

The End of Machiavellianism*

By Jacques Maritain

I

MY PURPOSE is to consider Machiavellianism. Regarding Machiavelli himself, some preliminary observations seem necessary.

Innumerable studies, some of them very good, have been dedicated to Machiavelli. Jean Bodin, in the XVIth Century, criticized *The Prince* in a profound and wise manner. Later on Frederick the Great of Prussia was to write a refutation of Machiavelli in order to exercise his own hypocrisy in a hyper-Machiavellian fashion, and to shelter cynicism in virtue. During the XIXth Century, the leaders of the bourgeoisie, for instance the French political writer Charles Benoist, were thoroughly, naïvely and stupidly fascinated by the clever Florentine.

As regards modern scholarship, I should like to note that the best historical commentary on Machiavelli has been written by an American scholar, Professor Allan H. Gilbert.¹ As regards more popular presentations, a remarkable edition of the *Prince* and the *Discourses* was recently issued by the Modern Library.

Mr. Max Lerner, in the stimulating, yet somewhat ambiguous Introduction he wrote for this edition of *The Prince* and *The Discourses*, rightly observes that Machiavelli was expressing the actual ethos of his time, and that "power politics existed before Machiavelli was ever heard of, it will exist long after his name is only a faint

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1 "*Machiavelli's Prince and its forerunners, The Prince as a typical Book De Regimine Principum*," by Allan H. Gilbert, Duke University Press, 1938.—I think that Professor Gilbert is right in locating the *Prince* in the series of the classical treatises *De Regimine Principum*. Yet the *Prince* marks the end of this series, not only because of the political changes in society, but because its inspiration utterly reverses and corrupts the medieval notion of government. It is a typical book *De Regimine Principum*, but which typically puts the series of these books to death.

memory." (p. xxi and xlii). This is perfectly obvious. But what matters in this connection, is just that Machiavelli *lifted into consciousness* this ethos of his time and this common practice of the power politicians of all times. Here we are confronted with the fundamental importance, which I have often emphasized, of the phenomenon of "prise de conscience," and with the risks of perversion which this phenomenon involves.

Before Machiavelli, princes and conquerors did not hesitate to apply on many occasions bad faith, perfidy, falsehood, cruelty, assassination, every kind of crime of which the flesh and blood man is capable, to the attainment of power and success and to the satisfaction of their greed and ambition. But in so doing they felt guilty, they had a bad conscience—to the extent that they had a conscience. Therefore a specific kind of unconscious and unhappy hypocrisy—that is, the shame of appearing to oneself such as one is—a certain amount of self restraint, and that deep and deeply human uneasiness which we experience in doing what we do not want to do and what is forbidden by a law that we know to be true, prevented the crimes in question from becoming a rule, and provided governed peoples with a limping accommodation between good and evil which, in broad outline, made their oppressed lives, after all, livable.

After Machiavelli, not only the princes and conquerors of the *cinquecento*, but the great leaders and makers of modern states and modern history, in employing injustice for establishing order, and every kind of useful evil for satisfying their will to power, will have a clear conscience and feel that they accomplish their duty as political heads. Suppose they are not merely skeptical in moral matters, and have some religious and ethical convictions in connection with man's personal behavior, then they will be obliged, in connection with the field of politics, to put aside these convictions, or to place them in a parenthesis, they will stoically immolate their personal morality on the altar of the political good. What was a simple matter of fact, with all the weaknesses and inconsistencies pertaining, even in the evil, to accidental and contingent things, has become, after Machiavelli, a matter of right, with all the firmness and steadiness proper to necessary things. A plain disregard of good and evil has been considered the

rule, not of human morality,—Machiavelli never pretended to be a moral philosopher,—but of human politics.

For not only do we owe to Machiavelli our having become aware and conscious of the immorality displayed, in fact, by the mass of political men, but by the same stroke he taught us that this very immorality is the very law of politics. Here is that Machiavellian perversion of politics which was linked, in fact, with the Machiavellian “*prise de conscience*” of average political behavior in mankind. The historic responsibility of Machiavelli consists in having *accepted*, recognized, indorsed as a rule the fact of political immorality, and in having stated that good politics, politics conformable to its true nature and to its genuine aims, is by essence non-moral politics.

Machiavelli belongs to that series of minds, and some of them much greater than himself, which all through modern times have endeavored to unmask the human being. To have been the first in this lineage is the greatness of the narrow thinker eager to serve the Medici as well as the popular party in Florence, and deceived on both sides. Yet in unmasking the human being he maimed its very flesh, and wounded its eyes. To have thoroughly rejected ethics, metaphysics and theology from the realm of political knowledge and political prudence is his very own achievement, and it is also the most violent mutilation suffered by the human practical intellect and the organism of practical wisdom.

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Radical pessimism regarding human nature is the basis of Machiavelli's thought. After having stated that “a prudent ruler ought not to keep faith when by so doing it would be against his interest, and when the reasons which made him bind himself no longer exist,” he writes: “If men were all good, this precept would not be a good one; but *as they are bad*, and would not observe their faith with you, so you are not bound to keep faith with them.” Machiavelli knows that they are bad. He does not know that this badness is not radical, that this leprosy cannot destroy man's original grandeur, that human nature remains good in its very essence and its root-tendencies, and that such a basic goodness joined to a swarming multiplication of

particular evils is the very mystery and the very motive of struggle and progression in mankind. Just as his horizon is merely terrestrial, just as his crude empiricism cancels for him the indirect ordainment of political life toward the life of souls and immortality, so his concept of man is merely animal, and his crude empiricism cancels for him the image of God in man,—a cancellation which is the metaphysical root of every power politics and every political totalitarianism. As to their common and most frequent behavior, Machiavelli thinks, men are beasts, guided by covetousness and fear. But the prince is a man, that is, an animal of prey endowed with intelligence and calculation. In order to govern men, that is, to enjoy power, the prince must be taught by Chiron the centaur, and learn to become both a fox and a lion. Fear, animal fear, and animal prudence translated into human art and awareness, are accordingly the supreme rulers of the political realm.

Yet the pessimism of Machiavelli is extremely removed from any heroic pessimism. To the evil that he sees everywhere, or believes he sees everywhere, he gives his consent. He consents, he aspires to become a clear-sighted composite of fox and lion. "For how we live," he says, "is so far removed from how we ought to live, that he who abandons what is done for what ought to be done, will rather learn to bring about his own ruin than his preservation." Therefore we have to abandon what *ought to be done* for *what is done*, and it is necessary for the prince, he also says, "to learn how not to be good, and to use this knowledge and not use it, according to the necessity of the case." And this is perfectly logical if the end of ends is only present success. Yet such an abandonment, such a resignation would be logical also, not only for political life, but for the entire field of human life. Descartes, in the provisory rules of morality which he gave himself in the *Discours de la Méthode*, made up his mind to imitate the actual customs and doings of his fellow-men, instead of practicing what they say we ought to do. He did not perceive that this was a good precept of immorality: for, as a matter of fact, men live more often by senses than by reason. It is easy to observe with Mr. Max Lerner that many Church princes, like the secular princes, and above all that Alexander VI whom Machiavelli gives often in example, were among the principal

followers of Machiavelli's precepts. But never has any catechism taught that we must imitate the Church princes in our conduct, it is Christ that religion teaches us to imitate. The first step to be taken by everyone who wishes to act morally is to decide not to act according to the general customs and doings of his fellow-men. This is a precept of the Gospel: "Do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not. . . ."²

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The practical result of Machiavelli's teachings has been, for modern conscience, a profound split, an incurable division between politics and morality, and consequently an illusory but deadly antinomy between what they call *idealism* (wrongly confused with ethics) and what they call *realism* (wrongly confused with politics). Henceforth, as Mr. Max Lerner puts it, "the polar conflict between the ethical and the ruthlessly realistic." I shall come back to this point. For the present I wish to note two kinds of complications which arise in this connection in the case of Machiavelli himself.

