

generally the worst men, lacking in understanding and faithless. . . . Above all such men have no true friendship with anyone; they do not confide in anyone. True and joyous friendship is necessary in human affairs and conserves you in virtue; but such men have no good virtue, nor do they contract true friendship. They always hate good men and employ only wicked and evil people. . . . Furthermore, their rule cannot be long and durable because all the people, even if they do not show it, hate their tyranny. A people under a tyrant is like a body of water compressed and held back by force, which, when it finds a little hole to escape, bursts forth impetuously and ruinously. . . . Have a care, therefore, that such men do not take control in your city, and attend to the

common good. And how this should be done I will tell you, as God will inspire me.

I have told you, during the last few days, that when the natural agent wishes to do a thing, it must give every consideration to the form of that thing; therefore, I tell you that you must select a good form for your new government, and above all no one must think of making himself head if you wish to live in liberty . . .

CONSIDER THIS:

- What is the essence of Savonarola's message in his sermon to the Florentines? Why is his oratorical technique so persuasive? In this regard, analyze his words and images. What makes a demagogue like Savonarola so attractive? Why did people follow him?

"The Prince"
Niccolò Machiavelli

***Precepts of Power:
"Everyone Sees What You Appear to Be,
Few Perceive What You Are"***

NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI

Over the centuries, the name of Machiavelli has become synonymous with evil. The adjective *Machiavellian* still evokes images of deceit and political backstabbing. Machiavelli's ideas were condemned by the church as immoral and inspired by Satan himself. In reality, Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) was a loyal citizen of Florence who had been schooled in the classics and had chosen a career in public service. He disliked the rule of the Medici and was a great advocate of republicanism. After Savonarola's fall from power in 1498, his theocracy was replaced by a true republic, led by elected officials of the people. Machiavelli became ambassador to France, and this duty served as a laboratory for the science of politics where he could observe men and governments in action. The Florentine republic was successful until 1512, when a Spanish mercenary army defeated Machiavelli's personally trained Florentine militia. They reinstalled Medici rule, and Machiavelli was tortured on the rack and thrown into prison for a time. He retired to the country and wrote a little book entitled *The Prince*. In it, Machiavelli gives the wisdom of his experience in politics. It is a manual of power: how to obtain it, maintain it, and lose it. In his analysis, Machiavelli is brutally realistic about the nature of human beings and the world of power politics: Learn the rules and you may survive and prosper. In the political chaos of Renaissance Italy, where alliances shifted frequently and distrust prevailed, such a guide proved useful and popular. Some of Machiavelli's most important ideas from *The Prince* are excerpted here.

"Precepts of Power" is from *The Historical, Political and Diplomatic Writings of Niccolò Machiavelli*, translated by C. E. Detmold (Boston, 1882), pp. 51–52; 54–59 (Chapters 8, 17 and 18). Translation modernized by the editor.

On Those Who Have Become Princes by Crime

It should be noted at this point that in securing a state by force, its conqueror should consider carefully all the harmful things he must do and do them all at once so he does not have to repeat them daily. By avoiding such constant brutality, men will begin to feel secure and the prince will gain their loyalty with the benefits he bestows on them. Any ruler who does otherwise, either because he is timid and hesitant, or because he listens to poor advice, must always keep his dagger in his hand. He can never count on the support of his subjects because their continual wounds are always fresh and they will never feel secure with him. The prince, therefore, should inflict all injuries at the same time, for the less often they are imposed, the less they offend. Benefits, on the other hand, should be distributed in small amounts, but continually so that they may be fully appreciated. And a prince should most importantly live with his subjects and be so aware of their attitudes that no unexpected event, whether good or bad, forces him to change his plans. For when emergencies arise, you will not have time to get your subjects to respond through cruelty, and what good you might do will help you little, since they will think that circumstances forced your hand and you will derive no thanks from it whatsoever.

On Cruelty and Mercy

A prince must always be cautious in believing too deeply or in acting too overtly. But he also must never seem timid and hesitant. He should temper his actions with an eye to prudence and a human touch so that too much trust doesn't result in foolish risk, or too little trust make him intolerable. From this arises the question as to whether it is better to be loved than to be feared, or the opposite. I reply that the prince should be both, but since it is difficult to combine them, it is much safer to be feared than to be loved when one must choose. For it is true about men that

they are ungrateful and unfaithful, deceitful and two-faced—bootlicking cowards, who nevertheless are always greedy for their own gain. And while you shower them with benefits, they are all yours and will give you their blood, their property, their lives, and their children—so long as danger is remote. But when danger approaches, they turn away. And that prince who relies exclusively on their empty words, rather than on finding other ways to protect himself, will surely be destroyed. For any friendships that are purchased rather than founded on greatness and nobility of character, are never truly owned—and you can never cash them in at the crucial time.

