all things, visible and invisible. The Christian who imitates Christ in this way is a man who, supernaturally elevated by Grace, offers himself and the entire universe of which he is a part to the divine Father.

The Aristotelian and Christian perspective in which the Mid-

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dle Ages places itself is then determinedly and at the same time *vitalistic, consonant* and *optimistic*. The bustling life of nature comes from God and returns to God through Christ, *per ipsum et cum ipso et in ipso est tibi Patri omnipotenti, in unitate Spiritus Sancti, omnis honor et gloria*. This grandiose theological vision of a world whose multiplicity is gathered in unity would not have been possible without the vast work of systematization undertaken by Aristotle, who carried the Greek idea of a universe ordered like a chorus to the ultimate point of perfection: the cosmos suspended through love from a supreme Good who is God. The medieval spirit will strive, then, like the Greek spirit, to make manifest the convergence of all beings, of all goods towards the one Good, of all material, spiritual and intellectual interests towards total harmony. The Christianity of the Middle Ages is in this sense the direct heir of the Greek *cosmos* and its transposition to the superior level of the supernatural.

This universe is all the more ordered since all its members depend on a creative God all the way to the ultimate roots. Each one has there his destined place. Each is what he is in that place because of the divine will. No one can add an ell to his stature. No one can become something other than he is. No one can escape from his own being. To surpass oneself, to go beyond the power which God assigns to each of his creatures is the sin *par excellence*: pride, which makes its victim fall into disorder, out of the divine creation, and lets him fall into the hands of the Devil. Here too the Christian concept of sin as a breaking of divine law is parallel to the Greek concept of lack of measure, of *hybris*, according to which any man who exaggerates the power at his disposal and surpasses his limits is immediately punished for his temerity by the explosion of his own power. To want to be more than he is excludes man from the universe and from order. Every abuse of power is immediately punished. Whoever crosses the limits of the human condition to set himself up as a superman and as a god cuts himself off from the universal harmony.

This concept was demolished in the Renaissance. Difficult as it is to sum up in a few words that prodigious movement that was the Renaissance, the least one can say is that there was a lessening of the Aristotelian and Christian influences which had made themselves so forcefully felt in the Middle Ages. In some

cases, these influences even disappeared. Doubtless, the school of Padua remained faithful to Aristotle, but the Aristotelianism which it diffused had nothing more in common with the Greek and Thomist Aristotelianism. It is an Aristotelianism so strongly influenced by Averroism that it is hardly recognizable. In all minds Plato, or rather his neo-Platonic transposition, takes the place of Aristotle, and Paduan Aristotelianism is hardly more than a camouflaged neo-Platonism, just as is the Averroism whose influence it underwent. There is no longer, from the Renaissance on, a single philosopher of peripatetic breadth.

In the same way, the solidly peasant structure of the Christian faith is altered, and invaded by elements which disjoin within it the firm relations which it had established between supernature and nature. While nature, in the medieval sense of the word, is the ensemble of created beings assembled in creation and concretely submissive to the Creator, nature, in the new sense of the word, becomes abstract and degenerates into naturalism, that is to say, a doctrine which removes the universe and human conduct from the imperatives of the transcendent divine law which governs them.

Deprived of its natural substratum, Christian faith transforms itself in turn: it casts off its carnal character and makes itself immanent. It is much more thought than lived; it moves on the basis of pure faith. Certainly, the Renaissance man remains a believer, but his belief is cut off from all the speculations which he elaborates concerning the universe; it is enclosed within itself, breaking all the relations which the Middle Ages had so firmly established between philosophy, the realm of proof, and theology, the realm of revelation. As Poggio wrote on the subject of his friend Lorenzo Valla, the latter "discredits Aristotle's physics, destroys religion, professes heretical ideas, despises the Bible. And has he not claimed that the Christian faith rests not on proofs, but on belief, which would be beyond all proofs!" From this typical quotation one may see that the Renaissance breaks with Aristotle and with traditional Christian theology.

The two breaks are parallel and are to be found, in different degrees, in all minds of the time. The Renaissance man does not consider the world as a *cosmos* created and redeemed by God.

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He places himself henceforth outside of this world with which he now no longer deals except in a strictly worldly sense.