The first complication comes from the fact that Machiavelli, like many great pessimists, had a somewhat rough and elementary idea of moral science, plainly disregarding its realist, experiential, and existential character, and lifting up to heaven, or rather up to the clouds, an altogether naive morality which obviously cannot be practiced by the sad yet really living and labouring inhabitants of this earth. The man of ethics appears to him as a feeble-minded and disarmed victim, occasionally noxious, of the beautiful rules of some Platonist and separate world of perfection. On the other hand, and because such a morality is essentially a self-satisfying show of pure and lofty shapes,—that is, a dreamed-up compensation for our muddy state—Machiavelli constantly slips from the idea of well-doing to the idea of what men admire as well-doing, from moral virtue to appearing and apparent moral virtue: his virtue is a virtue of opinion, self-satisfaction and glory. Accordingly, what he calls vice and evil, and considers to be contrary to virtue and morality, may sometimes be only the authentically moral behavior of a just man engaged in the complexities of human life and of true ethics: for instance, justice itself may call for

² Math., xxiii 3.

relentless energy—which is neither vengeance nor cruelty—against wicked and false-hearted enemies. Or the toleration of some existing evil—if there is no furthering of or cooperating with the same—may be required for avoiding a greater evil or for slowing down and progressively reducing this very evil. Or even dissimulation is not always bad faith or knavery. It would not be moral, but foolish, to open up one's heart and inner thoughts to whatsoever dull or mischievous fellow. Stupidity is never moral, it is a vice. No doubt it is difficult to mark exactly the limits between cunning and lying, and even some great Saints of the Old Testament—I am thinking of Abraham—did not take great care of this distinction,—this was a consequence of what may be called the twilight status of moral conscience in the dawn-ages of mankind.³ Yet a certain amount of cunning, if it is intended to deceive evil-disposed persons, must not be considered fox's wiles, but intellect's legitimate weapon. Oriental peoples know that very well, and even evangelic candor has to use the prudence of the serpent, as well as the simplicity of the dove (the dove tames the serpent, but the lion does not tame the fox). The question is to use such cunning without the smallest bit of falsehood or imposture: this is exactly the affair of intelligence; and the use of lying—namely the large-scale industrialisation of lying, of which contemporary dictatorships offer us the spectacle—appears from this point of view, not only as moral baseness, but also as vulgarity of mind and thorough degradation of intelligence.

The second complication arises from the fact that Machiavelli was a cynic operating on the given moral basis of civilized tradition, and whose cruel work of exposure took for granted the coherence and density of this deep-rooted tradition. Clear-sighted and intelligent as he was, he was perfectly aware of that fact; that is why he would pale at the sight of modern Machiavellianism. This commentator of Titus Livius was instructed by Latin tradition, he was a partaker as well as a squanderer of humanist learning, an inheritor as well as an opponent of the manifold treasure of knowledge prepared by Christian centuries, and degenerating in his day. He never negates the values of morality, he knows them and recognizes them as they have been established by ancient wisdom, he occasionally praises virtuous leaders

³ Cf. Raissa Maritain, *Histoire d'Abraham ou la Sainteté dans l'état de nature. Nova et Vetera*, No. 3, 1935.

(that is, whose virtues were made successful by circumstances), he knows that cruelty and faithlessness are shameful, he never calls evil good or good evil. He simply denies to moral values—and this is largely sufficient to corrupt politics—any application in the political field. He teaches his prince to be cruel and faithless, according to the case, that is, to be evil according to the case, and when he writes that the prince must learn how not to be good, he is perfectly aware that not to be good is to be bad. Hence his difference from many of his disciples, and the special savour, the special power of intellectual stimulation of his cynicism. But hence also his special sophistry, and the mantle of civilized intelligence with which he unintentionally covered and veiled for a time the deepest meaning, the wild meaning, of his message.

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Finally, the “*grammar of power*” and the recipes of success written by Machiavelli are the work of a pure artist, and of a pure artist of that Italian Renaissance where the great heritage of the antique and Christian mind, falling in jeopardy, blossomed into the most beautiful, delightful and poisonous flowers. What makes the study of Machiavelli extremely instructive for a philosopher, is the fact that nowhere is it possible to find a more purely artistical conception of politics.⁴ And here is his chief philosophical fault, if it is true that politics belongs to the field of the “*praktikon*” (to do), not of the “*poietikon*” (to make), and is by essence a branch—the principal branch, according to Aristotle—of ethics. Politics is distinct from individual ethics as a branch from another branch on the same tree, it is a special and specific part of ethics, and it carries within itself an enormous amount of art and technique is organically, vitally and intrinsically subordinated to the molding intelligence and imagination is much greater in political than in individual or even familial ethics. But all this amount of art and technique is organically vitally and intrinsically subordinated to the ethical energies which constitute politics, that is to say, art is there in no manner autonomous, art is there embodied in and encompassed with and lifted up by ethics, as the physico-chemical activities in our body are insubstantiated in our living substance and superelevated by our vital energies. When these merely physico-chemical activities

⁴ “. . . In these things lie the true originality of Machiavelli; all may be summed up in his conviction that government is an independent art in an imperfect world.” Allan H. Gilbert, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

are liberated and become autonomous, there is no longer a living organism, but a corpse. Thus, merely artistic politics, liberated from ethics, that is, from the practical knowledge of man, from the science of human acts, from truly human finalities and truly human doings, is a corpse of political wisdom and political prudence.

Indeed, Machiavelli's very own genius has been to disentangle as perfectly as possible all the content of art carried along by politics from the ethical substance thereof. His position therefore is that of a separate artistic spirit contemplating from without the vast matter of human affairs, with all the ethical cargo, all the intercrossings of good and evil they involve, and to teach his disciple how to conquer and maintain power in handling this matter as a sculptor handles clay or marble. Ethics is here present, but in the matter to be shaped and dominated. We understand from this point of view how *The Prince* as well as *The Discourses* are rich in true observations and sometimes in true precepts, but perceived and stated in a false light and in a reversed or perverted perspective. For Machiavelli makes use of good as well as of evil, and is ready to succeed with virtue as well as with vice. That specific concept of *virtù*, that is, of brilliant, well-balanced and skilled strength, which was at the core of the morality of his time, as an aesthetic and artistic transposition of the aristotelian concept of virtue, is always present in his work.⁵ He knows that no political achievement is lasting if the prince has not the friendship of the people, but it is not the good of the people, it is only the power of the prince which matters to him in this truth perversely taught. The *Discourses*⁶ eloquently emphasize the fundamental importance of religion in the state, but the truth or falsity of any religion whatsoever is here perfectly immaterial, even religion is offered as the best means of cheating the people, and what Machiavelli teaches is "the use of a national religion

⁵ According to a very just remark by Friedrich Meinecke, the two concepts of *fortune* and *necessity* complete the trilogy of the leading ideas of Machiavelli: *Virtù, fortuna, necessità*. Cf. Friedrich Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staatsräson*, München and Berlin, 1924, chapter I.

⁶ Some authors magnify the divergences between the *Prince* and the *Discourses*. In my opinion these divergences, which are real, relate above all to the literary genus of the two works, and remain quite secondary. The *Discourses on the first ten Books of Titus Livius* owed it to their own rhetorical and academic mood as well as to Roman antiquity to emphasize the republican spirit and some classical aspects of political virtue. In reality neither this virtue (in the sense of the Ancients) nor this spirit ever mattered to Machiavelli, and his own personal inspiration, his quite amoral art of using *virtù* to master fortune by means of occasion and necessity are as recognizable in the *Discourses* as in the *Prince*.

for state purposes," by virtue of "its power as a myth in unifying the masses and cementing their morale"⁷: a perversion of religion which is surely worse and more atheistic than crude atheism, —and the devastating effects of which the world may see and enjoy in the totalitarian plagues of today.