Besides, men don't mind harming someone who makes himself loved than one who makes himself feared because love is held together by a bond of obligation which, since men are basically a dismal bunch, is broken whenever their own self-interest is threatened. But fear always holds the bond tightly because the dread of punishment never leaves them.

A prince, however, must make himself feared in such a way that, even if he has not won the affection of his people, he has avoided their hatred. For being feared yet not hated is a good combination, if the prince keeps his hands off the property and the women of his subjects. And if he must execute someone, then be sure to do so only when there is manifest cause and proper justification for it. But above all, he should avoid taking the property of others, for men will sooner forget the death of their fathers than the loss of their inheritance. Moreover, there will never be any lack of reason for taking people's property. And a prince who begins to live by stealing will always find a excuses for confiscating property. On the other hand, it is not as easy to find reasons for taking a life, and these justifications dissipate more quickly. . . . To come back now to the question of whether it is better to be loved or feared, I conclude that since men love at their own pleasure and fear at the pleasure of the prince, a wise prince should always rely



FIGURE 11.5 Niccolò Machiavelli: "Let a prince therefore act to seize and to maintain the state; his methods will always be judged honorable and will be praised by all; for ordinary people are always deceived by appearances and by the outcome of a thing; and in the world there is nothing but ordinary people." (*Art Resource, NY*)

on himself, and not on the will of others. But, above all, he should strive only to avoid hatred, as I have already noted.

How a Prince Should Keep His Word

It must be evident to everyone that it is more commendable for a prince to keep his word at all times and practice integrity rather than live by deceit. And yet, the experience of our own times has shown that the princes who have achieved great things have not cared much for keeping promises but have been expert at manipulating the minds of others. In the end,

they have surpassed those rulers whose actions were dictated by loyalty and honesty.

Therefore, you must know that there are two ways of fighting: one according to the laws, the other by force; men practice the first way, and animals the second. But because the first is often insufficient, it becomes necessary to resort to the second. A prince, then, must know how to use both the natures of the beast and of man. . . .

Since it is necessary for a prince to know how to make good use of the nature of the beast, he should choose from among animals the fox and the lion; for the lion cannot defend itself from traps and the fox cannot protect itself from

wolves. A prince should be a fox in order to recognize the traps laid for him and a lion in order to frighten the wolves. Those who simply employ the nature of the lion do not understand their business. A wise ruler, therefore, cannot and should not keep his word when it is to his disadvantage or when the reasons that made him promise no longer exist. And if men were all good, this rule would be wrong; but since men are basically bad and will not keep their promises to you, you likewise need not keep yours to them. A prince never lacks legitimate reasons to break his promises. I could offer an infinite number of modern examples that demonstrate this and show how many peace treaties, how many promises have been made null and void by the infidelity of princes. And the ruler who knows best how to play the fox has always been the most successful. But the prince must also know how to disguise this nature well and to be a great hypocrite and a bold liar. For men are so simple and so controlled by their immediate needs that the deceiver will always find a dupe who will allow himself to be deceived. . . .

It is not necessary for a ruler to possess all the qualities mentioned above, but it is essential that he should at least seem to have them. . . . A prince, therefore, must appear to be all mercy, all faithfulness, all integrity, all kindness,

all religion. And it is most necessary for the prince to seem to possess this last quality, since men in general judge more by what they see and hear, than by what they feel. Everyone sees what you appear to be, few perceive what you are, and those few do not dare to contradict the opinion of the many who are protected by the majesty of the state. For the actions of all men, and especially those of princes where there is no other arbiter, are judged by the final result. A prince, therefore, should boldly seize and maintain the state. His methods will always be judged honorable and will be praised by everyone; for ordinary people are always deceived by appearances and by results—and in the world, there is nothing but ordinary people. . . .

CONSIDER THIS:

- Niccolò Machiavelli has been called “the disciple of the devil.” After reading the excerpts from *The Prince*, why do you think this view has prevailed? Is it better for a prince to be loved or feared? Why kill all enemies or potential enemies when you come into power through crime? Interpret the phrase “the ends justify the means.” How does Machiavelli’s view of human nature compare with that of other Renaissance humanists? Do you see Machiavelli as moral, immoral, or amoral? Why did he write *The Prince*?

THEME: THE INSTITUTION AND THE INDIVIDUAL

THE ARCHITECTURAL FOUNDATION

The Artistic Smackdown

The Dome of Brunelleschi

GIORGIO VASARI

Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446) ranked supreme among Florence’s architects. His was a robust personality—confident, innovative, and willing to risk all in creating new solutions to seemingly impossible challenges. His architectural emphasis on mathematics, proportion, and perspective drew glowing praise from his supporters and