Let us not be deceived here by the metaphors which are so often used when speaking of the Renaissance. The historians and philosophers tell us that the Renaissance substituted anthropocentricity for medieval theocentricity. The image of the center is rather misleading. In fact, that of the circle is much more proper: for the medieval man, the cycle of the real passes from God as principle to God as end, through finite beings both natural and supernatural. This circular harmony is now broken. Man finds himself *outside* the cycle of reality. He is no longer a being in the world, but a being outside of the world, facing a world that has been despoiled of its natural profundity explored by Aristotelianism and of its supernatural profundity communicated to it by Christianity. The world of the Renaissance is a *denaturalized* and *desacralized* world. This world no longer has a vital principle as Aristotle had assumed. This world no longer has the ferment of Grace as St. Paul had assumed. It is now a bare, disenchanted world. One will no longer seek in it for traces of the divine intelligence which created it or the passage of divine love which redeemed it. The world is now no more than an object of conquest for man, who faces it as a master faces a slave or as an artist faces the model from which he is working.

Such a change of concept has the immediate result of substituting the practical men, the artists, the artisans, the warriors, the conquerors, in short, the technicians, for the philosophers and theologians and contemplative spirits of the Middle Ages. And just as it is necessary, in order to seize the world and give it shape, to know its resistance and malleability, so it will be necessary to determine its lines of strength, just as if the world were a machine to be constructed. Henceforth the world is no longer an organism, as Aristotle thought, but a mechanism in which all idea of cause is excluded, where there are now only phenomena which succeed each other, revealing only the invariability of their antecedents and consequences to the observer. As Emile Bréhier has emphasized, the new concept of the world "is a concept which one realizes rather than thinks." The Renaissance man whose behavior Machiavelli analyzes is the first Faustian man: *im Anfang war die Tat!* One could even say that he is the first man of a Marxist

type, even if it be true that, according to the prophet of communism, it is no longer a question of knowing the world but rather of changing it.

With prodigious acuteness, Machiavelli discerned this new aspect of man arising under his very eyes on the stage of history. Machiavelli resolutely turns his back on the philosophers of the Renaissance who remain prisoners of the old scheme of the universe, such as Nicholas of Cues and Campanella. He adopts the new vision of nature. He does not want to pour new wine, whose fermentation he sees, into the old skin of the past. He adopts, rather, the path of the great captains, the great political leaders, the great artists.

For him, as for his contemporaries who sense the coming of the new man, there is no longer a harmonious universe, articulated in all its parts by a creating and redeeming God. There is now only, on the one hand, mankind and, on the other, a world which men can freely violate, if they are intelligent and astute enough. By the word *liberty*, Machiavelli no longer understands, as did the people of the Middle Ages, the possibility of doing good or evil, as he explains in subtle terms in the *Discorsi*, but rather the power to dominate a world henceforth as plastic and malleable as one could wish, since this world is now merely a banal and profane world, where reason can discover only matter perceptible to the senses. Outside of this material world, there is only a distant supernatural, floating like a balloon without anchors, without communication between the two.

Machiavelli is not an atheist in the modern sense of the word. He remains attached to the traditional faith, but it is no longer possible for the traditional faith to become incarnate in the new world which Machiavelli has discovered. He is just as likely to write an exhortation to penitence or a moral discourse—the title of one of his prose works—as a set of rules for a society of pleasure—the title of another. He will die in the lap of the Church. His son Pietro Machiavelli wrote these dry lines to Francesco Nello, a Florentine lawyer in Pisa, on June 22, 1524: “He let Fra Matteo hear his confession, who kept him company until his death.” That is all. Machiavelli dies, faithful to an institution. Nothing more. He is not a miscreant, not a negator or an enemy of Christianity. He does not even mimic the faith,

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as Abel Lefranc thinks Rabelais does. He lives in two different worlds, separated by high walls. Human knowledge of the world is for him no longer integrated with Christian faith, and Christian faith no longer vitally applies itself to human knowledge of the world. He practices, as do the Averroists of his time, the doctrine of the double truth: religious truth and profane truth, each independent of the other. His attitude is that of reliance on faith: *credo quia absurdum*, and not *credo ut intelligam*. Reason and experience no longer lead him to the threshold of the supernatural mystery. The latter no longer extends the research of reason and of experience. They are two compartmentalized methods of knowing. The real terrestrial world is that of action. The real celestial world is that of irrational, sentimental, affective faith, enclosed by the institutions and rites of the Church. Machiavelli accepts both, without discovering any tie between them, as does the majority of his contemporaries. The two worlds are dissonant, and Machiavelli adjusts himself to this, as do, by the way, Montaigne, Hobbes and so many others.