Here we are confronted with the paradox and the internal principle of instability of Machiavelli's Machiavellianism. It essentially supposes the complete eradication of moral values in the brain of the political artist as such, yet at the same time it also supposes the actual existence and actual vitality of moral values and moral beliefs in all others, in all the human matter that the prince is to handle and dominate. But it is impossible that the use of a supramoral, that is, a thoroughly immoral art of politics should not produce a progressive lowering and degeneration of moral values and moral beliefs in the common human life, a progressive disintegration of the inherited stock of stable structures and customs linked with these beliefs, and finally a progressive corruption of the ethical and social matter itself with which this supramoral politics deals. Thus, such an art wears away and destroys its very matter, and, by the same token, will degenerate itself. Hence Machiavelli could only have rare authentic disciples; during the classical centuries of Henry VIII and Elizabeth, Mazarin and Richelieu, Frederick, Catherine of Russia and Talleyrand, the latter was perhaps the only perfect pupil of Machiavelli; finally Machiavelli's teachings, which imply an essentially rational and well-measured, that is, an artistic use of evil, were to give place to that use of every kind of seemingly useful evil by great irrational and demonic forces and by an intelligence no longer artistic but vulgar and brutal and wild, and to that immersion of the rulers as well as of the ruled in a rotted ethics, calling good evil and evil good, which constitute the common Machiavellianism to today.

II

But so much for Machiavelli. It is this common Machiavellianism that I wish now to consider. In so doing, I should like briefly to touch the three following points: first, the notion of common good and the factual triumph of Machiavellianism; second, the crucial conflict which here constitutes the main problem, and the resolution thereof; third, the roots and the more subtle implications of this resolution, which

⁷ Max Lerner, Introduction, p. xxxvii.

concern the specific structure of politics in its relationship with morality.

Now for my first point. For Machiavelli the end of politics is power's conquest and maintenance: which is a work of art to be performed. On the contrary, according to the nature of things, the end of politics is the common good of a united people; which end is essentially something concretely human, therefore something ethical. This common good consists of the good life—that is, a life conformable to the essential exigencies and the essential dignity of human nature, a life both morally straight and happy—of the social whole as such, of the gathered multitude, in such a way that the increasing treasure and heritage of communicable good things involved in this good life of the whole be in some way spilled over and redistributed to each individual part of the community. This common good is at once material, intellectual and moral, and principally moral, as man himself is; it is a common good of human persons. Therefore, it is not only something useful, an ensemble of advantages and profits, it is essentially something good in itself,—what the Ancients termed *bonum honestum*. Justice and civic friendship are its cement. Bad faith, perfidy, lying, cruelty, assassination, and all other procedures of this kind which may occasionally appear *useful* to the power of the ruling clique or to the prosperity of the state, are in themselves—insofar as political deeds, that is, deeds involving in some degree the common conduct—injurious to the common good and tend by themselves toward its corruption. Finally, because good life on earth is not the absolute ultimate end of man, and because the human person has a destiny superior to time, political common good involves an intrinsic though indirect reference to the absolutely ultimate end of the human members of society, which is eternal life, in such a way that the political community should temporally, and from below, help each human person in his human task of conquering his final freedom and fulfilling his final destiny.

Such is the basic political concept which Machiavellianism broke down and destroyed. If the aim of politics is common good, peace,—a constructive peace struggling through time toward man's emancipation from any form of enslavement—is the health of the state; and the organs of justice, above all of distributive justice, are the chief power in the state. If the aim of politics is power, war is the health of the state, as Machiavelli put it, and military strength is the chief power in the state. If the aim of politics is common good, the ruler, having to take

care of the temporal end of a community of human persons, and having to avoid in this task any lack of clear-sightedness and any slip of will, must learn to be, as St. Thomas taught, a man good in every respect, *bonus vir simpliciter*. If the aim of politics is power, the ruler must learn not to be good, as Machiavelli said.

The great rulers of modern times have well understood and conscientiously learned this lesson. Lord Acton was right in stating that "the authentic interpreter of Machiavelli is the whole of later history." We have to distinguish, however, two kinds of common Machiavellianism. There was a kind of more or less attenuated, dignified, conservative Machiavellianism, using injustice within "reasonable" limits, if I may put it so; in the minds of its followers, what is called *Realpolitik* was obfuscated and more or less paralyzed, either by a personal pattern of moral scruples and moral rules, which they owed to the common heritage of our civilization, or by traditions of diplomatic good form and respectability, or even, in certain instances, by lack of imagination, of boldness, and of inclination to take risks. If I try to characterize more precisely these moderate Machiavellianists, I should say that they preserved in some way, or believed they preserved, regarding the end of politics, the concept of common good—they were unfaithful to their master in this regard; and that they frankly used Machiavellianism regarding the means of procuring this common good. Such an unnatural split and disproportion between means and ends was, moreover, inevitably to lead to a perversion of the idea of common good itself, which became more and more a set of material advantages and profits for the state, or territorial conquests, or prestige and glory. The greatest representative of moderate Machiavellianism was, in my opinion, Richelieu. Bismarck was a transition from this first form of Machiavellianism to the second one, of which I shall now speak.

This second form of Machiavellianism is absolute Machiavellianism. It was intellectually prepared, during the XIXth Century, by the Positivist trend of mind, which considered politics to be, not a mere art, but a mere natural science, like astronomy or chemistry, and a mere application of so-called "scientific laws" to the struggle for life of human societies,—a concept much less intelligent and still more inhuman than that of Machiavelli himself. Absolute Machiavellianism was also and principally prepared by the Romanticist German philosophy of Fichte and Hegel. It is well known that Fichte made an analysis of Machiavelli part of his *Address to the German Nation*: as to the Hegelian

cult of the state, it is a metaphysical sublimation of Machiavelli's principles. Now the turn has been completed, ethics itself has been swallowed up into the political denial of ethics, power and success have become supreme moral criteria, "the course of world history stands apart from virtue, blame and justice," as Hegel put it, and at the same time "human history," he also said, "is God's judgment." Machiavellianism is no longer politics, it is metaphysics, it is a religion, a prophetic and mystical enthusiasm.

It sufficed for such an enthusiasm to enter into some desperados who were empty, as it were, of the usual characters of rational personality, but open to the great collective forces of instinct, resentment and tellurian inspiration; it sufficed for such leaders to give a full practical significance to the old infernal discovery of the endless reserves of evil when thoroughly accepted and utilized, and of the seemingly infinite power of that which negates, of the dissolving forces and of the corruption of human consciences,—in order for absolute Machiavellianism to arise in the world, and in order for the unmasking Centaur to be unmasked in its turn.⁸ Here we are confronted with that impetuous, irrational, revolutionary, wild, and demoniacal Machiavellianism, for which *boundless* injustice, *boundless* violence, *boundless* lying and immorality, are normal political means, and which draws from this very boundlessness of evil an abominable strength. And we may experience what kind of common good a power which knows perfectly how not to be good, and whose hypocrisy is a conscious and happy, ostentatious and gloriously promulgated hypocrisy, and whose cruelty wants to destroy souls as well as bodies, and whose lying is a thorough perversion of the very function of language, what kind of common good such a power is able to bring to mankind. Absolute Machiavellianism causes politics to be the art of bringing about the misfortune of men.

