

Fortuna o Virtú

Machiavelli drafted The Prince in 1513, the midst of the Italian Renaissance, which was a time of widespread chaos and war across the Italian city-states. Machiavelli saw his countrymen continuously conquered by foreign barbarians from the north, and he attributed Italy's weakness to the petty quarrels between each city-state and the inefficiency of their respective dukes. "The book was a product of personal and national tragedy created, however, in the spirit of hope" (Introduction, X). Machiavelli's hope sprung from his vision of the old Roman Empire when Italy was unified. Machiavelli saw political disorganization and the faltering of Italy's power; he saw Italy as "leaderless, lawless, crushed, despoiled, torn, overrun" (81), but it was because of these extremely wretched turns of fate that Machiavelli wrote in hope of a unified Italy. Machiavelli hoped to cleanse Italy of all foreigners and their claims, to restore the glorious valor of the old Roman princes, and to restore the awesome respect and honor for the Italian state. "His concept of Italy was racial or cultural rather than nationalistic" (Introduction XI). To establish cultural and political unity, Machiavelli called for a strong government headed by a powerful, warrior-like prince who would derive his power from the principles of *fortuna* and *virtu*. He also used *fortuna* and *virtu* as rhetorical techniques to justify the prince's amorality which allows the prince to do whatever was necessary to accomplish his goals. Machiavelli employed a dialectical technique for expressing his philosophies in the form of thesis, antitheses, and synthesis. He proposed *virtu* as the theses in conjunction with *fortuna* as the antithesis, and the synthesis was an articulate, powerful, deadly, prince.

Machiavelli introduces *virtu* in the context of a "newcomer" to the state ascending to the principship of the state. Machiavelli's choice of the word "newcomer" denotes the man's freshness and specifically averts reference to noble birth because the prince could be anyone who could be effective in his purposes. In this instance, the maintenance of rule will depend mostly on his *virtu* or ability. He cites Hiero of Syracuse as an example of a private citizen who came to power using his *virtu*. Hiero was renowned for his *virtu* as shown by the Roman historian's quotation, "That he had all the attributes of a king except a kingdom" (20). Hence, a private citizen with the right amount of *virtu* could be a successful prince if presented with an opportunity. The most crucial element of *virtu* is the instinct for seizing opportunities. "The opportunities given them enabled these men to succeed, and their own exceptional prowess enabled them to seize their opportunities" (18). *Virtu* also encompasses an element of anticipation. Machiavelli expresses that it is a great asset for the prince to be able to anticipate who will betray him for the purpose of executing his foes before they have time to muster their own power. Machiavelli also speaks of the prince's intelligence in reference to the advisers with which he chooses to surround himself. The highest level of intelligence is

This intro is good but a little too general, or too. Or from the text as a starting point

positives?

Very good, you are the only one to follow this path

Good

Good