But it is not enough to determine this, as do most historians, or to declare this ambivalent attitude untenable and purely hypocritical, as does Abel Lefranc. One must understand it. And one will not understand it if one plunges Machiavelli into the specifically neo-Platonic atmosphere in which all the Renaissance minds under the influence of Proclus immerse themselves. For the neo-Platonists, as for Plato, there are two worlds which coexist without interpenetrating: the intelligible, harmonious world and the material, discordant world. But while Plato poetically conceived of the sensible world as a degradation or shadow of the world of ideas, the neo-Platonists considered the material world to be an assemblage of exterior parts with no principal of organization. Matter is for them completely indeterminate. It is evil, and if it isn't evil in the way that Proclus thinks, it is the absence of all consonance, all accord and all harmony.

Man is therefore in a universe radically marked with the seal of duality: here below, a dissonant world, and above, a consonant world. By his spirit man belongs to the latter, by his body to the former. Faced with this dual world, there are only two possible attitudes, and they are exactly the ones which the men of the Renaissance adopt, according to their respective temperaments:

either they flee the world below as much as possible and escape into the world of cerebral speculation, and this is the attitude of numerous philosophers, from Marsilio Ficino to Nicholas of Cues and Campanella; or they deny, or, at the very least, enclose the world above in silent solitude, and adapt themselves to the world below with the firm intention of making a place for themselves in the midst of its divergencies.

Most minds vacillated between the two, for that matter. Leonardo da Vinci throws himself at the same time into esotericism and into technique. Certain philosophers reconstruct with their thoughts an ideal world, but are, at the same time, doctors, astrologers and occultists. The humanists build a religion out of beauty, and are exact philologists. As for Machiavelli, he throws himself eagerly into the world here below, except to reserve for himself—with characteristically extreme prudence and sense of calculation—an emergency exit to the world above.

The entire genius of Machiavelli resides in his having understood the significance of this passage from a unified world to a disjointed one, and in having drawn the consequences.

Machiavelli admirably grasped the cause of this immense transformation. His experienced eye saw at once: if the world is dissonant, *it is because man himself is cracking* and the components of his nature, only recently assembled into an organic whole by Aristotelianism and by a Christianity that is diffuse and *passé* in the customs of the time—these components are separating. Not only is faith self-isolated in Renaissance man, under the aspect of a deincarnate fideism, divorced from human nature, reduced to naturalism; it is man himself who is isolated, everyday man, the man in the street, so to speak. The medieval man—all of a piece—gives way to a man whose spiritual and vital extremities are separating from each other. The angel within us, under the guise of spirit, now contemplates *from outside* the beast within us, under the guise of passions and instincts. A triple fissure splits man from top to bottom. There is no longer organic communication between the believer, the reasonable being and the animal being. The Renaissance man, for Machiavelli who observes him with the sagacity of the entomologist, is a prey to the tensions and oppositions of the disjointed elements of his being. This man had just barely overcome the contradictions in

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his nature by sublimating them in an art of living inspired by Aristotelianism and Christianity. The invasion of neo-Platonism submerged this possibility.

Pico della Mirandola best translated this attitude in his famous *Oratio de hominis dignitate*. The creator says to Adam: "I placed you in the center of the world so that you could more easily look about you and see what it encloses. In making you a being that is neither celestial nor terrestrial, I wanted to give you the power to form yourself; you may descend all the way to the level of the beast and you can elevate yourself until you become a divine being."

All the philosophies of the period reject the unitary concept of man. Man's reason is autonomous and has no point of contact with the body, which is only vile matter. Reason is divine, or participates in the divine. It introduces itself into the secrets of the superior realities to which its nature is related. There is hardly a thinker, an artist or even a man of action at this time, who does not dabble in hermetic or exotic sciences, close to cabala and magic. It follows that the passions of the body, no longer regulated by a spirit present in the flesh, are given free rein. The famous adage of Pascal stresses this: he who behaves like an angel behaves like a beast. It would be difficult to find in history another period in which the culture of the spirit in all directions, normal or aberrant, coincided with the worst license in moral habits. The pontifical court is an example.