That's how it is. But absolute Machiavellianism succeeds, does it not? At least it has succeeded for many years. How could it not succeed, when everything has been sacrificed to the aim of success? Here is the ordeal and the scandal of contemporary conscience. Moreover it

⁸ "Hitler told me he had read and reread the *Prince* of the Great Florentine. To his mind, this book is indispensable to every political man. For a long time it did not leave Hitler's side. The reading of these unequalled pages, he said, was like a cleansing of the mind. It had disencumbered him from plenty of false ideas and prejudices. It is only after having read the *Prince* that Hitler understood what politics truly is." Hermann Rauschning, *Hitler m'a dit*. (The Voice of Destruction)

would be astonishing if a timid and limited Machiavellianism were not overcome and thrown away by a boundless and cynical Machiavellianism, stopping at nothing. If there is an answer to the deadly question which we are asked by the Sphinx of history, it can only lie in a thorough reversal of a century-old political thought. In the meantime, the peoples which stand against absolute Machiavellianism will be able to stop its triumphs and to overcome its standard-bearers only in wasting and sacrificing in this struggle their blood and their wealth and their dearest treasures of peaceful civilization, and in turning against this Machiavellianism its own material weapon, material techniques and gigantic means of destruction. But will they be obliged, in order to conquer it and to maintain themselves, to adopt not only its material weapons, but also its own spirit and philosophy? Will they yield to the temptation of losing for the sake of life their very reason for living and existing?

III

Here we arrive at the crucial conflict which I intend to discuss as my second point.

Confronted with any temptation of Machiavellianism, that is, of gaining success and power by means of evil, moral conscience answers and cannot keep from answering, just as when it is tempted by any profitable fault: it is never allowed to do evil for any good whatsoever. And Christian conscience in this case is strengthened by the very word of the Gospel. When the devil tempted Jesus by showing him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and telling him: "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me,"—"Get thee hence, Satan," Jesus answered. "For it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Such is the answer that the human Person, looking up to his own destiny as a person, to his immortal soul, his ultimate end and everlasting life, to his God, gives to Politics when Politics offers him the kingdoms of the world at the price of his soul. This answer, and the personage to whom it was given, show us the root significance of Politics making itself absolutely autonomous, and claiming to be man's absolutely ultimate end. It shows us the transcendent meaning of the Pagan Empire, and of any paganized Empire, and of any self-styled Holy Empire if its Cesar,—be he a Christian Emperor or a Socialist Dictator, or any kind of Great Inquisitor in the sense of Dostoievsky's

famous legend,—wills to settle and manage on earth the final kingdom of God or the final kingdom of Man, which is the same final kingdom. “Get thee hence, Satan,” answers Christ. State and politics, when truly separated from ethics are the realm of those demoniacal principalities which St. Paul spoke of, the Pagan Empire is the Empire of Man making himself God, the diametrical opposite of the kingdom of Redemptive Incarnation.

Yet the answer we are considering does not solve our conflict; on the contrary, it increases this conflict, it widens the tear to the infinite, it clamps down on the Machiavellian temptation without appeasing the anguish and scandal of our intellect. For it is an answer given by Personal ethics to a question asked by Political ethics; it transcends the question, as the Person, with regard to his eternal destiny, transcends the state; it cuts short the question, it does not resolve it. Obviously no assertion of the individual Ethics of the Person, as absolutely true, absolutely decisive as it may be, can constitute a sufficiently adequate and relevant answer to a problem stated by the Ethics of the State. Exactly because it is a transcendent answer, it is not a proper one. Machiavellianism succeeds, does it not? Absolute Machiavellianism triumphs on earth, as our eyes have seen it for years. Is Morality willing, is Christianity willing, is God willing that, of necessity, all our freedoms be conquered, our civilization destroyed, the very hope annihilated of seeing a little justice and brotherly amity raise our earthly life,—willing that, of necessity, our lives be enslaved, our temples and institutions broken down, our brethren persecuted and crushed, our children corrupted, our very souls and intelligence delivered over to perversion by the great imperial standard-bearers of Machiavellianism, because of the very fact that we adhere to justice and refuse the devil, while they dare to use injustice and evil and accede to the devil up to the end?

It is the true goal of the *Person* which is eternal, not that of the *State*. If a man suffers martyrdom and enters paradise, his own soul enjoys bliss; but suppose all the citizens of a tributary state of some Nero suffer martyrdom and enter paradise, it is not the soul of this state which will enjoy bliss; moreover, this state no longer exists. The state has no immortal soul, nor has a nation, unless perhaps as concerns a merely spiritual survival of its common moral heritage in the memory of men or in the virtues of the immortal souls which animated its members long ago, at the time when it existed. It is a joke to console Frenchmen and ask them to accept the destruction or the enslavement of France in speaking to them of *la France éternelle*. The soul of a

nation is not immortal. The direct and specifying end, the common good of a nation is something temporal and terrestrial, something which can and should be superelevated by Gospel virtues in its own order, but whose own order is natural, not supernatural, and belongs to the realm of time. Therefore the very existence, temporal and terrestrial, the very improvement, temporal and terrestrial, the very prosperity of a nation, and that amount of happiness and glory which arises from the crises themselves and from the ordeals of history, really and essentially pertain to the common good of this nation.

No doubt—to imagine a thoroughly extreme example—a nation or a state could and should accept destruction, as did the legion of Mauritius, if its citizens were summoned to choose between martyrdom and apostasy; but such a case would not be a political case, it would be a case of sacrifice of political life itself to divine life, and a witnessing, in some way miraculous, of the superiority of the order of grace over the order of nature. But in political life itself, in the order of nature, in the framework of the temporal laws of human existence, is it not impossible that the first of the normal means of providing the common good of a state, that is, justice and political morality, should lead to the ruin and disaster of this state? Is it not impossible that the first of the means of corrupting the common good of a state, that is, injustice and political treachery, should lead to the triumph and prosperity of this state?

Yes, this is impossible.

Yet Machiavellianism succeeds in political history? Evil succeeds?

What is then the answer?

* * *

The answer is that evil *does not* succeed. In reality Machiavellianism does not succeed. To destroy is not to succeed. Machiavellianism succeeds in bringing about the misfortune of man, which is the exact opposite of any genuinely political end. More or less bad Machiavellianists have succeeded for centuries against other more or less bad Machiavellianists, this is mere exchange of counterfeit coin. Absolute Machiavellianism succeeds against moderate or weak Machiavellianism, this also is normal. But if absolute Machiavellianism were to succeed absolutely and definitely in the world, this would simply mean that political life would have disappeared from the face of the earth, giving place to an entanglement and commixture of the life of the animals and the slaves, and of the life of the saints.

But in saying that evil and injustice do not succeed in politics, I mean a more profound philosophical truth. The endless reserves of evil, the seemingly infinite power of evil of which I spoke a moment ago, are only, in reality, the power of corruption,—the squandering and dissipation of the substance and energy of Being and of Good. Such a power destroys itself in destroying that good which is its subject. The inner dialectic of the successes of evil condemn them not to be lasting. The true philosophical answer consists therefore in taking into account the dimension of time, the duration proper to the historical turns of nations and states, which considerably exceeds the duration of a man's life. According to this *political duration* of vital maturations and fructifications, I do not say that a just politics will, even in a distant future, always actually succeed, nor that Machiavellianism will, even in a distant future, always actually fail. For, with nations and states and civilizations we are in the order of nature, where mortality is natural and where life and death depend on physical as well as moral causes. I say that justice works through its own causality toward welfare and success in the future, as a healthy sap works toward the perfect fruit, and that Machiavellianism works through its own causality for ruin and bankruptcy, as poison in the sap works for the illness and death of the tree.

Now, what is the illusion proper to Machiavellianism? It is the illusion of *immediate success*. The duration of the life of a man, or rather the duration of the activity of the prince, of the political man, circumscribes the maximum length of time required by what I call *immediate success*, for immediate success is a success that our eyes may see. But what we are speaking of, what Machiavelli is speaking of, in saying that evil and injustice succeed in politics, is in reality *immediate success*, as I have defined it. Now immediate success is success for a man, it is not success for a state or a nation; it may be—it is, in the case of Machiavellianist successes considered as to their inner causal law, a disaster according to the duration proper to state-vicissitudes and nation-vicissitudes. It is with regard to immediate success that evil and injustice enjoy a seemingly infinite power: a power which can be met and overcome only by a heroic tension of the antagonistic powers. But the more dreadful in intensity such a power of evil appears, the weaker in historic duration are the internal improvements, and the vigour of life, which have been gained by a state using this power.