Machiavelli adapted himself to his epoch. He made this concept of *homo duplex* his own. "He is happy," he writes, "that is to say, arrives at the perfection of his being, who knows well how to govern himself according to the quality and condition of the times." But his peculiar genius lay in *having reversed the terms*, and in having realized that all the esoteric dust which his contemporaries sniffed with such delight in the manuscripts of decadent antiquity were not worth anything. For him, too, man is double: there is reason, and there is the animal in man, but it is the animal in him which brings him into contact with reality. The proper function of reason is not to escape into the kingdom of illusions, permitting the animal's passions and instincts to fulfill themselves haphazardly, but, on the contrary, to follow them in order to allow them to attain their end, as a

pilot guides a ship towards the port, and to give them the maximum power, by means of wise techniques which reason invents for this purpose.

We are here at the very core of Machiavelli's thinking.

The Aristotelian and Christian type of intelligence that finds the ultimate aim of human life in the Sovereign Good that is God, assigning to the will the task of approaching Him as closely as possible, bit by bit harmonizing the material world with the spiritual world for Machiavelli all this is finished. For him reason, too, is finished, in the ancient and medieval sense that unveils to man his nature as a reasonable animal with organically hierarchified functions, a reason that enlightens the will charged with realizing this ordered architecture. Reason finds itself in the presence of the animal that demonstrates its desires, its ardors, its loves and hates, and aspires only to satisfy them. But how can one satisfy a being that no longer has a proper aim and that is moved by limitless aspiration? Deprived of his supernatural and of his natural good, man is so animal as to be only a gaping appetite. The animal knows its limits: when it is full, it stops. Its hunger satisfied, its thirst quenched, its other desires fulfilled, it rests.

But man retains in himself, deep down, however far he may have fallen, the specific aspect of his nature. He will still desire to realize his nature and to arrive at the Supreme Good.² Since this path is closed to him, he will go in the direction of his animality, at a single word of command: *always more*. Machiavelli saw this without emotion: the man he observed has no outlet other than *power*. The definition of power is *always more*. Power is like a gas, wrote Simone Weil, paraphrasing Thucydides: it expands indefinitely until it encounters an exterior obstacle. Thus the whole problem, *the only problem* which Machiavelli poses is this: *how can man, who is only power, extend this power without losing it?* The answer which he perpetually gives is the following: by elaborating *a rational technique* of power which prevents it from dissipating itself.

² Pico della Mirandola, again, has clearly seen this. In his *Oratio*, God says to man: "On coming into the world, the animals were given everything they needed... But you, you can grow and develop as you like."

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Machiavelli then sees the double man acting exactly like an engineer. The engineer finds himself faced with material forces. It is a matter of first conquering them, and then of utilizing them, in such a way that the forces remain captive and do not escape. Machiavelli's problem is the same. The engineer is a Machiavellian without being aware of it. Machiavelli is an engineer of men who is not called such.

To arrive at this point, Machiavelli pushes his analysis of power to the extreme limit.

In the first place, he frees it of its impurities. Power has no end other than power. According to him, one is not powerful in order to enjoy comfort, women, pleasures, etc. One is powerful in order to use one's power. Therefore Machiavelli seeks all the historical examples of power. He plumbs the depths of Titus Livy. Ancient Rome, the archetype of power, furnishes him with innumerable materials that permit him to determine how power is achieved, maintained or lost.

Like the engineer who applies his intelligence to material forces from the outside, he will later see in power only the single quantitative slope which will give the correct measure. One is struck, in reading Machiavelli's advice, by the place occupied by "the more and the less." For him it is always a question moving toward a certain point determined by calculation. Sometimes it is necessary to assassinate, but never too much, except in the unusual case when "the grandeur of the crime covers its infamy." All human acts must be judged, counted, weighed, calculated and numbered, like things. Man is a thing. And the Prince is himself a thing which his technical reason must calculate, if he wishes to remain a Prince. Napoleon is on the straight line drawn by Machiavelli when he says: "For me, there are no persons, there are only things, their weights and their consequences," and when he specifies, "I am the most enslaved of men, because my master is necessity, and this master has no entrails." In other words, the animal-man is a *mechanism* for the reason-man.

Machiavelli said the same in his famous letter from San Casciano: "I adjust my watchmaker's lens, I manipulate my tiny, fine needles with a delicate finger, I unceasingly take apart and put back together the little toothed wheels, I examine the minuscule pivots, I sound the nervous organs and all the springs of the

human soul and I make it function before my eyes, *as it functions in all men.*" Undoubtedly, he would not deny the possible presence of chance and accidents in events, but for the Prince, if he would remain the Prince, it is a matter of foreseeing these and parrying the thrusts ahead of time by setting up substitute mechanisms that will make good the failings of the mechanisms already in place. For the first time in the history of humanity, human acts are considered to be a system of mechanical reflexes which almost always make infallible predictions possible.

And finally, man's reason, applying itself to purely mechanical objects and situations, is itself a mechanism. For Machiavelli there is no form of intelligence other than the calculating intelligence. Before Descartes, who said that his physique was only geometry, Machiavelli could have claimed that his politics were only mathematics, with its fundamental signs: *more, less, equal.* For that matter, to see in man and in the world only their quantitative aspects is evidence that the reason which sees them must itself be completely mathematized, mechanized. One could almost say, without falling into caricature, that Machiavelli sees in *homo duplex* the mechanism of reason acting on the mechanism of the passions and instincts, and their juxtaposition acting on the machine of the world.

In this way, and only in this way, is it possible to maintain acquired power. All the risks of losing it are present in the equation of power together with all the stratagems for maintaining it. Each is weighed. Each is in its place, provided with its negative or positive sign. It is now only necessary to carry out the operation. The solution will be free of error. Machiavelli never wearies of repeating this. Moreover, he adds with his habitual ardent coldness, "one owes the people only results."

Machiavelli is therefore not, absolutely not, the pure technocrat of politics that some people like to think he is. His processes are rooted in a strongly determined dissonant and dualistic conception of man and of the world. Anyone who reads Machiavelli attentively cannot help but notice this. When one writes that interest or power have no need for basis or foundation according to Machiavelli; that they are taken for granted; that they are simply facts which the Florentine determines, one underestimates the intelligence of the author of *The Prince*. Machiavelli

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has before him a new type of man, avid for power over men and things, whose structure is presupposed in all the techniques which he prescribes. He has applied to the neo-Platonic type of man the same reversal which Marx will later effect in the dialectics of Hegel, with the same intention: that of dominating other men and the world.

It is clear that so resolutely mathematical a way of thinking ignores the notions of good and evil. In mathematics, there is neither good nor evil, there is not even truth and error in the real sense of the terms, there is only exactitude or inexactitude. In this sense, Machiavelli is the supreme contemporary thinker in a world given over to techniques. Doubtless, his thinking still causes scandal, and it is in memory of Niccolò Machiavelli that the English call the devil *Old Nick*.³

It is indubitable that this rigorous mechanization of man and of the world under the rule of a quantitative intelligence appears *satanic* to the Christian. But the satanic quality of Machiavelli is not there. It resides rather in his inharmonious concept of man and of the world, which his methodical calculations try to reduce to, and disguise as the relations of forces. Satan is in effect the cleft character *par excellence*, because he derives his being from God and has turned away from God. He has no more interior unity. He is torn through and through. Vigny saw this admirably when he made him say:

Entre moi-même et moi si grande est la distance
Que je ne comprends plus ce que dit l'innocence.

[The distance between me and myself is so great that I no longer understand what innocence says.]

Satan no longer understands that sin is, at the same time, separation from oneself and separation from God, on whom all being depends. To select arbitrarily one part of one's being to the detriment of the others, and to remove it from the divine rule, is according to the Church Fathers the very definition of original sin: "by the first sin," one of them writes, "Adam separated himself from himself and from the others," Adam broke the tie

³ Macaulay seems to have been the first to apply the fantastic epithet of *Old Nick* to the devil, around 1880. (E.N.).

that united him as a creature to all the other creatures, and to the rest of creation in the love of the Creator.

This is exactly the position of Machiavelli, whose concept of man and of the world is as pessimistic as possible. "For one can say that men in general are ungrateful, inconstant, dissimulating, cowardly, prejudiced...and the Prince who has relied on their word, without taking other precautions, falls.... As all those who have written about public life may demonstrate, and as may be observed in the numerous examples offered by history, anyone who organizes a Republic and orders its laws must assume that all men are bad, and give free rein to the malignity of their souls every time that they may freely do so... Men never do anything good except by necessity." One could find armfuls of analogous quotations in the Florentine's writings.