As I have already put it in other studies, the good in which the

state's justice bears fruit, the misfortune in which the state's injustice bears fruit, have nothing to do with the immediate and visible results; historic *duration* must be taken into account; the temporal good in which the state's justice fructifies, the temporal evil in which its iniquity bears its fruit, may be and are in fact quite different from the immediate results which the human mind might have expected and which the human eyes contemplate. It is as easy to disentangle these remote causations as to tell at a river's mouth which waters come from which glaciers and which tributaries. The achievements of the great Machiavellianists seem durable to us, because our scale of duration-measurements is an exceedingly small one, with regard to the time proper to nations and human communities. We do not understand the fair play of God, who gives those who have freely chosen injustice the time to exhaust the benefits of it and the fulness of its energies. When disaster comes to these victors the eyes of the righteous who cried against them to God will have long putrefied under the earth, and men will not know the distant source of the catastrophe.

Thus it is true that politics being something intrinsically moral, the first political condition of good politics is that it be just. And it is true at the same time that justice and virtue do not, as a rule, lead us to success in this world. But the antinomy is solved, because on the one hand success in politics is not material power nor material wealth nor world-domination, but the achievement of the common good, with the conditions of material prosperity which it involves. And because, on the other hand, these very conditions of material prosperity, as terrible as the ordeals may be which the requirements of justice impose on a people, are not and cannot be put in jeopardy or to destruction by the use of justice itself, if historical duration is taken into account and if the specific effect of this use of justice is considered in itself, apart from the effect of the other factors at play.

I do not mean that God recompenses the just peoples by the blessings of military triumphs, territorial aggrandizements, accumulation of wealth, or infinite profit in business: such values are but secondary, sometimes even injurious to the political common good. Moreover, if it is true that the political life of peoples may be enveloped in its own order by Christian influences, it may be that a Christian nation has to undergo in a measure the very law of evangelic trials, and to pay for a certain abundance of spiritual or cultural improvements at the price of certain weaknesses and infirmities in worldly values;

such was the case of Italy in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance; never did Italy know a more splendid civilization, than in those times when the power of the Popes brought her, as Machiavelli points out, weakness and pain regarding her political unity. Nor do I mean that a state using political justice is by this fact alone protected against ruin or destruction. What I mean is that in such a misfortune the very cause of ruin or destruction is never the use of justice. What I mean is that the very order of nature and of natural laws in moral matters, which is the natural justice of God, makes justice and political righteousness work towards fructifying, in the long run, as regards their own law of action, into an improvement of the true common good and the real values of civilization. Such was the case for the policy of St. Louis, although he was beaten in all his enterprises of crusade. Political injustices, on the other hand, political treacheries, political greed, selfishness or cowardice, exploitation of the poor and the weak, intoxication with power or glory or self-interest,—or that kind of political cleverness which consists, as a professor in international policy told me candidly some years ago, in using flattery and leniency toward our enemy, because he is an enemy, and therefore is to be feared, and in forsaking our friend, because he is a friend, and therefore is not to be feared—or that kind of political firmness which consists in denouncing some predatory state which is attacking a weak nation, and in selling weapons and supplies to the same aggressor, because business must keep going,—all this is always dearly paid for in the end. Wars, even just wars which must be waged against iniquitous aggressors, are often the payment thus exacted from a civilization.⁹ Then war must be waged with unshaken

⁹ What Sir Norman Angell said in Boston in April, 1941, is true for all contemporary democracies. "If we applied," he said with great force, "ten years ago resolutely the policy of aiding the victim of aggression to defend himself, we should not now be at war at all.

"It is a simple truth to say that because we in Britain were deaf to the cries rising from the homes of China smashed by the invader, we now have to witness the ruthless destruction by invaders of ancient English shrines.

"Because we would not listen to the cries of Chinese children massacred by the invader we have now, overnight, to listen to the cries of English children, victims of that same invader's ally.

"Because we were indifferent when Italian submarines sank the ships of republican Spain we must now listen to the cries of children from the torpedoed refugee ship going down in the tempest 600 miles from land."

But the remote responsibilities thus alluded to by Sir Norman Angell go back much farther than ten years. Western civilization is now paying a bill prepared by the faults of all modern history.

resolution. But victory will be fruitful only on the condition of casting away the wrongdoings of the past, and of decidedly converting oneself toward justice and political righteousness.

The more I think of these things, the more I am convinced that the observations I proposed a moment ago on the dimension of time are the core of the question. To be lasting is an essential characteristic of the common good. A forester who would seek immediate visible success in planting plenty of big old trees in his forest, instead of preparing young saplings, would use a foolish forester policy. Machiavelli's prince is a bad political man, he perverts politics, because his chief aim is his own personal power and the satisfaction of his own personal ambition. But, in a much more profound and radical sense, the ruler who sacrifices everything to the desire of his own eyes to see the triumph of his policy is a bad ruler and perverts politics, even if he lacks personal ambition and loves his country disinterestedly: because he measures the time of maturation of the political good according to the short years of his own personal time of activity.

As regards the great representatives of contemporary Machiavellianism, with their mad lust for personal power, nothing is more instructive in this connection than the ferocious impatience of their general policy. They apply the law of war, which requires a series of immediate striking successes, but which is a supreme and abnormal crisis in the life of human societies, to the very development of the normal life of the state. In so doing, they appear, not as Empire-builders, but as mere squanderers of the heritage of their nations.

Yet a fructification which will come into existence in a distant future but which we do not see, is for us as immaterial as a fructification which would never exist on earth. To act with justice, without picking any fruit of justice, but only fruits of bitterness and sorrow and defeat, is difficult for a man. It is still more difficult for a man of politics, even for a just and wise one,—who works at an earthly work that is the most arduous and the highest among temporal works,—the common good of the multitude,—and whose failures are the failures of an entire people and of a dear country. He must live on hope. Is it possible to live on hope without living on faith? Is it possible to rely on the unseen without relying on faith?

I do not believe that men in politics can escape the temptation of

Machiavellianism, if they do not believe that there exists a supreme government of the universe, which is, properly speaking, divine, for God — the head of the cosmos — is also the head of this particular order which is that of ethics; and if they do not entrust the providence of God, by faith, with the care of all that supra-empirical, dark and mysterious disentanglement of the fructifications of good and evil which no human eye can perceive;—thus closing their eyes, by faith, as regards the factual achievements in the distant future, while they open their eyes and display, by knowledge and prudence, more watchfulness than any fox or lion, as regards the preparations of these achievements and the seeds to be presently put into the earth.

A merely natural political morality is not enough to provide us with the means of putting its own rules into practice. Moral conscience does not suffice, if it is not at the same time religious conscience. What is able to face Machiavellianism, moderate Machiavellianism and absolute Machiavellianism, is not merely natural, as it were, just politics, it is Christian politics. For, in the existential context of the life of mankind, politics, because it belongs by its very essence to the ethical realm, demands consequently to be helped and strengthened, in order not to deviate and in order to attain a sufficiently perfect point of maturation, by everything man receives, in his social life itself, from religious belief and from the word of God working within him. This is what the authors of the Declaration of Independence and of the Constitution of this country understood and expressed in a form adapted to the philosophy of their time, and what makes their accomplishment so outstanding to the mind of everyone who believes Christianity to be efficacious not only for heaven but also for earth: among modern states, there is one state to whose political instinct and understanding Machiavellianism is basically repugnant, this one is the United States. Christian politics is neither theocratic nor clerical, nor yet a politics of pseudo-evangelical weakness and non-resistance to evil, but a genuinely political politics, ever aware that it is situated in the order of nature and must put into practice natural virtues; that it must be armed with real and concrete justice, with force, perspicacity and prudence; a politics which would hold the sword that is the attribute of the state, but which would also realize that peace is the work not only of justice but of love, and that love is also an essential part of political virtue. For it is never excess of love that fools political men, but without love and generosity there is regu-

larly blindness and miscalculation. Such a politics would be mindful of the eternal destiny of man and of the truths of the Gospel, knowing in its proper order—in a measure adapted to its temporal ends—something of the spirits of love, and of forgiveness.

IV

We arrive now at the third consideration I indicated at the beginning, in which I should like to make clearer certain particular points concerning the relationship between Politics and Morality.

As I have previously pointed out, political reality, though principally moral, is by essence both moral and physical, as man himself, but in a different manner from man, because it does not have any substantial immortal soul. Societies are like ever-growing organisms, immense and long-living trees, or coral-flowers, which would lead at the same time a moral and human life. And in the order to which they belong, which is that of Time and Becoming, death is natural; human communities, nations, states and civilizations naturally die, and die for all time, as would these morally-living coral-flowers of which I just spoke. Their birth, growth and decay, their health, their diseases, their death, depend on basic physical conditions, in which the specific qualities of moral behavior are intermingled and play an essential part, but which are more primitive than these qualities. Similarly, imprudence or intemperance may hasten the death of a man, self control may defer this death, yet in any case this man will die.

Justice and moral virtues do not prevent the natural laws of senescence of human societies. They do not prevent physical catastrophes from destroying them. In what sense are they the chief forces of the preservation and duration of societies? In the sense that they compose the very soul of society, its internal and spiritual force of life. Such a force does not secure immortality to the society, no more than my immortal soul protects me from death. Such a force is not an immortal entelechy, because it is not substantial; yet, insofar as it is spiritual, it is by itself indestructible. Corrupt this force, and an internal principle of death is introduced into the core of the society. Maintain and improve this force, and the internal principle of life is strengthened in the society. Suppose a human community is hammered, crushed, overwhelmed by some natural calamity or some powerful enemy: as long as it still exists,—if it preserves within itself justice and civic friendship

and faith, there is actual hope of resurging within itself, there is a force within itself which tends by itself to make it live and get the upper hand and avail itself of disaster; because no hammer can destroy this immaterial force. If a human community loses these virtues, its internal principle of life is invaded by death.

What therefore must be said, is that justice and righteousness *tend by themselves* to the preservation of states, and to that real *success* at long range of which I spoke a moment ago. And that injustice and evil *tend by themselves* to the destruction of states, and to that real *failure* at long range of which I also spoke.

Such is the law of the fructification of human actions which is inscribed in the nature of things and which is but the natural justice of God in human history.

But if the normal fruit of success and prosperity called for by political justice and wisdom does not come into actual existence because the tree is too old or because some storm has broken its branches; or if the normal fruit of failure and destruction, called for by political wickedness and madness, does not come into actual existence because the physical conditions in the sap or in the environment have counterbalanced the internal principle of death,—such an accident does not suppress that regularity inherent in the law which I emphasized in the previous part of this essay, and only bears witness to the fact that nations and civilizations are naturally mortal. As I pointed out some moments ago, justice may sometimes, even in a distant future, not actually succeed in preserving a state from ruin and destruction. But justice tends by itself to this preservation; and it is not by virtue of justice, it is by virtue of physical conditions counterbalancing from without the very effects of justice that misfortune will then occur. Machiavellianism and political perversion may sometimes, even in a distant future, not actually break, they may triumph decisively over weak and innocent peoples. But they tend by themselves to self destruction; and it is not by virtue of Machiavellianism and political perversion, it is by virtue of other conditions counterbalancing from without the very effects of these, that success will then occur.

If a weak state is surrounded and threatened by Machiavellian enemies, it must desperately increase its physical power, but also its moral virtues. Suppose it delivers its own soul to Machiavellianism,—then it only adds a principle of death to its already existing weaknesses.

If a civilization grown old and naturally bound to die, as the Roman Empire was at the time of St. Augustine, if a political state artificially and violently built up, and naturally bound to fail, as was the German Reich of Bismarck and Wilhelm, wished none the less to escape either death or failure by letting loose evil and perversion, then it would only poison centuries and prepare for itself a historical hell worse than death.

It seems not irrelevant to add the two following observations. First: innumerable are, in the history of mankind, the cases where the strong have triumphed over the weak; yet this was not always a triumph of strength over right, for most often right's sanctity was as immaterial to the conquered weak as it was to the conquering strong. Greece was conquered by Rome, (and was to conquer intellectually Roman civilization): at that time Greece had lost its political soul.

Second: As to the lasting or seemingly lasting triumphs of political injustice over innocent people, they also are not rare, at least at first glance. They concern most often, however, the enslavement, sometimes the destruction, of populations or human groups not yet arrived at a truly political status by nations enjoying this very status,—of such a fact the most striking instance is to be found in the history of modern colonization. But it seems that in proportion as peoples arrive at a truly political status, and really constitute a *civitas*, a political house and community, in this proportion the immaterial internal force which abides in them and is made up of long-lived justice and love and moral energies, and of deep-rooted memories, and of a specific spiritual heritage, becomes a more and more *formed* and cohesive soul; and in this very proportion this soul takes precedence over the merely physical conditions of existence and tends to render such peoples unconquerable. If they are conquered and oppressed, they remain alive and keep on struggling under oppression. Then an instinct of prophecy develops among them, as in Poland at the time of Mickiewicz, and their hopes naturally lift up toward the supernatural example of any historical perennity in the midst of oppression, the example of the house of Israel, whose internal immaterial force and principle of communion is of a supra-political and supra-temporal order.

* * *

Yet a final question arises now, which is of a rather metaphysical nature. I have said that the natural laws, according to which political justice fructifies by itself into the good and the preservation of a given

human community, evil and political injustice into its destruction, are to be identified with the natural justice of God in human history. But is not an essential tendency only connoted here? Did I not emphasize the fact that even at long range such normal fructifications may fail, that the fruit of evil for the unjust state, the fruit of good for the just one, may be marred, because of the physical factors and particularly because of the physical laws of senescence and death which interfere here with the moral factors? If this is the case, where is the natural justice of God? Justice does not deal with tendencies, as essential as they may be, whose factual result may fail to appear, it deals with sanctions which never fail.

The question we are facing here transcends the field of moral philosophy and historical experience, and deals with the knowledge we are able to stammer of the divine government of created things. The first answer which comes to the mind of a Christian metaphysician consists in affirming a priori that the natural fructifications of good and evil never fail, the fruit of justice and the fruit of injustice are never marred: which seems self-evident, since the justice of God cannot be deceived. Because states and nations have no immortal destiny, not only must the sanctions deserved by their deeds reach men within time and upon the earth, but they must do so in an absolutely infallible manner.

In considering the problem more attentively, I believe, however, that this answer results from a kind of undue reverberation of considerations pertaining to theology upon metaphysical matters, which causes things which belong to time and history to be endowed with that absolute firmness which is proper to things relating to eternity.