The immoralism of Machiavelli, crystalline and glacial, has at least the consequence, Asiatic as that might be, of putting the political man on guard against the smoke of moralism. The devil carries stones. If there is indeed a domain where the end frequently justifies the means, it is certainly politics. The common good which the statesman protects always includes a heavy dose of "impure" elements, and the health of a nation is not the result of a microbial sterilization. The statesman, in his function as watchman over the common good, is often forced to be "cruel" or "perfidious." If he has the perpetrators of grave disorders put to death, he is not more "immoral" than a surgeon who amputates a gangrened leg. If he hides his true intentions from his adversaries, he does not "lie" any more than the doctor who hides from a stubborn patient the true purpose of his therapy. Having excluded themselves from the common good which would require them to participate in the life of the city, malefactors are only things, to be treated as such. Placed outside of this same common good, enemies are in their turn things. They are no longer, neither the former nor the latter, "persons." They have broken, as the poet says:

L'attachement qui nous rend libres
A l'ombilic dont nous vivons.

[The attachment, which makes us free, to the umbilical cord, from which we live.]

In addition, the position in which the statesman finds himself includes a number of factors which escape his free choice, and

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therefore his moral or immoral will: the geographical situation of his land, its demographic development or recession, natural riches, commerce with neighboring peoples, etc. Therefore his action will resemble the techniques applied to material realities, when it comes up against the impersonal forces subject to his care. He cannot strictly apply to these forces, principles which govern the relations between conscious and free beings.

Finally, the anti-Machiavellians who rise up against the "Machiavellism" of the political man are always pharisees of Machiavellism when they do not recognize the enormous dose of natural philosophy which ballasts the art of ruling. Their moralism proceeds from a secret or admitted adhesion to a cult of the "gross animal" which sets up nations and peoples as gigantic individuals, gifted with liberty and responsibility. It is no longer the individuals whom they sacrifice to the idol of their pseudo-morality, it is entire groups, classes, lands, races. In imbuing with "morality" the physical means which they are forced to use, they shamelessly justify these means. The Machiavellism which they deny in words has been inherited in their marrow like an old and shameful malady which ravages them, and whose sepulcher they must whiten. "To be taken by idealism," Lenin said of these types. The real world disgorges these "moralists" who, like termites, gnaw at the vital tissue of nations and dress in glory the ruins which they have provoked. The great solitary wild animal that is Machiavelli is supremely innocent, compared with these insects who consider themselves athletes of morality.

Machiavelli is equally the exact antithesis of Rousseau. For him, man is radically bad, as if he had never been created or redeemed by God. For the Genevan, man is radically good as if he had never sinned, as if he were God Himself.

Our time has combined the two concepts. Under a Rousseauism of law which betrays the great words *liberty*, *equality* and *fraternity*, a Machiavellism of fact is hidden, that uses the hypnotic influence of these words in favor of the will for power of these who love power—individuals, groups and nations. Rousseau gives Machiavelli the good conscience and good faith that the Florentine laughs at. He covers his enterprises with a plastic coating of respectability. Divisions, conflicts and crimes are no longer perpetrated in the name of power, but in the name of

Justice with a capital "J." The man whom Rousseau idolized hides a demon in his bosom. The Rousseauian angel is combined with a Machiavellian beast. That produces an excellent explosive mixture. For two centuries now, all revolutions have used it shamelessly. Nuclear fission, presented at the same time as the key that will open the new terrestrial paradise and as the instrument of the absolute catastrophe unloosed by the will for power, is the symbol of this.

We will not escape from this inhuman dilemma without returning to the human. This conversion is simple and difficult. Man is neither good nor bad. The proper function of the statesman is to establish by all means a social climate such that the powers of evil themselves promote the development of good. A healthy policy is one in which strictly personal interest, which, if left to itself, removes man from the community, is made to coincide with the duty which absorbs man into the community if it is allowed to dominate. This tension is perpetual. Political work has constantly to be redone, like Penelope's cloth.

To go beyond Machiavelli and Rousseau, only recourse to some transcendent and atemporal power, mythological or not, can turn evil towards good. That is why the ancients said that politics is a *divine science*. Without the keystone of religion, the social edifice crumbles.