It is perfectly true that God's justice cannot fail as regards the immortal destiny of each human person, which is accomplished in fact, according to Christianity's teachings, in the supernatural order. Yet it would be too hasty a procedure simply to conceive the divine justice which rules the historical fate of human societies, according to the pattern of that divine justice which rules the supra-historical destiny of the human person. In these two cases justice applies to its subject-matter in an analogical fashion. The supra-historical justice cannot fail, because it reaches moral agents—the human persons—who attain their final state, above time. But the historical justice, dealing with human societies, reaches moral agents who do not attain any final state: there

is no final sanction for them, sanctions are spread out for them all along time, and intermingled at each moment with their continuing and changing activity; often the fruit of ancient injustice starts up into existence at the very moment when a revival of justice occurs in a given society. Moreover, and by the same token, it appears that these sanctions *in the making* do not enjoy that absolute necessity which is linked with the immutability of some ultimate, eternal accomplishment. What seemed to us, a moment ago, to be self-evident, is not self-evident. It is possible that in the case of human societies the natural fructifications of good and evil be sometimes marred. The sanctions deserved by the deeds of nations and states must reach men within time and upon the earth, yet it is not necessary that they do so in a manner absolutely infallible and always realized.

Consider the civilization of the peoples which lived on legendary Atlantis. The good and bad political deeds of these peoples tended by themselves to bear fruit and to engender their natural sanctions. Yes, but when Atlantis was engulfed by the Ocean, all these fruits to come were cancelled from being as well as the peoples and the civilization from which they were to spring forth. The natural justice of God, as regards human societies, that is, moral agents immersed in time, may fail just as nature may fail in its physical fructifications. Because this natural historical justice of God is nothing else than nature itself in its not physical, but moral fructifications. God's justice is at work in time and history, it reigns only in heaven and in hell. The concept of perfect and infallible retribution for human deeds, with its absolute adamant strength, is a religious concept relating to the eternal destiny of human Persons; it is not the ethico-philosophical concept which has to be shaped relating to the destiny of human communities in time and history.

Such is the answer which appears to me the true answer to be made to the question we are considering. But we must immediately add that these failures of historical justice are to occur in the fewest number of cases, just as do the failures of nature in the physical order, because they are accidents, in which the very laws of essences do not reach their own effect. There is, indeed, in nature an immense squandering of seeds in order that a few may have the chance of springing up, and still fewer the chance of bearing fruit. Even if the failures of natural historical justice were *abnormities as regards individual accomplishment*, as frequent as the failures of so many wasted seeds, the truth that I

am pointing out throughout this essay would none the less remain unshaken: namely, that justice tends by itself toward the welfare and survival of the community, injustice toward its damage and dissolution, and that any long-range success of Machiavellianism is never due to Machiavellianism itself, but to other historical factors at play. Yet the abnormalities which really occur *ut in paucioribus* in physical nature are *abnormalities as regards specific accomplishment*—as is the production of something deviating from the very essence of the species, the production of “freaks.” And it is with such physical abnormalities as regards specific accomplishment that the failures of the natural fructifications of good and evil, the failures in the accomplishment of the specific laws of moral essences, must rather be compared. We must therefore emphasize more strongly than ever the fact—which I have already stressed in a previous section—that the sanctions of historical justice fail much more rarely than our short-sighted experience might induce us to believe.

Here a new observation seems to me particularly noticeable. These sanctions, which have been deserved by the deeds of the social or political whole, must not necessarily reverberate on this political whole as such, on the state itself in its existence and power, they may concern the common cultural condition of men considered apart from the actual framework of this whole, yet in some kind of solidarity with the latter: because the political whole is not a substantial or personal subject, but a community of human persons, and a community related to other communities through vital exchanges. Thus, during the life of a state the fruit of its just or perverted deeds may appear only in some particular improvement or plague of its internal strata; but still more, when a state, a nation, a civilization dies, it is normal that the fructifications of good and evil which its deeds had prepared pass over—in the cultural order and as regards such or such a feature of the common social or cultural status—to its remnants, to the scattered human elements which had been contained in its unity and to their descendants, or to the human communities which are its successors and inheritors.

Then a state or a civilization dissolves, but its good or bad works continue to bear fruit, not strictly political (for the word political, in its strictest sense, connotes the common life of a given state), yet political in a broader and still genuine sense, which relates to the cultural life and to the common cultural heritage of mankind. For there exists a genuine temporal community of mankind,—a deep intersolidarity, from

generation to generation, linking together the peoples of the earth,—a common heritage and a common fate, which does not concern the building of a particular *civil society*, but of a *civilization*, not the prince, but the culture, not the perfect *civitas* in the aristotelian sense, but that kind of *civitas*, in the augustinian sense, which is imperfect and incomplete, made up of a fluid network of human communications, and more existential than formally organized, but all the more real and living and basically important. To ignore this non-political *civitas humani generis* is to atomize the basis of political reality, to fail in the very roots of political philosophy, as well as to disregard the progressive trend which naturally tends toward a more organic international structure of peoples.

Thus another fundamental consideration must be added to that of *historic duration*, which I emphasized some time ago: namely the consideration of the *human extension*, down through generations, of the fructifications of political deeds. Then we see in a complete manner the law which binds Machiavellianism to failure, as a rule and as regards the essential tendencies inscribed in nature. If, even at long range, political justice and political injustice do not ever fructify into the political success or disaster of the state itself which has practiced them, they may still produce their fruit according to the laws of human solidarity. By the same stroke we perceive Machiavellianism's mischievousness, weakness and absurdity in their full implications. It is not only for particular states that it prepares misfortune and scourges—first the victims of Machiavellianist states, then the Machiavellianist states themselves,—it is also for the human race in general. It burdens mankind with an ever-growing burden of evil, unhappiness and disaster. By its own weight and its own internal law it brings about failure, not only with reference to given nations, but with reference to our common kind, with reference to the root community of nations. Just as every other sort of selfishness, this divinized selfishness is essentially blind.

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To sum up all that I have stated, I would say First: It suffices to be just in order to gain eternal life; this does not suffice in order to gain battles or immediate political successes.

Second: In order to gain battles or immediate political successes, it is not necessary to be just, it may occasionally be more advantageous to be unjust.

Third: It is necessary, although it is not sufficient, to be just, in order to procure and further the political common good, and the lasting welfare of earthly communities.

The considerations I have developed in my essay are founded on the basic fact that Politics is a branch of Ethics but a branch specifically distinct from the other branches of the same generic stock. One decisive sign of this specificity of Political Ethics in contradistinction to Personal Ethics is that earthly communities are mortal as regards their very being and belong entirely to time. Another sign is that political virtues tend to a relatively ultimate end which is the earthly common good, and are only indirectly related to the absolutely ultimate end of man. Hence many features of Political Ethics which I can only allude to here, and which secure its truly realist quality; in such a way that many rules of political life, which the pessimists of Machiavellianism usurp to the benefit of immorality, like the political toleration of certain evils and the recognition of the *fait accompli* (the so-called "statute of limitations") which permits the retention of long ago ill-gotten gains, because new human ties and vital relationships have infused them with new-born rights, are in reality ethically grounded; and in such a way that Political Ethics is able to absorb and digest all the elements of truth contained in Machiavelli, namely, to the extent that power and immediate success are part of politics, but a subordinate part, not the principal part.

May I repeat that a certain hypermoralism, causing Political Ethics to be something impracticable and merely ideal, is as contrary to this very Ethics as Machiavellianism is, and finally plays the game of Machiavellianism, as conscientious objectors play the game of the conquerors. The purity of means consists in not using means morally bad in themselves, it does not consist in refusing pharisaically any exterior contact with the mud of human life, and it does not consist in waiting for a morally aseptic world before consenting to work in the world, nor does it consist in waiting, before saving one's neighbor, who is drowning, to become a saint, so as to escape any risk of false pride in such a generous act.

If this were the time to present a complete analysis of the particular causes of lasting success and welfare in politics, I should add two observations here. First: While political justice — which is destroyed both by the perversion, that is, by Machiavellianism, and by the distract-

tion of Ethics, that is, by Hypermoralism — is the prime spiritual condition of lasting success and welfare for a nation as well as for a civilization, the prime *material* condition of this lasting success and welfare is on the one hand that heritage of accepted and unquestionable structures, fixed customs and deep-rooted common feelings which bring into social life itself something of the determined physical data of nature,¹⁰ and of the vital unconscious strength proper to vegetative organisms; and on the other hand that common inherited experience and that set of moral and intellectual instincts which constitute a kind of empirical practical wisdom, much deeper and denser and much nearer the hidden complex dynamism of human life than any artificial construction of reason. And both this somewhat physical heritage and this inherited practical wisdom are intrinsically and essentially bound to and dependent upon moral and religious beliefs. As regards Political Ethics and political common good, the preservation of these common structures of life and of this common moral dynamism is more fundamental than any particular action of the prince, however serious and decisive this may be in itself. And the workings of such a vast, deep-seated physico-moral energy are more basic and more important to the life of human societies than particular political good or bad calculations, they are for states the prime cause of historic success and welfare. The Roman Empire did not succeed by virtue of the stains, injustices and cruelties, which were intermingled in its policy, but by virtue of this internal physico-moral strength.

Now, and this is my second observation: what is in itself, even in the order of material causality, primarily and basically destructive of lasting historic success and welfare for a nation as well as for a civilization, is that which is destructive of the common stock and heritage I just described: that is, Machiavellianism on the one hand and Hypermoralism on the other. Both destroy, as do gnawing worms, the inner social and ethical living substance upon which depends any lasting success and welfare, of the commonwealth, as well as that political justice which constitutes the moral righteousness, the chief moral virtue and the very “soul” of human societies.

Thus the split, the deadly division created between Ethics and Politics both by Machiavellianists and by Hypermoralists is overcome. Because Politics is essentially ethical, and because Ethics is essentially

10 Cf. The Political Ideas of Pascal, in *Ransoming the Time* (Scribner's, 1941).

realistic, not in the sense of any *Realpolitik*, but in the sense of a real common good.

I am aware that if this antinomy which has been the scourge of modern history, is to be practically, not only theoretically, overcome, it will be only on condition that a kind of revolution take place in our conscience. Machiavelli has made us conscious of what is in fact the average behavior of politics in mankind. In this he was right. It is a natural incline that the man who endeavors to overcome dissociation, the man of unity, has to climb up again. But inclines are made to be climbed. As Bergson pointed out, a genuine democracy, by the very fact that it proceeds from an evangelic motive power, works against the grain of nature and therefore needs some heroical inspiration.

With whatever deficiencies human weakness may encumber the practical issue, the fact remains, in any case, that such an effort must be made, and the knowledge of what is true in these matters is of first and foremost importance. To keep Machiavelli's awareness, with reference to the factual conduct of most of the princes, and to know that this conduct is bad politics, and to clear our conscience from Machiavelli's rules, precepts and philosophy,—this is the very end of Machiavellianism.

Here I emphasize anew what I pointed out at the beginning of this essay. Machiavellianism does not consist of this unhappy lot of particular evil and unjust political deeds which are taking place in fact by virtue of human weakness or wickedness. Machiavellianism is a philosophy of politics, stating that by rights good politics is supra-moral or immoral politics and by essence must make use of evil. What I have discussed is this political philosophy. There will be no end to the occurrence of misdeeds and mistakes as long as humanity endures. To Machiavellianism there can and must be an end.

Let us conclude. Machiavellianism is an illusion, because it rests upon the power of evil, and because, metaphysically, evil as such has no power as a cause of being; practically, evil has no power as a cause of any lasting achievement. As to moral entities like peoples, states, and nations, which do not have any supratemporal destiny, it is within time that their deeds are sanctioned, it is upon earth that the entire charge of failure and nothingness with which is charged every evil

action committed by the whole or by its heads, will normally be exhausted. This is a natural, a somewhat physical law in the moral order, although thwarted in some cases by the interference of the manifold other factors at play in human history: as a rule Machiavellianism and political injustice, if they gain immediate success, lead states and nations to misfortune or catastrophe in the long run; in cases where they seem to succeed even in the long run, this is not by virtue of evil and political injustice, but by virtue of some inner principle of misfortune already binding their victim to submission, even if the latter did not have to face such iniquitous enemies. Either the victims of power politics are primitive tribes which had been in a state of inexistence as to political life and therefore as to political justice: and their unjustly-suffered misfortune, which cries out against heaven and makes God's justice more implacable with regard to the personal destiny of their executioners, does not reverberate upon the unjustly conquering state unless in the form of some hidden and insidious, not openly political, self-poisoning process. Or else the victims of power politics are states and nations which were already condemned to death or enslavement by the natural laws of senescence of human societies or by their own internal corruption. And here also the very effect of the injustice which has been used against them is to introduce a hidden principle of self-destruction into the inner substance of their conquerors.

In truth the dialectic of injustice is unconquerable. Machiavellianism devours itself. Common Machiavellianism has devoured and annihilated Machiavelli's Machiavellianism; absolute Machiavellianism devours and annihilates moderate Machiavellianism. Weak or attenuated Machiavellianism is fatally destined to be vanquished by absolute and virulent Machiavellianism.

If some day absolute Machiavellianism triumphs over mankind, this will only be because all kinds of accepted iniquity, moral weakness and consent to evil, operating within a degenerating civilization, will previously have corrupted it, and prepared ready-made slaves for the lawless man. But if for the time being absolute Machiavellianism is to be crushed, and I hope so, it will only be because what remains of Christian civilization will have been able to oppose it with the principle of political justice integrally recognized, and to proclaim to the world the very end of Machiavellianism.

There is only one determining principle before which the principle of Machiavellianism finds itself spiritually reduced to impotence: that is the principle of real and absolutely unwavering political justice, as St. Louis understood it. Men will have to spring up to array against the knighthood of human degradation the true knighthood of justice.

The justice of which I speak is not an unarmed justice. It uses force when force is necessary. I believe in the effectiveness of the methods of Gandhi, but I think that they are suitable only in certain limited fields of political activity. Especially in the case of war, other means must be used. And when one considers the course of the wars waged by total Machiavellianism, one can but wonder to what extent aggressors, who respect nothing, force the rest of mankind to have recourse to the terrible law of just reprisals, or to put aside momentarily, if a superior concept of justice necessitates our doing so, certain juridical rules which the barbarous action of the adversary has rendered inefficacious in justice.

But the more forceful and even horrible the means required by justice, the more perfect should be the men who use them. The world requires, for the affirmation to the end, and the application without fear, of the terrible powers of justice, men truly resolved to suffer everything for justice, truly understanding the part to be played by the State as judge, the part which according to the great theologian Francisco de Vitoria, belligerent States assume in the absence of any international entity endowed with universal jurisdiction. Men truly certain of preserving within themselves, in the midst of the scourges of the Apocalypse, a flame of love stronger than death.

In his introduction to Machiavelli, Mr. Max Lerner emphasizes the dilemma which democracies are now confronted with. This dilemma seems to me perfectly clear: Either to perish by continuing to accept, more or less willingly, the principle of Machiavellianism, or to regenerate by consciously and decidedly rejecting this principle. For what we call democracy or the commonwealth of free men is by definition a political regime of men the spiritual basis of which is uniquely and exclusively law and right. Such a regime is by essence opposed to Machiavellianism and incompatible with it. Totalitarianism lives by Machiavellianism, freedom dies by it. The only Machiavellianism of which any democracy as such is capable is the attenuated and

weak Machiavellianism. Facing absolute Machiavellianism, the democratic states inheritors of the Ancien Regime and of its old Machiavellian policy will therefore keep on using weak Machiavellianism and be destroyed from without, or they will decide to have recourse to absolute Machiavellianism, which is only possible with totalitarian rule and totalitarian spirit; and thus they will destroy themselves from within. They will survive and take the upper hand only on condition that they break with every kind of Machiavellianism.

The end of Machiavellianism, that is the aim, that is the moral revolution to which, in the depth of human history, amidst savage wars which must be waged with inflexible determination, free men are now summoned.